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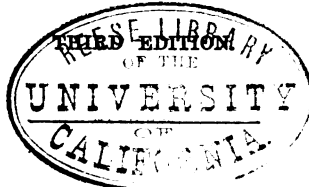
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THE
PILGRIMAGE
OF
ADAM AND DAVID;
WITH SKETCHES OF
THEIR HEAVENLY EMPLOYMENT.
A BIBLE ALLEGORY.

BY JAMES GALLAHER.

"Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book." — JOHN.



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P R E F A C E

T O T H E S E C O N D E D I T I O N .

I HAVE long believed that true religion would be honored, could the great men of the heathen world be fairly contrasted with the great men of the Bible. Nowhere on this earth does the human mind unfold its powers to such purpose and perfection as where the light of revelation shines. When a young worshipper of the true God was brought into the court of a mighty heathen king, and stood there amidst renowned statesmen, talented counsellors, and profound politicians, and gave his opinions and his advice to the king, Pharaoh said unto his servants, "Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the spirit of God is? And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath showed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou." (Gen. xli. 38—40.) Now, what was true of Joseph in the court of Egypt, is true of the great men of the Bible in every department of society. The Bible legislator and the Bible historian has no parallel in the annals of the heathen world. In like manner, the faithful friend, the deep politician, the eloquent orator, the patriot soldier, and the great general, portrayed on the sacred pages, are unequalled where the true religion is unknown. It is remarkable that at a single touch the pencil of inspiration

places the whole living man before you. The student of the Bible sees Jonathan, the friend of David, as plainly as ever an American saw Lafayette, the friend of Washington. He knows Ahithophel as perfectly as an enlightened Frenchman knows Talleyrand. He understands Hushai the Archite as well as an old Virginian understands the character of Patrick Henry. And he becomes as well acquainted with Joab as the Tennessean is acquainted with General Jackson.

The following book was prepared with a view of introducing the reader to the great men and the thrilling scenes of the Bible, and with a belief that thus many might be led to take a deeper interest in the sacred volume. The experiment has been successful. Rev. Thomas Brainard, pastor of the Third Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, writes, June 6, 1849, "I have reason to love the book. Mrs. Judge Burnet, of Cincinnati, sent a single copy to my little son in Philadelphia, when he was eight years old. He read it six times through and through. He literally devoured its contents; he learned to repeat its dialogues; he set to work to search out the Bible history on which it is founded;—and after three years, his eyes still sparkle when any thing in the Bible recalls to his mind *Adam and David's Pilgrimage*. His book has been lent with a similar result in other families. It is now lent in Massachusetts. This is the *only copy* I have personally seen; but I hope the youth of our land will see thousands."

A Missouri senator met me in the streets of St. Louis. "Why, sir," said he, "I have been reading your book. I never knew there were such interesting characters and scenes in the Old Testament. I thought it was all fulfilled and done away. But now I have set in to read it through, and I am greatly interested, and I hope profited." Such testimony has been received from many others. May the Lord cause the publication to promote his glory and the prosperity of his Zion.



PREFACE

TO THE FIRST EDITION.

TO THE

YOUNG MEN OF THE UNITED STATES.

MY YOUNG COUNTRYMEN :

THE writer of the following work respectfully presents his book to you. His object is, to encourage you to study the Bible; not as a book of religion merely, but as the great storehouse of general knowledge. No book takes hold of the four corners of the human mind, and "lifts it up," like the book that God has written.

Almost every American has *felt* that there was an intellectual superiority possessed by Dr. Franklin, which caused him to shine as a luminary of the first magnitude among the worthies of the revolution. You take up a newspaper; you cast your eye on the first page, and see "Debates in Congress." Perhaps you will not read them. On the second page you see, "Dissertation on Political Economy." This, also, you pass over. On the third page you find, "Anecdote of Franklin." You are sure to read it. Among Americans, nine hundred and ninety-nine in a thousand will read it.

There is an intellectual charm about Franklin, that is *felt* by the whole American people.

Why is this? What was it that imparted to the mind of Franklin that clearness and power which were so conspicuous through all his history?

I answer, that one prominent reason is this: Early in life, his fine intellect was enriched with an uncommonly intimate and thorough acquaintance with the sacred Scriptures; and the Bible-reading habit, which he formed when very young, he continued to cultivate until old age. This appears on almost every page of his public life. Few, if any, of the political men of that day, approached him in the accuracy and extent of his scriptural knowledge; and this is one chief reason why Franklin towered "a head and shoulders" above his fellows, in, perhaps, every assembly of which he was a member.

An anecdote or two will illustrate this subject.

When quite a youth, Franklin went to London, entered a printing-office, and inquired if he could get employment as a printer?

"Where are you from?" inquired the foreman of the establishment.

"America," was the reply.

The English, at that time, had an opinion, sufficiently prevalent among them yet, that America is a land of wild, uncultivated forests, and of wild, uncultivated minds.

"Ah," said the foreman, "from America? A lad from America seeking employment as a printer. Well, do you really understand the art of printing? Can you set type?"

Franklin stepped to one of the cases, and in a very brief space, set up the following passage, from the first chapter of the Gospel by St. John: "Nathanael saith unto him, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see." It was done so quick, so accurately, and contained a delicate reproof, so appropriate and powerful,

that it at once gave him standing and character with all who were in the office.

Similar anecdotes, in great numbers, might be given. I shall at present, however, mention but one more.

When, after the declaration of independence, Franklin was minister from the United States to France, he was invited to dine with a French nobleman, in company with the British ambassador. After dinner, they were taking a glass of wine, and it was proposed that each should give a sentiment, or toast. The Englishman led the way, and gave, "George the Third: like the Sun in his meridian glory, he is the admiration of the world!"

The French nobleman followed next, and gave, —

"The Queen of France: like the Moon in her bright path through the heavens, she enlightens and influences the earth."

Both now turned to Franklin, confident that he was thrown very far into the back ground. But Franklin, with great composure, took up his glass, and gave, —

"George Washington: like Joshua of old, he commands the Sun and the Moon to stand still, and they obey him."

Many have an impression, that as the Bible is a book of religion, religious improvement is the only benefit to be derived from its perusal. The mistake is mischievous. It is true, the Bible is the great source of religious instruction. Its chief design is to teach us to glorify God and prepare for a future world. But it is also true, that it is the great magazine of useful knowledge; and that an intimate acquaintance with its sacred pages, is immensely profitable for the "life that now is," as well as for the "life that is to come."

You have never seen a man "mighty in the Scriptures," but that man was very respectable for his general knowledge. You have never seen a grossly ignorant man, a grossly ignorant family, a grossly ignorant neighborhood, but that man, that family, that neighborhood, had grossly neglected the book of God.

Now, the Bible is *not read*. This is a reading age. But alas! a large portion of the reading community do not read the Bible. Their time is spent in reading light, frothy, vapid trash, "written by a moonbeam, and dictated by the nightmare," while the golden treasures of God's book are neglected. There are many instances of men, in public life, who go halting all their days, because, in their education, that best foundation of general knowledge was not laid. They go through life a laughing-stock to Sabbath school children, because they are ignorant of the book of God.

I will give a few examples.

An editor of one of our newspapers, when giving an obituary notice of a worthy man, remarks, "We may say of him, as the Holy Scriptures have so beautifully expressed it, —

"An honest man 's the noblest work of God."

A certain lawyer, pleading for an old culprit, makes this appeal: "You know, gentlemen of the jury, that the Bible says,—

"While the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return."

Two members of a state legislature, at the close of the session, addressed a circular to their constituents: "We hope the course we have pursued, and the votes we have given, will meet your approbation. We hope you will say to us, as Nathan said to David, 'Well done, good and faithful servants.'"

"Mr. Speaker," said a member of a legislative body, earnestly opposing a measure before the house, — "Mr. Speaker, I would no more vote for that bill, than I would fall down and worship the golden calf that Abraham made."

"Mr. Speaker," said another member, "the gentleman is wrong. It was not Abraham that made the golden calf; it was Nebuchadnezzar."

Instances of this kind might be given by the dozen, by the score, by the hundred.

The Bible contains the most instructive history in the world — the richest biography. No book delineates character with such accuracy, clearness, brevity, and power. It abounds with the sublimest poetry, the loftiest eloquence, the most overwhelming logic, and, indeed, all the higher beauties of literature; while, at the same time, it lays before us a map of the road that leads to a brighter world. Yet the Bible is not read.

But a short time since, I conversed with a gentleman, who had been assisting the Bible Society to supply every family with a copy of the blessed book. He told me frankly, it was a book he had never read himself.

Now, to direct the attention of his young countrymen, in this great and growing republic, to the rich, though neglected treasures contained in God's precious Word, — the thrilling interest of Bible themes, — the unrivalled beauty of Bible history, — the unparalleled grandeur of Bible truth, — the unequalled sweetness of Bible religion, — the vast and inexhaustible variety of Bible instruction, is the aim and object of

THE AUTHOR.

ST. CHARLES, MISSOURI, *April* 10, 1846.

NOTE.

One word as to the *manner* of the following work. As my design is to interest the reader in Bible scenes, Bible characters, and Bible truth, I have preferred to use, in the dialogue, the modern rather than the ancient style. This feature of the book is the result of mature deliberation.

Again : it is no part of my plan to delineate the character of the fallen angels. Their conversation is used solely as a medium for bringing past events and ancient men before the reader. Should any one object, that the demons are not *bad* enough, I reply, that this feature of the work, also, was deliberately chosen, as best calculated to answer the design of the Author. This style of presenting Bible subjects was adopted with the hope that many who neglect to read commentaries and sermons, may thus have their attention awakened, and their minds directed to the rich treasures contained in the Holy Oracles.

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THE PILGRIMAGE
OF
ADAM AND DAVID.
AN ALLEGORY.

CHAPTER I.

THE CAVERN.

THE sun had gone down behind the distant mountains, and the shadows of a calm and beautiful evening were gathering around. As the daylight faded away, I had been reading the missionary's account of a volcanic eruption in an island of the Pacific Ocean. The narrative excited the highest interest. The trembling of the whole island; the thunders of the convulsed mountain; the immense volumes of ascending smoke, that turned "day into night, and night into darkness;" the volcanic lightning, that now shot up to an inconceivable height, and now, branching out like some gigantic forest tree, glared over the mighty crater; the flood of burning lava, that the mountain vomited forth, which, rolling a river of fire, broad and deep as

the Mississippi, swept through a tall forest for more than forty miles, and then over a huge precipice discharged its terrible flood into the vexed and boiling ocean.

After the excitement produced by this awful description began to subside, I gradually sunk into a gentle slumber. But the deep impression was still on the mind. In my dream I saw before me a volcanic mountain. Its height was very great, but its fires were extinguished and its thunders were hushed. No column of smoke streamed upward from its lofty summit, and the vast bodies of lava which it had once thrown out, were now crusted and cold as the granite rock. On the majestic mountain side, however, though scarred and blackened with the traces of former eruptions, I could distinctly mark, even to a great elevation, the successful attempts of nature to throw around it her bright mantle of green.

At the base of the mountain was the yawning mouth of an immense cavern. On the one side was a wall of primitive rock, which, rising to a great height, seemed to overhang a large portion of the open space. On the other side, black masses of solid lava formed the boundary. Whether successive eruptions, pitching the lava from the brow of the projecting cliff, had left this mighty opening, or whether it had been formed by some tremendous convulsion of nature, it was now impossible to determine.

In the strange illusions of a dream, I resolved to explore this remarkable mansion, and proceeding cautiously along through the "darkness visible," I had gone a considerable way, when my attention was

caught by a dim light, that feebly twinkled through the gloom. On turning toward it, there appeared, as though hewn out of the solid rock, on one side of the cavern, an immense hall, fitted up for the accommodation of some mighty congress. There was the lofty chair of the speaker or president; and there the long ranges of curving seats, rising gradually one behind another, for the use of the members, while here and there, at regular intervals, suspended lamps were dimly burning. But no living form appeared. All was silence and desertion. After gazing on this extraordinary scene for fifteen or twenty minutes, two unearthly beings suddenly appeared at the further extremity of the spacious hall, and engaged in earnest conversation.

“I am greatly troubled,” said one, — and the voice was unlike any sound that ever before had fallen on my ears, — “I am greatly troubled at the long and unaccountable absence of our chief. I fear it portends disaster to his empire.”

“Perhaps not,” said the other: “he is doubtless engaged in guarding and fortifying his heathen dominions against the encroachments of the gospel. The modern movements of the church are absolutely beyond endurance. In scarcely one of the heathen nations is our cause now exempt from annoyance. Great Lucifer, who once could proudly point to ‘all the kingdoms of the world’ as his possessions, and claim ‘the glory of them’ as all his own, is now threatened with utter disfranchisement. I doubt not that this is the cause of his long absence. Indignant at the attempts to expel him from the abodes of men, he has grasped the great war-club of hell, with which he battled against the

church in the days of Paul and Peter, and with this he is beating off the Bible and the missionary from his heathen dominions."

"That was my opinion until of late, but it is now fully ascertained to be a mistake. I have conversed with Belial to-day, and he assures me that scouts have been despatched, and that they have diligently searched every dark corner of Europe, Africa, Asia, America, and the islands of the sea, and they have searched in vain."

"Why, you astonish me!"

"No doubt now remains that Lucifer is gone from the earth. No tidings of him can be heard, nor the slightest traces of his movements found for the last fifteen years."

"Can that be possible? I fear, then, that the days of his kingdom on earth are numbered. I have long dreaded the accomplishment of that ancient oracle, uttered by the apostle John on the Isle of Patmos. I was near him at the time. His form, his attitude, and tone of voice, are fresh in my memory till this day. He came to the verge of the island to which he had been banished. He stood upon a naked rock, that overhung the roaring ocean, and while the sea breeze lifted the long, white locks from his aged countenance, that glowed with the sublimity of divine inspiration, he stretched his hands towards the dwelling-place of the nations his Master had come to redeem, and pronounced these awful words: —

"I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand, and he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent,

which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years should be fulfilled.'

"I am startled," said the demon, "lest this terrible oracle has been fulfilled, and our great master is now in chains of darkness, shut up in the bottomless pit."

Here a group of anxious and haggard visages appeared around the speakers. Presently the hum of a moving multitude was heard. Innumerable forms from without were hurrying into the spacious hall. In a moment, the long ranges of seats were crowded.

I gazed on this singular assembly, and was much impressed with the indications of powerful mind that appeared among them. Here were a multitude of beings that once shone among the stars of heaven, cherubim and seraphim hurled by sin from exalted stations on high, who yet appeared "majestic though in ruins."

I had often marked the strong language of the Bible concerning the *power* of fallen angels — "a roaring lion;" "a great red dragon;" "the prince of the power of the air;" "rulers of the darkness of this world;" and other kindred expressions; and the vision now before me seemed fully to justify the emphatic language of the sacred writers.

Another fact that arrested my attention was this — the resemblance which the several classes of these demons bore to the several nations among whom they had been employed. I learned that all the hosts of hell, from heathen and from Christian lands, had been summoned to attend this grand council. It appeared that

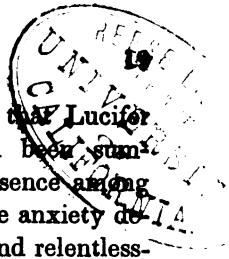
each, for ages, had been employed in his separate charge, according to the appointment of their great leader.

The Scriptures declare that the heathen idolaters worshipped devils—offered their sacrifices to devils. Now we know that the idea of local deities was prevalent among them. Some of their idol gods were gods of the hills, but not of the valleys. Some of their deities had power in one district, but not in another.

This belief among the ancient heathens comports fully with the statement that the rebel angels have each a separate charge among the nations assigned them by their mighty chief. Now this was very observable in the great assembly before me. This group reminded you of the dignified and proud Englishman ; that brought to your mind the volatile and mirth-loving Frenchman ; while a third led you to think of the cloudy and mysterious Spaniard. Here you saw the cold, calculating German ; and there the haughty and whiskered Russian. The representatives from Turkey, China, and Tartary occupied seats in one quarter ; and in another appeared those from Central and Southern Africa, and the islands of the sea ; while a distinct group, with copper-colored visages and fierce, savage appearance, seemed to personify the North American Indians. I looked on this company, and thought of the names of those powerful Indian chiefs that were the terror of our country in the days of its early settlement—“Red Jacket,” “Double Head,” “The Bloody Fellow,” and, “The Hanging Maw.”

From remarks interchanged, in a low tone of voice, by individuals in this congress of Rebel Angels, I

THE CAVERN.



learned that the general impression was that Lucifer had reappeared; that this council had been summoned by his authority, and that his presence among them was every moment expected. The anxiety depicted in many countenances was great, and relentlessness and impatience began to be visible in various parts of the assembly; when suddenly rising on the platform in front of the speaker's chair, the prince of hell,

"In shape and gesture proudly eminent,
Stood like a tower."

Profound silence pervaded the entire multitude, while he cast his eyes around, and for several seconds surveyed this vast host of collected confederates. At length he spake. "Friends and allies, you have doubtless been perplexed and amazed at my long and unexplained absence; and although beforehand I judged it important to lock up the design in my own breast, yet, now that the enterprise is over, it will gratify me frankly to tell you all."

Here, as if the well-remembered voice of their renowned chief waked up emotions that could not be controlled, the whole assembly burst forth into the most tumultuous cheering. Hall and cavern rang again. It seemed the very mountain shook, and the earth itself, for leagues around, shared in the strong agitation. Often, as the deafening shout began to subside, it was renewed, reiterated, and prolonged with the most extravagant demonstrations of fiendish ecstasy. Lucifer at length waved his hand, and immediately the multitude was calmed and reduced to order.

CHAPTER II.

LUCIFER'S NARRATIVE.

“MORE than thirty years ago I marked in the Christian church the waking up of a spirit which at once I recognized as that of the apostolic age — mighty efforts to send the Bible abroad in all the languages of the earth; religious truth by means of printed tracts, diffused through every nook and corner of society; children by tens and by hundreds of thousands collected into Sabbath schools, and taught to lisp hosannas to Him who died on Calvary; while the living missionary in the north and in the south, in the east and in the west, was scaling the walls that for long ages have surrounded my heathen dominions, and sounding the trumpet of the gospel jubilee.

“Signs of the times, like the budding of the trees when summer is nigh, were appearing all abroad. A spirit of inquiry seemed to be stirring up the nations. Idols that had stood firm for three thousand years, were beginning to totter, and a strange, portentous trembling penetrated the heart of the empire of darkness.

“But what increased my alarm was this: I found that the attention and interest of heaven was now directed with uncommon intensity towards earth. Ministering angels in unusual numbers were clustering

around the heirs of salvation. And while they roused their immortal energies to forward every gospel enterprise, there was an air of animated, confident expectation in their visages and in their movements, such as I had not witnessed before. Their whisperings were of 'conquest, victory, nations disenthralled, and a renovated world.' It was evident that throughout all their ranks there was strong assurance that the great harvest foretold by ancient seers is at hand, when the sceptre of sin shall be broken, and earth shall be transformed into the garden of the Lord.

"In my attempts to oppose them, I found, from month to month, the work becoming more and more difficult. In stratagems against the church, success was slow and hard to be won. Many favorite and deep-laid devices were wholly baffled, or so crippled in their results as to afford little triumph in the review; while the river of life seemed to be continually swelling in its channel, and rolling onward with a bolder and a broader tide, threatening ere long to overflow all its banks, and extend its wonderful influence to the thirsty and perishing nations.

"After an arduous struggle, continued through many years, I became fully convinced that the modern movements of the gospel cannot be overcome or arrested by direct resistance. An invisible power from above has come down, as though the 'set time to favor Sion' had arrived.

"No army that I could muster could vanquish in the open field the armies marshalled by Him who rideth on the white horse, with his crown, his sword, and his bow.

“I saw the necessity of attempting some important change in the circumstances of the war between heaven and hell. I had known earthly warriors, when discouragements and disasters thickened around, and success at a given point was impracticable, to change entirely the *field* of contest, and thus secure the most decided triumph. Thus imperial Rome, when Hannibal, for sixteen successive years on the plains of Italy, overmatched her generals, cut to pieces her armies, and shattered her strength, and it became perfectly conclusive that no force she could bring into the field could stand before the terrible invader — the crafty mistress of the world despatched Scipio with a strong Roman army to Africa, kindled there the flames of destructive war, laid siege to Carthage itself, and thus effected the recall of Hannibal and the ruin of Carthage. By this artful device, Victory, which so long had seemed to hesitate, was induced finally to perch on the standard of Rome.

“I resolved to attempt a similar stratagem, though on a somewhat larger scale. I was persuaded that many portions of the creation, distant from earth, must be ignorant of its history, and that if rebellion against the Creator could be excited there, it would powerfully draw off the attention of heaven from earth, to quell the newly-excited insurrection, which might, perhaps, be extended far and wide.”

At this declaration of Lucifer, a strange commotion was visible throughout the entire throng of rebel angels. Troubled looks were exchanged, and here and there some mighty leader rose to his feet, as if anxious to make an inquiry. Lucifer paused, and the

following question was propounded by several voices at once : —

“ Would your majesty, then, think of abandoning your possessions on earth, and allowing the gospel to achieve its triumphs among men, without resistance ? Is it your plan to found your empire permanently in some different and distant world ? ”

“ Never ! never ! ” vociferated Lucifer, with much vehemence, “ Never ! never ! ” There was a pause, during which the huge frame of the fallen angel underwent an involuntary shudder. It was the trembling of the enormous forest tree that has felt the glance of the lightning. Again he spoke : “ I say never, never surrender my possessions on earth. On earth I set up the standard of hell six thousand years ago. On earth I have battled long with patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, and emissaries from the world above. It was to earth Messiah came, boasting that he would destroy the works of the Devil. Yes, and through my management, earth rejected him, and shed his blood. I am resolved firmly and forever to maintain my kingdom on earth, if devilish ingenuity and devilish energy can do it. The design of which I spoke was simply this — to excite insurrection in some distant province of the Creator's kingdom, draw off the armies of heaven to quell the troubles there, and thus gain ample respite to recover much that has been lost on earth, and fortify my kingdom here, that it may be more strong and unassailable than ever. ”

At the utterance of these words, a smile of ineffable satisfaction spread over the whole assembly, and the deep murmur of applause was heard from all parts of the crowded hall.

"Having formed my plan," continued Lucifer, "I determined to set out immediately on its execution. I put on the robes of an angel of light, and ascended to the sun, that from that central position I might take a survey of the wide-extended field in which I was to act. I thought it best to go quite beyond the limits of the solar system, lest the knowledge of earth's history should have extended there, and should impede my purpose. As I stood on the outer crust of the sun, pondering my voyage, and undetermined, as yet, in what direction it was best to steer, I perceived a comet of unusual magnitude returning from some long excursion through the regions of space. It was yet in the distant depths of the broad blue heaven, drawing its immense trail in the direction of the solar system with incredible celerity. In the fury of its progress it seemed to 'plough the stars aside,' and for a time looked as though it would surely strike the body of the sun. But at its near approach, it most gracefully curved around the burning luminary, throwing its long-extended trail into the figure of a gigantic rainbow. I resolved at once to take passage on this extraordinary vehicle, and while it was near the sun, I sprung upon its surface, and perched myself on one of its lofty peaks.

"Away, away, it shot, in the rapidity of its flight, for the distant tracts of creation. It was evidently the wreck of some former world, which once, perhaps, had been the abode of animated beings. But it was now in ruins. The work of destruction, however, was yet incomplete, for it was evidently still in progress. From time to time, the internal fires, gaining access to fresh bodies of combustible matter, flamed forth with a gran-

deur that was terrible. Mountain top responded to mountain top in thundering discharges of burning lava. Tempests and tornadoes, mingled with broad sheets of lightning, howled along the surface, while the huge body itself was incessantly convulsed and torn, as by the heavings and tossings of some mighty earthquake.

“On we drove, accompanied by this ‘war of elements and wreck of matter.’ Conflagration flamed on conflagration, and explosion thundered on explosion: on, on, we drove,

‘Showering thin flame o’er half the breadth of heaven.’

“At length, having passed many a shining world, wheeling in its bright orbit, I found that my fiery conveyance was beginning to slacken in its speed. I therefore prepared to betake myself to flight, and bounding aloft, I spread my wings, and directed my course due north. Onward, onward, onward, I winged my way, until earth’s sun grew dim, and began to twinkle in the distant heavens, like a feeble star. I now found myself approaching a cluster of worlds, whose orbits encircle that luminary which on earth is called the polar star. Here I determined to make my first attempt. Alighting on a large revolving globe, I began to take a particular survey. It was dressed in the richest green, intermingled with all the varied and beautiful drapery of early spring. I could only compare it to Eden in its first loveliness, before the blight and desolations of sin had entered there. Even in the vegetable kingdom I could not detect the slightest trace of mildew or decay. I looked carefully around, if there were any marks of indignation from on high — any object scathed

with the curse of the Almighty. But there was none. I listened attentively. But neither sigh nor moan, nor accent of woe, could be heard. Nor could I find tombstone or graveyard, nor any vestige of the ravages of him who rideth on the 'pale horse.'

"No doubt now remained that I had reached a sinless world, and that intellectual beings, who inhabited here, have retained their allegiance to God. As I was revolving in my mind the method in which it might be best to approach them, and attempt to draw them into sin, my attention was caught by a structure at no great distance, evidently the work of art, but of singular symmetry and grandeur.

"It was manifestly a monument designed to perpetuate the knowledge of some great event. The material of which it was built surpassed the finest white marble, and while it stood secure and firm on its substantial base, the spire streamed up to an incredible height, and seemed to touch the floating clouds of heaven. I approached to take a nearer survey, and learn, if possible, its meaning. Judge of my astonishment, when there, on its broad surface, appeared an inscription, in letters of light, rehearsing the story of 'The Manger,' 'The Garden,' 'The Cross,' and 'The Sepulchre.'

"Astounded and dizzy with amazement, I could scarcely realize what I saw. It seemed like the illusion of some wild, fantastic dream. But surveying the inscription again and again assured me that it was a palpable and undoubted reality. Immediately the thought occurred — some of the saints from the heavenly world have been here, and have told of God's plan of redemption for man.

“I now recollected that the apostle Paul, in the days of his ministry, often assured his hearers that ‘God created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ.’ (Ephesians iii. 9—11.) I now understood that those principalities and powers in heavenly places, are the inhabitants of other and distant worlds, to whom God intends fully to reveal himself by means of man’s redemption; that the church, that part of it now in heaven, is employed in this great work; and that the countless multitudes of rational beings who inhabit the wide universe are to bow the knee and render adorations to the incarnate Messiah.

“It was now plain that most of the saints on earth ‘see through a glass darkly’ with respect to the condition of those who have died in the Lord. Many suppose that the saints who have gone to heaven are merely employed in the enjoyment of the happiness there, singing anthems of praise to Jehovah, and rejoicing in his redemption. I had often wondered myself at the ways of Providence toward the church below. When I saw *Jonathan Edwards* called away in the prime of life, and *Larned* plucked from his pulpit in New Orleans at the age of twenty-eight; when I saw *Cornelius* called away at the age of thirty-eight, *Wisner* at forty, and many other similar cases, I have wondered why those whose labors were so much in demand in the church below, should be so early removed. But now I could comprehend it all. I now saw that important services await the soldier of the cross when called to go

up higher in the grand army; and that while the church below is engaged in missions, sending out her sons to the dark corners of the earth to make known the tidings of salvation, that part of the church which is in heaven is engaged in missions also, on a larger scale, and her sons are dispersed abroad through the wide creation, making known to principalities and powers in heavenly places the manifold wisdom of God."

At this point Lucifer paused, for there were strange commotions in the assembly of his auditors. Here and there among the fallen cherubim was a countenance singularly blank. Others stood aghast. Some, with open hand behind the ear, were leaning forward to catch every word that fell from the lips of their chief; others had unconsciously risen to their feet, and appeared writhing in the agonies of bitter vexation; while from all parts of the hall arose a confused and jarring sound, like murmurs mingled with gnashing of teeth.

"You are greatly troubled," continued Lucifer. "I knew it would be so. But I have shared deeply in the bitterness and mortification which you now endure. I frankly declare that no event during the period of the patriarchs, the prophets, or the apostles, inflicted on my spirit such deep anguish. True it is, I was greatly grieved when the tribes of Israel succeeded in passing the wilderness and entered Canaan. I was greatly grieved when the captive Jews, under Ezra and Nehemiah, returned from Babylon and rebuilt the city and their temple. I was greatly grieved, when, under the preaching of Peter, thousands of my subjects deserted in a day, and became believers in the gospel. But the discoveries now made of the extended preparations, that

are in progress, to have the inhabitants of distant worlds become acquainted with the plan of man's redemption, and bow the knee and honor the Lamb that was slain, rent my heart with intolerable vexation and enormous woe, exceeding all that I have endured since the direful day when our routed legions, scorched by the red lightning of the Eternal, were forced from heaven's utmost verge to take the dreadful plunge into the burning lake."

Here Lucifer paused again. The tide of maddening recollections choked his utterance. In a moment or two, however, he mastered his emotions, and proceeded.

"The unconquered spirit never yields. Hate, revenge, and despair are our leaders in this unequal war. I determined to prosecute my original design with all possible vigor.

"Accordingly I left the neighborhood of this remarkable monument, to seek access to some of the inhabitants. I was careful to have my whole exterior transformed into the likeness of some spotless angel. The face of the country over which I now travelled had every variety of hill, and dale, and mountain peak. Here was the extended velvet lawn, adorned with flowers of every hue, that seemed to possess perpetual bloom. There was the bright stream that meandered and murmured along, and there was the craggy steep, towering aloft, its summit crowned with the stately grove, whose branches, bending with the richest fruit, swung and bowed in obedience to the breezes of heaven, while all around teemed with active life. Insects were busy among the flowers, flocks and herds were grazing and bounding over the fields, birds filled the groves with the sweetest melody,

while the dumb fish leaped up from the stream, rejoicing in the consciousness of a happy existence.

“I had not proceeded far before an assembled multitude of the inhabitants caught my eye. They were collected in an extended grove, the trees of which resembled the palm of Palestine. The number already on the ground was great, and new accessions were constantly arriving. It seemed that valley, hill, and mountain top were pouring in their contributions. It was evidently an occasion of extraordinary interest. I joined the crowd unobserved, and pressed in to learn the design of their meeting; when, lo! on an elevated platform, in the midst of the assembly, arose the glorified person of the first Adam—the father of the human race. I had not seen him for near five thousand years, and though in many respects he was greatly changed, yet there was such an essential sameness, that I recognized him at once.

“The sight of this man, at this unexpected point of time and place, waked up vivid recollections of the memorable scenes through which he passed soon after his creation. When I first succeeded in tempting Adam to transgress the commandments of God, I expected to see him smitten immediately by the avenging sword of divine wrath. I had no thought but that sin would be instantly followed by threatened punishment. With this expectation I waited in the bowers of Eden, impatient to witness the result. Adam and his wife were now abandoned by their heavenly guardians, for the ministering angels had all fled from Paradise on the first entrance of sin. I saw the two fallen beings sewing fig leaves together in order to cover their naked

bodies. Presently the voice of the Lord was heard walking in the garden. Terror seized them. They fled, and endeavored to hide themselves among the thick trees. I thought they would have sunk into the earth when that terrible call rung in their ears, 'Adam, where art thou?'

"Pale, trembling, covered with confusion and shame, I saw him come from his place of concealment, and stand before the Judge of all the earth. A gloom that was awful seemed gathering over the entire garden. Every moment I expected to hear the irrevocable doom pronounced; when suddenly a light of celestial mildness and beauty came streaming, it seemed, from the very throne above, and a heavenly voice, in tones of unparalleled tenderness and benignity, uttered that first promise, that Messiah should come, and man should be restored, and the head of the serpent bruised. The meaning of this promise I but imperfectly comprehended at the time; though I felt the stunning power of huge disappointment, and dreaded what that promise seemed to imply. After a moment or two, I glanced my eye towards Adam, and distinctly saw in his visage the kindlings of hope coming up over the brow of despair; while Eve, who had sunk to the ground by his side, now lifted up her eyes, that were bathed in tears, with a look of astonishment and joy, and stretching her arms toward heaven, exclaimed, 'Redemption! redemption!' But I will not dwell on these recollections now."

CHAPTER III.

A D A M .

“IN the midst of the vast assembly,” said Lucifer, “which I have described, the glorified form of Adam now stood. As soon as he rose, the mighty congregation was composed and still. Every eye and ear were attentive.

“‘I stand before you,’ said he, ‘a missionary from the church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven. I came to make known to you the manifold goodness of God, as disclosed in his dealings with man.’ The language in which he spoke was that first used in Paradise, the gift of God to man at his creation, and it appeared to be fully understood by the audience which he now addressed.

“Adam now went on to describe the primitive state of man, how he was made in the image of God, and ‘but a little lower than the angels.’ He spoke of the beauties of Eden in the liveliest terms; of the benediction of God, that rested so richly on this first-dwelling-place of man; told of the serenity and innocence that reigned in his own bosom; and how the friendly angels came on frequent visits to his bower, rejoicing in those new-made works of God, and delighting him with the rehearsal of heavenly scenes and heavenly history.

“Here he asked leave to rehearse the favorite anthem that he used to sing in Paradise in the worship of Jehovah. I shall not attempt to repeat it now. But its effect on the audience was powerful; and it reminded me of those early songs in the world above, while cherubim and seraphim as yet were young, and celebrated the honors of the Author of their being.

“At this point, Adam made a deep pause, and seemed reluctant to proceed. At length he smote upon his breast, and entered upon the narrative of his fall. He described the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; spoke of the serpent and the manner of the temptation, but took the blame and guilt of his rebellion wholly on himself. He then told of the gradual unfolding of the plan of redemption. He rehearsed the first promise; described the altars erected by the divine command; told of the blood of the victims sprinkled there; and how, while the sacrifice was burning on the altar, and the smoke ascending high, the pious worshipper stood and prayed for the forgiveness of his sins through the great atonement thus typically set forth.”

At this moment, a Demon started up in a distant part of the assembly, and asked leave to make an inquiry. The form of his visage was peculiarly fierce and stern. Destruction seemed imprinted on his brow, and his hands and the whole length of his arms had a strange bloody hue, the sight of which caused the hair to rise on my head, and sent a chill of horror that quivered through every vein; while in his eye there was a wrathful fiery flash, which gave assurance that this was the Demon of Murder.

"I wish to ask," said he, "if your majesty saw Abel in company with his father, Adam."

"Abel," said Lucifer, "no: I did not see Abel. Why do you inquire for Abel?"

"Because," said the Demon, "it was through my influence and instigation that Abel was killed by Cain, his brother."

"Mention the circumstances, if you wish," said Lucifer.

"No instance of death," said the Demon, "had as yet taken place in Adam's family. I had no idea of the immortality of the soul, or that it could exist separate from the body. I had seen beasts die of disease. I had also seen them killed by the wolf, the tiger, and the lion. And I thought that death to man would be annihilation, as to the beasts that perish. And I felt the unfoldings of a new malignant delight at the thought of blotting men out of existence, and plunging them forever into the gulf of annihilation. Accordingly, when I saw Cain incensed and furious because his brother's offering was accepted, while his own was not, I urged him to take vengeance for the imaginary wrong he had sustained, by falling on Abel with violence and beating him to death. But judge of my disappointment and surprise, when instantly after the fatal blow was given, I beheld the spirit of Abel strangely disengage itself from the body now in ruins, and stand up, possessed of a holy and happy existence in a separate state. The robe in which he was now arrayed was exceedingly beautiful, but at the same time essentially unlike any thing I had ever seen before. I afterwards learned that it was the robe of the Re-

deemer's righteousness, of whom his accepted sacrifice was a type, and could be worn by none but the redeemed from the earth. He was immediately surrounded by ministering angels, many of whom I had seen and known in heaven, before heaven by us was lost. I soon learned from their conversation, that they had come to carry the ransomed spirit of Abel up to live with God in glory.

“As they began to rise from the earth, the spirit of Abel appeared to be transported with joy unspeakable and full of glory. He commenced singing a new song. It was the song of redemption. The ministering angels, to whom also it was perfectly new, listened in silent, deep attention, while his single voice hymned the notes of victory over sin, and death, and hell, through the promised Messiah. Stung with disappointment and rage, I determined to the utmost to resist his upward flight. I put on the form of a huge, hideous night-raven, and set out in the pursuit. Sometimes, as they ascended, I pressed close upon their train, with such harsh, horrible croaking as I had learned in bottomless perdition. Sometimes, in dark irregular circles I fluttered round them, and then again shot ahead, and flapped my black enormous wings right in their pathway; but nothing could impede his upward progress. He seemed borne along by an invisible, resistless power. I persisted in my efforts at annoyance until we began to approach the celestial city. But when I saw the gate of glory open, and the light ineffable came streaming from within, and especially when I began to hear the anthems of the happy multitudes around the throne, I paused in the pursuit,

and wheeled in the opposite direction. Such bitter recollections were waked up of all that had been lost by our rebellion, that, like a burning meteor flashing out the fires of vexation and despair, I shot down the steeps of night, and plunged into the darkness and the depths of hell."

Here one of the chiefs of the assembly spoke. "Is it the pleasure of your majesty to be interrupted thus in your narrative?"

"It is," said Lucifer, with much firmness of manner. "It is my pleasure that all the members of this council shall exercise the utmost freedom in propounding a question or introducing a remark. The fact is, I have called this meeting for the edification and training of my associates in the war against heaven. We are entering upon a new era. The great contest between light and darkness is about to put on a new aspect. Since the dispersion of man from the tower of Babel, large bodies of the hosts of hell have been employed, almost exclusively, in heathen lands. Their employment has been in promoting and extending idolatry, and encouraging those forms of wickedness that are practised in heathen nations. They have had little or no experience in combating the church, or resisting the advances of revealed truth. But now the Bible is going every where. The missionary, the Sabbath, the church, are finding their way among all nations.

"All the powers of darkness must now come in contact with the church, and it is my plan to have them properly disciplined and prepared for this mighty conflict. While, therefore, I relate what I have been doing,

it is my design that all my coadjutors who have, in ages past, had conflicts with patriarchs, prophets, apostles, or the church of God in any of its branches, shall relate their experience too, for the general instruction of the armies of hell, in the warfare in which all must soon engage. My design is, that facts shall be communicated in a manner that is clear, calm, and accurate. Fallen angels are all leagued in one cause. We have no motive to deceive each other, though we practise deception on men. I wish facts to be understood by all.

“The skilful advocate who undertakes to manage a cause that is dark and difficult, wishes first to know the real *facts* of the case, without coloring; then he knows how to employ his talents.

“I wish all the hosts of hell to know the truth, that they may be the better able to disguise the truth; to counterfeit the truth; to war against the truth.”

Here the members of the great council looked one upon another, bowing, and signifying their cordial acquiescence, while the demon who had just spoken addressed the chief:—

“Your majesty’s plan is profoundly wise, and worthy of its author; but we are impatient to hear your narrative; and for this cause I asked the question.”

“I will proceed, then,” said Lucifer, “without delay. In the address of Adam, of which I was speaking, there were several items which I wish to relate to you. He told how the pestilence of sin spread among all his descendants; how, without exception, they went astray from God ‘as soon as they were born.’ He went on to describe the setting up of the terrible empire of death,

and the legion of diseases that are in league with him. He told of fever, consumption, and the spotted plague. He spoke of red-handed war, gaunt famine, 'the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and the destruction that wasteth at noonday.' He drew a picture of the monster Death, mounted on his pale horse, marshalling the dreadful armies under his command; while his progress through the terrified and trembling earth might be traced by the shroud, the new-made coffin, and the yawning grave, and the sound that accompanied his going, like the inscription on the roll that the prophet saw, was 'lamentation, mourning, and woe.'

"'Death reigned,' he exclaimed, 'from Adam to Moses, and from Moses to the time of Christ. No tyrant of earth ever swayed the sceptre over such a multitude of subjects. Smiling infancy, blooming youth, stately manhood, and venerable age, were all forced to bow to his awful supremacy. He found his way into the cottages of the poor, the habitations of the careful, and the palaces of the great. The monarch on his throne, and the prisoner in the dungeon, alike shrunk back at his approach. He was to my fallen family the *King of Terrors*. "O Death! Death! how dark and how gloomy, how unpitiful and relentless, is thy tremendous sway!"' Here Adam paused in his address. His emotions were too strong for utterance. After a moment or two, however, he continued thus:—

"'Long did I look, with most earnest expectation, for the coming of the promised Messiah. Century after century rolled by, while I waited for his appearing. But God's ways are above the ways of man, as the heavens are higher than the earth.'"

Here one of the princes of the assembly arose to make an inquiry. Lucifer paused, that he might speak.

“I wished to inquire,” said the prince, “whether Adam confirmed the opinion, that at the birth of his eldest son, the parents thought he was the promised Messiah. You know that the language of Eve, when Cain was born, ‘I have gotten a man from the Lord,’ or, as it is in the Hebrew, ‘I have gotten a man, the Lord,’ has led many to suppose that she thought this was the promised Savior.”

“Adam did not touch that subject now,” answered Lucifer; “but I remember the circumstance exceedingly well. Eve had been powerfully impressed with the first great promise. Her thoughts were daily, indeed I may say hourly, engaged in searching out its import. ‘The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head,’ was the theme of her meditation from month to month. And when her eldest son was born, she gazed with wonder and joy on this immortal man in miniature. Her hopes were indeed very high; how high they soared I cannot exactly say; but when Cain, by rude and wicked conduct, disappointed her, and she found her hopes were vain, she called her next son Abel, signifying vanity, or disappointment. But Adam said nothing on the subject now.”

“I wished also to inquire,” said the prince, “if Adam spoke of the translation of Enoch.”

“He did,” said Lucifer, “with much point and clearness, though it took place after Adam’s removal from earth. But the event was witnessed by all the redeemed.”

“I am anxious to know,” said the prince, “what reasons he gave for that strange dispensation.”

“He mentioned,” said Lucifer, “that three great objects were accomplished by the translation of Enoch at that time.

“1st. It established, in the view of men, the doctrine of a future state. Enoch was pious, eminently pious, in the midst of a crooked and perverse world. His translation was public. It took place in the presence of an immense congregation, and showed them that man is a candidate for another world; that his existence does not end with his life on earth.

“2d. As Enoch was taken, soul and body united, to the world of glory, it established the doctrine that there is redemption for the *body* as well as the soul through the Messiah. Thus the hope of a resurrection was brought to view at that early day. And,

“3d. He said that the translation of Enoch was designed to give the angels in heaven one perfect *sample* of redeemed humanity. The angels desired to look into the work of redemption. They were appointed to be ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation; and yet they could ‘see but in part, and know but in part,’ what God designed in reference to man. By the taking of Enoch, soul and body, to glory, and the placing of him in the very midst of the Paradise of God, at this early day, all the holy angels had a beautiful *sample* of perfect redemption set before them, and they could now form correct anticipations of what the Redeemer’s kingdom shall be, when, from all kindreds and people under heaven, multitudes, which no man can number, shall be brought home to God. Such,” said Lucifer, “was the statement given by Adam concerning the design of Enoch’s translation.”

The prince who had asked the question bowed, and resumed his seat, as if satisfied with the answer ; and Lucifer resumed his rehearsal of Adam's address.

“ ‘Yes,’ said Adam, ‘God’s ways are above our ways, as the heavens are higher than the earth. Having waited long for the coming of the Messiah, my protracted life, at length, drew to a close, and I was called to leave earth and join the general assembly of the church of the first born in heaven. After my reception into heaven, I still waited, with the liveliest interest, for the accomplishment of the great promise. The saints in heaven, the great cloud of witnesses, have much intercourse with earth. They see and know with perfect accuracy all that is transacting there. And while the pestilence of sin was spreading through the world, with the spreading population, and while that fell destroyer, Death, was turning the earth into one vast graveyard for my fallen family, O, with what intense desire did I look for the appearance of that strong Deliverer, who should conquer sin, and death, and hell ! In the mean time, the ministering angels were bringing up from earth to the world of glory the ransomed souls of patriarchs, and prophets, and holy men who had believed the promise of God, and lived and died in the faith of the coming Messiah.

“ ‘The circle of worshippers,’ continued Adam, ‘around the divine throne, who stood on the great platform of the atonement, and were arrayed in the robes of a Redeemer’s righteousness, now contained a multitude which no man could number ; but our title to heaven was not yet complete, for the great atonement was not yet made. We had been pardoned and

taken to glory, in virtue of the covenant engagement of the Son of God, that he would magnify and honor the broken law, and atone for sin in the fulness of time ; but it was not given to us to know the times and the seasons, and the stupendous work had not yet been done. The immortal interest, therefore, on this great subject, that pervaded the whole multitude of the redeemed, can be more easily conceived than told.

“ ‘ And now,’ said he, ‘ four thousand years had been completed since the entrance of sin and death into the world ; when, lo ! the proclamation is made in heaven that the great Emanuel was about to put on the form of a servant, and finish the work the Father had given him to do. And *that day*, when he laid aside his robes of glory, and the bright crown he wore above, and descended to earth, to save them that were lost, O, *that day*, —it will be celebrated in the world of glory, as a high anniversary through eternal years.

“ ‘ In the plenitude of God’s abounding mercy, I was commissioned to be the bearer of the joyful news to earth. Yes, it was divinely appointed that the first Adam, who had lost all by sin, should be the messenger to inform his perishing children of the arrival of the second Adam, to repair the ruins of the fall. I did not go alone ; all the redeemed from the earth, that were now in glory, were directed to accompany me.

“ ‘ It was in Bethlehem of Judea that the Savior had chosen first to appear. There were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night. I approached in the form of an angel of the Lord, and the glory of the Lord shone all around them. They were afraid. I called to them, “ Fear not, for, behold, I

bring to you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people ; for unto us* is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." No sooner had I made this blessed proclamation, than all the multitude of the redeemed came clustering round me, singing, with celestial rapture, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men." " "

Here, a demon suddenly started up, whose name I could not learn ; but he seemed one of the principal personages of the council, and, interrupting Lucifer, he exclaimed, with a fluttered and troubled air, —

"How? How do you say? Why, I was present on that night. I heard the announcement made to the shepherds of Bethlehem. I saw the messenger. He was indeed very glorious. But I thought certainly this was one of the heavenly angels, who kept their first estate, and whose original brightness had never been sullied or eclipsed by sin. Did your majesty say that this radiant messenger, who came to the shepherds in the very effulgence of heaven itself, was the redeemed soul of the first Adam?"

Lucifer. Such was his statement.

Demon. And the shining multitude of the heavenly host, that clustered around him and sung rapturous anthems to God, did you say it was composed of patriarchs and prophets, and holy men of Adam's race, who had died in faith, and were already in glory?

Lucifer. So he said.

* In some old manuscripts of the Gospel by Luke, the language of the angel is, "unto us," instead of "unto you," as in common copies. This led some of the fathers to suppose that this angel was a glorified human soul, and likely the first Adam. (Luko ii. 8—14.)

Demon. Confusion, frustration, and defeat attend us! Why, it appears that Adam and all his descendants, who have believed in Christ, are raised, by his redemption, to a station far more exalted, safe, and happy, than that which he lost in Paradise.

Lucifer. It looks like it.

Demon. And their anthem plainly implied that the plan of redemption through Christ, while it brings peace and good will to man, at the same time brings the highest glory to God.

Lucifer. It did.

“Precisely so!” cried a loud, excited voice from a distant part of the assembly; but I could not see the speaker. “Precisely so it is understood by the church on earth. So they preach, so they pray, and so they sing. Often have I heard the assembled congregation, in the sanctuary, join all their voices to swell the strain of praise in the seventy-second Psalm, where that doctrine is plainly taught. And I have marked the peculiar animation with which they would sing the following stanza, referring to the kingdom of Christ:—

“Where he displays his healing power,
Death and the curse are known no more;
In him the tribes of Adam boast
More blessings than their father lost.”

“Confusion, frustration, and defeat!” exclaimed the demon.

“Why,” said he, turning to Lucifer, “when your majesty returned from Eden, and brought us the news that the temptation had succeeded, and man had fallen into sin, all hell kept jubilee. We calculated of a surety that God was over-matched and grievously disappointed.

and that man was ruined beyond remedy. O, that ancient oracle! I always feared it contained some terrible import. *Bruise the serpent's head.* Bruised, indeed, should it turn out, in the end, that Jehovah, by redemption, is more glorified, and believers raised higher in knowledge, holiness, and happiness, than if man in primitive innocency had never been assailed by the malignant devices of an apostate angel."

Here he stopped short, for the whole frame of Lucifer was agitated and convulsed with the most violent emotions. Shame, madness, horror, alternately stared through his visage. He stamped furiously on the ground, and, wielding his enormous arm, with the speed of lightning he smote the rocky vault of the cavern a blow which caused the entire mountain to reel and rock on its deep foundations. The paroxysm, however, was brief. In a very few moments, he had entirely regained his composure, and proceeded in his narrative.

"Adam," said he, "next went on to rehearse the living interest with which the disembodied saints hung over the pathway of the Redeemer as he carried forward the mighty work of redemption. He spoke of his example, his preaching, his miracles. He dwelt at considerable length on the resurrection of Lazarus, and the circumstances of Christ's transfiguration. On this last subject he remarked, that the depth of Messiah's humiliation was so wonderful that eminent saints on earth were astonished, and their faith wavered.

"John the Baptist, one of the wisest and best of men, was so affected by the lowly condition of his Master, that he sent two of his disciples, and asked

him, 'Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?'

"Nor was this amazement at the deep things of God confined to the earth. The great company of the redeemed on high were filled with astonishment and solicitude, when they saw that the stupendous work of their eternal redemption depended on one now in the form of a servant ; a man of sorrows, despised and rejected of men. Well was it known that, should the Mediator fail to meet the claims of divine justice at the awful hour appointed, their title to heaven and glory failed forever. When the period drew nigh, there was deep and earnest consultation among all the patriarchs, the prophets, and the ransomed souls in glory. It was determined to send a delegation of their own body down to converse with Christ concerning his death which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. Moses and Elias were chosen for this important mission. (Luke ix. 28—31.) They descended to earth, and appeared in glory to Christ and his disciples, on the mount of transfiguration. There, in terms of heavenly eloquence, they presented to the Redeemer the immortal interest that thrilled all the multitude of the redeemed, in view of the scenes of suffering on which he was soon to enter. 'This interview with Moses and Elias,' said Adam, 'was vastly important in its connection.' But when he came to speak of the scene in Gethsemane, he made some things plain which I had never understood before. The evangelist Luke, in describing the sufferings of the Redeemer, mentions, that while in the garden, when his soul was in an agony, and his sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground,

there 'appeared an angel from heaven strengthening him.'" (Luke xxii. 43.)

"Strengthening him! strengthening him!" ejaculated a tall, fierce-looking spirit of darkness, who now stepped forward in front of the speaker. I understood that he was one who had been chiefly employed among the heathen tribes, ever since the dispersion of man from the tower of Babel, and that in no age of the world had he been much in contact with the church of God. "Strengthening him!" he repeated, with an air at once resolute and inquiring: "why, I thought that the Redeemer was *divine*. How, then, could a created angel *strengthen* him?"

Lucifer. That passage has been thought by many commentators to be very difficult. And some of the early fathers thought it dishonorable to Christ, and supposed it must be an interpolation of some unskilful transcriber of the Gospels at an early day. They were consequently disposed to have it expunged from the copies of the New Testament. But I assure you, Adam set it in a light that was plain and powerful.

"How?" "How?" "How?" was now eagerly called out, from every part of the assembly. "We should be glad to hear what consistent explanation could be given of such a passage."

"Well," said *Lucifer*, "he stated that the Messiah had a true and proper *humanity*, as well as a true and proper divinity. He said, 'Such are the laws of the human mind, that it is deeply affected by important truth, when brought clearly and closely before it. Thus the general at the head of an army, though he is aware that perhaps every soldier under his com-

mand has a general knowledge of the causes of the war, yet on the eve of battle he makes them an earnest and eloquent address, that each man may go into the engagement, with the motives to valor and to victory fully before his mind. Thus also the minister of the gospel holds up its everlasting truths before the minds of his hearers; that truth may produce its impression, though he is aware that to many of his hearers those things are well known, and have been heard before perhaps a thousand times. Now,' he observed, 'the humanity of Christ was in many respects like other men.' He illustrated it thus: 'Christ knew that Lazarus was dead four days before he came to Bethany. But when he arrived there, and saw Martha weeping, and Mary weeping, and the large circle of friends around them weeping, "*Jesus wept.*" His humanity was deeply affected by the mournful insignia of death brought thus impressively before him. 'Now,' said Adam, 'when the Mediator in the garden stood in room of guilty man, the flood-gates of God's fearful displeasure against sin were opened upon him. The tide of his sufferings comes stronger and heavier. Billow after billow of fiery wrath rolled over him, while on the top of Sinai stood eternal Justice, flaming with indignation against sin, hurling ten thousand thunders on his spotless soul.

' "He " was in agony." He offered up "strong cries and tears." "His soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." His humanity was like to be crushed under the tremendous load. It was now he was approached by a mighty angel, one of the princes of a great hierarchy in heaven. That angel held up before his

humanity, how the wisdom and truth, the mercy and justice, of God would be glorified in the highest by the sorrows which now he bore ; how all the saints already in glory would have their title to heaven made good forever by his atonement ; how liberty to the captive, and life from the dead, would be preached in his name to the generations of men, as long as the sun and moon shall endure ; how the city of God would be peopled with ransomed multitudes, which no man can number, wearing crowns of life, and waving palms of victory ; how the new song of redeeming grace and dying love would transcend all the anthems of the heavenly world ; how the glory of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, would be spread over the plains of eternity, and the whole creation would ascribe hosannas and hallelujahs to the Lamb that was slain, through interminable ages. Now, by the contemplation of these immortal truths, in that dark and dreadful hour, his humanity was *strengthened*, and “for the joy that was set before him,” (Heb. xii. 2,) he endured those weighty sorrows that would have crushed a thousand worlds.’”

Here Lucifer made a deep pause. The spirits of darkness looked one upon another in profound silence. There was an anxious and troubled agitation in every countenance ; but their lips appeared to be sealed, and their tongues to cleave to the roof of their mouths. After the lapse of four or five minutes, it was asked by one, in a low and subdued tone of voice, —

“Did Adam speak of Calvary?”

“Speak of Calvary!” said Lucifer: “surely he did ; and his speech fully convinced me that the departed saints, who were so deeply concerned in the work the

Mediator was now accomplishing, were constant and earnest spectators during his whole earthly history. Yes, he spoke of Judas, of Herod, and of Pilate, and the scenes in the hall of the Jewish high priest."

"Of Judas! of Judas!" was now called out from every part of the assembly. "Tell us what view he gave of the character of Judas."

"The character of Judas," continued Lucifer, "has long been a fruitful source of debate in the church on earth, and the most prying and penetrating of the fallen angels have never been able to discover why it was that Christ took such a man into his family, and had him numbered with the twelve disciples."

CHAPTER IV.

ADAM.

THE chief seemed reluctant to proceed, and the changing shades of powerful conflicting emotions appeared and disappeared in his strongly-marked countenance.

"Tell us of Judas," was again earnestly demanded.

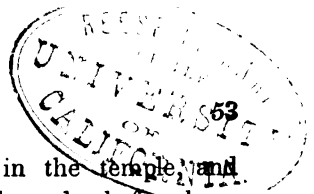
"Well," said the chief, "Adam declared that God, and God only, can search the heart; that the veil of hypocrisy is of such a texture that it cannot, in certain cases, be penetrated by the eye of man, angel, or devil. It is penetrated in all cases alone by the eye of the omniscient God. He claims it as his high prerogative: 'I, the Lord, search the hearts of the children of men.' 'Now,' said he, 'the character of Judas, when Christ called him, and during the time he was among the disciples, can only be known with certainty from Christ's testimony concerning him. He knew all men. He knew what was in man. Now, the unvarying testimony of Christ is, that Judas was a bad man. When he washed the disciples' feet, he said "Ye are not all clean," and he spoke in reference to Judas. When Judas murmured about the waste of ointment, because the woman anointed Christ, alleging that it should have been sold, and the money given to the poor, the inspired word

affirms, "he cared not for the poor." He was without that benevolence that is essential to true piety; and that same inspired word asserts in that connection that he "was a thief." At another time, Christ says to his disciples, "Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" (John vi. 70; xii. 6.)

"At this point in Adam's address," said Lucifer, "one of the mighty congregation arose, and wished to propound an inquiry. He was a tall and splendid form. In his countenance were the beamings of a soul that had long been making advances in knowledge, holiness, and happiness. There was there not the slightest trace of anxious care, or vexation, or any of that long train of woes that have followed in the footsteps of sin. But there sat upon his broad, expansive brow an unruffled and perpetual serenity, clearly denoting one who had been a dutiful son in the family of God from the birthday of his being. The question he proposed to Adam was this:—

"'Why did the Redeemer admit into his immediate family—even in the number of those whom he had chosen to be with him—such a man as Judas, when he knew him so well?'

"This was Adam's reply: 'It was the design of God to spread before the world the most ample proof of the character and works of Christ. He intended to record on the pages of inspiration the fullest testimony of both friends and enemies to the reality of his miracles and the purity of his life. That record he meant to send round the earth, and down the tide of time to the end of the world. Now, for this purpose, Christ showed himself openly to the world. He walked



in Solomon's porch; he taught in the temple, and performed many of his wonderful works before hundreds of his sharp-sighted and fault-finding enemies. Now, it is plain, that had the miracles of Christ been witnessed only by his friends, the modern sceptic would say, "It is true the friends of the Redeemer say he wrought miracles, and such miracles as fully proved his divine mission; but who ever saw them, except his particular friends? and they were partial, and even interested in putting the most favorable construction on them. Why did he not do his mighty works before those who were impartial?" Such would have been the cavillings of modern infidelity. There it would have taken refuge, and from that lurking-place it would have been difficult to dislodge it.

"But how stands the matter now. Jewish rulers, men of great learning and influence, admit the reality and grandeur of his miracles. "No man can do the miracles which thou doest, except God be with him." They acknowledged the resurrection of Lazarus; and in a very notable case, the man that was born blind, was brought into the Jewish high court, and catechized and cross-questioned by the Jewish lawyers and doctors, intensely eager to find some flaw, or plausible objection, but they could make nothing out of it. The man had been born blind, and Christ had opened his eyes. Then having already passed an ordinance, "that if any man did confess that Jesus was the Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue," they sent for his father and mother, and under the terror of that ordinance, tried to frighten them into a denial that this was their son, or that he was born blind. But this scheme also failed,

and *enemies*, as well as friends, had to acknowledge that a notable miracle had been done by him. Now,' said Adam, 'the fact that the miracles of Christ were admitted by the leading men of the Jewish nation, and that bitter infidels confessed that Christ did heal the sick, give sight to the blind, and raise the dead, has been of immense service in all ages of the church, in confuting the cavils of unbelievers. But,' said he, 'every man has a *private* character, as well as a character that is public; often the public character of a man may be good; he may be very popular, while his private character may be very bad; now, it was the will of God that there should be competent and credible witnesses to the private life, as well as the public works, of the Savior.

“ ‘For this purpose he “chose twelve to be with him,” when he was withdrawn from the multitude. These were with him by day and by night, on the sea and on the land, in the city and in the desert. Had these twelve all been the firm and faithful friends of Christ, the infidel, in after ages, would have objected, that the whole private walk and conversation of the Redeemer was only inspected by those who were interested in giving the most favorable account to the world; and though there might have been in the conduct of Christ, when retired from the public eye, many things inconsistent with his claim to Messiahship, yet none could witness these things except his particular friends, and they, of course, would conceal them.

“ ‘But behold the wisdom of God,’ said Adam, ‘that every mouth might be stopped, Christ, when selecting the twelve witnesses that were to be with him, took one

who was not a believer ; ‘for Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him ;’ one who “cared not for the poor ;” one who was a “thief ;” one who, in temper and spirit, was a “devil.” This man was admitted to the most familiar acquaintance with Christ and his disciples, and became a member of the family. He sees all and hears all that takes place between Christ and his disciples when they are retired from the public eye ; knows all the secrets of the family, so to speak ; and then, at last, by his avarice, is brought into circumstances where he has the strongest motives to divulge all that he knows against Christ. Could Judas have shown that there was a plot between Christ and his disciples to palm a false religion on the world, or that there was any thing in the private life of Christ inconsistent with his professions of Messiahship, it would have mitigated his guilt in deserting his Master. How powerful, then, is his testimony to the purity of the Redeemer’s life, when, in the solemn circumstances in which he stood, he declared, “I have sinned ! I have betrayed innocent blood !” ’

“The same inquirer here asked Adam, ‘Did Judas expect his Master would be put to death, when he betrayed him ?’

“‘Judas,’ replied Adam, ‘had not looked so far ahead. He was an avaricious man. The thirty pieces of silver were the great object : beyond that he had made little calculation. But when he had received his bribe, and had rejoiced over it for a time, the tidings came that Christ was condemned to be cruci-

fied. At hearing this, the conscience of Judas started up like a terrified and tortured spectre.

“‘Now,’ said Adam, ‘observe, that beforehand, speaking after the manner of men, the *crucifixion* of Christ was one of the most unlikely events that could be imagined; every probability was against it. Crucifixion was a mode of punishment unknown to the Jews until after they had come under the government of the Romans. Stoning to death was the mode in which the Jews, from the time of Moses, had been accustomed to punish malefactors. Now, the likelihood was a hundred to one that, should the envy and malice of the Jews against Christ rise so high as to make an attempt on his life, it would be by stoning, as Stephen was afterwards put to death by that infuriated mob. But that one so harmless and unblamable in his life should be regularly accused before a Roman court, formally condemned by a Roman judge, and crucified according to the forms of Roman law — every probability was against it. And yet Christ had repeatedly and plainly foretold to his disciples that he should be *crucified*. Now, Judas rested well satisfied with his ill-gotten gain, till a messenger came and told him Christ was condemned to be crucified. At once his reflections were waked up. He thought of the spotless innocence of that Lord and Master he had betrayed; he remembered the benignity, kindness, and grace that shone through all his life; he remembered also his plain prediction, “The Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified;” and the terrible words, “woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed!” Judas sprang to

his feet, seized the fatal bribe, and ran to find those who had tempted him. His alarmed conscience, armed with ten thousand lightnings, flashed insufferable terrors upon him at every step. Into the hall among the assembled rulers he rushed; in his eyes was depicted amazing anguish; and he exclaimed, —

“ ‘Scribes, Pharisees, Jewish rulers! Stop! stop! This is horrible work. My Master is innocent! I have sinned! I have betrayed innocent blood! Here is your money! I have brought it back! Stop! Take your money again, and go no further in this awful work.’ ”

“ ‘They turned to him scornfully. “Degraded wretch, would you control and direct us? If you have betrayed innocent blood, what is that to us. It is your own lookout. Depart! Molest us not.”’ ”

“ ‘Judas, finding his influence with them gone, his presence and counsel despised, dashed the detested thirty pieces of silver down on the pavement, and in the ravings of despair ran to the rope and the gallows, and vainly endeavored, by rushing out of life, to escape from the intolerable anguish that had fastened on his guilty soul. (Matt. xxvii. 3—5.)’ ”

“ ‘Such,’ said Adam, ‘was Judas, and such was the testimony of Judas to the purity and spotless character of the Mediator’s life. The weight of this testimony is tremendous; for it is the testimony of an enemy — one who had the strongest motives to speak otherwise, had his awakened conscience allowed him. And such,’ he added, ‘was the design of Christ, in taking Judas into his family, that this testimony of an enemy might’ ”

be given to the world. Often has the scrutinizing infidel, when searching for objections against Christ, been staggered, stunned, and confounded, when he encountered the testimony of Judas. For he was constrained to see that nothing but the omnipotence of truth could have caused Judas, so circumstanced, to speak as he spoke of Christ, whom he had betrayed.' ”

CHAPTER V.

PILATE AND HEROD.

MOLOCH, the monster, "besmeared with blood of human sacrifice," now stood up in the assembly.

"Your majesty," said he, "mentioned that Adam rehearsed the conduct of Pilate, and the scenes of Calvary: would you be pleased to give us the substance of what he said?"

"He related," said Lucifer, "that the whole multitude of departed saints, though invisible to mortal eyes, were present, and beheld not only the Mediator's agony in the garden, but when he was betrayed into the hands of his enemies, they followed him to the hall of the Jewish high priest, and witnessed the insults and outrages that were perpetrated against him there. But when he came to speak of Pilate, his discourse was powerful. Never since the death of the inspired apostles have I seen the conduct of that timid, time-serving judge so accurately portrayed.

"He mentioned that Pilate had been brought up a heathen, and in his early life, was unacquainted with the true religion. But he had now been at Jerusalem long enough to learn much of the character and works of Jesus Christ. He was there when the resurrection of Lazarus electrified the whole country, and was the

theme of inquiry, comment, and wonder, from one extremity of the land to the other. Pilate had seen the leper who had been cleansed by the power of Christ; the lame man he had healed; the dumb he had caused to speak; and the blind he had restored to sight. Opportunities were ample to learn much of the divine works and divine character of the Redeemer.

“It was at the early dawn of day, on the morning immediately after the betrayal of Christ by Judas, that Pilate was roused from his slumbers by a servant who entered his room, and told him that a vast concourse of the elders of the Jews, priests and pharisees, were crowded together in front of the judgment hall.

“‘What can be the meaning of all this?’ said Pilate, rising hastily, and arranging his dress. On going out to meet the multitude, he was addressed by the chief priest: ‘We have brought a malefactor before you for judgment.’

“‘Who is he?’ asked Pilate.

“‘Jesus of Nazareth,’ replied the priest.

“‘Jesus of Nazareth!’ exclaimed Pilate, greatly troubled at the announcement. He had already heard and known so much of the wonderful works of Jesus of Nazareth, that he shuddered at the thought of taking any hand himself in violent proceeding against him; and yet the number, respectability, and influence of this crowd, collected here at this unusual hour, and the determined earnestness of their manner, made it plain that he could not disappoint or disoblige them without great risk to his popularity. He cared but little what the Jews might do against Christ on their own responsibility, but he trembled at their demand that he, as

presiding judge, should share in the proceedings. And on the other hand, he was greatly solicitous to maintain his standing with the rulers of that people. Judea had but lately come under the Roman government, and Pilate thought it might be agreeable to them to have the claims of Rome set aside in this case, and be allowed to judge and condemn Christ in their own court. Thus the Jews would be gratified, and he would avoid having any personal agency in the condemnation of Christ. Pilate therefore said to the Jewish rulers, —

“‘Take him,’ and judge him according to your law.’
(John xviii. 31.)

“‘But,’ said the Jews, ‘it is not lawful for us to put any man to death. This is a capital offence. The man deserves to die. And all cases that touch the life of a man, must be brought before a Roman court.’

“‘I mean,’ said Pilate, ‘that as the representative of Rome, I will not urge her claims in this case. Take him, and judge him according to your law. Execute your pleasure. I’ll take no notice of it, even should you exceed your authority. I will pass it over in silence. But do not urge me to take any personal agency in the case.’

“‘No,’ said the Jewish rulers, ‘we are law-abiding men. We will not consent to act against the Roman law. You are here as the representative of Rome. We insist that you shall do your duty. We bring the case before you. We insist that you shall act.’

“Such was Pilate’s first attempt to avoid acting against Christ, and such was its success.”

At this Beelzebub rose, and observed, “There is a

remarkable statement in 32d verse of 18th chapter of John's Gospel:— it is this, that the Jews refused to accede to this proposal of Pilate, 'that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die.'"

"Certainly," said Lucifer, "it was just stated that the Jews put offenders to death by stoning. But Christ had foretold that he should be crucified. Had the Jews accepted Pilate's proposal, and put Christ to death according to their law, it would not have fulfilled the prediction of Christ."

"But," said Beelzebub, "was that their intention in refusing Pilate's proposal? Did they wish to fulfil the prediction of Christ?"

"Far from it," said Lucifer: "they had no such intention."

"What, then," said Beelzebub, "does the apostle mean? Or does he there teach that doctrine so terrible to all in hell, that there is a deep divine providence running through all the actions of men, and that even these infuriated Jews, when raving against Christ in the presence of Pilate, were controlled by an invisible hand that was higher than they. It is a doctrine I have dreaded for thousands of years. I never hear it but I tremble."

"That doctrine is as hateful to me as to you," answered Lucifer. "But I will go on with Adam's account of Pilate."

"He next stated, that when Pilate had questioned Christ of many things, he turned to his accusers, and said, 'I find no fault in this man.' On hearing this, they became exceedingly fierce, crying out, 'He stirreth

up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee unto this place.'

" 'Galilee?' said Pilate. 'Is the man, then, a Galilean?'

" 'Certainly,' said the Jews, 'he is a Galilean.' (Luke xxiii. 6, 7.)

" 'Then,' said Pilate, 'I have nothing to do with the matter, for Herod is governor of Galilee. The offence has been committed in his jurisdiction. Take him to Herod. He is now at Jerusalem.' Pilate was now confident he had discovered a method of ridding himself of the whole business, without offending the Jews. This was his second device, and he sent them to Herod.

" But Herod also had heard many things of Christ, and having suffered much remorse for his beheading of John the Baptist, he was now reluctant to have any hand in the condemnation of Christ. To gratify the Jewish rulers, who were clamorous and vehement in their accusations, Herod treated him with some marks of derision and disrespect, but would in no form signify that he thought him worthy of death; and thus he sent him again to Pilate. Herod was very artful. He and Pilate had been at variance, but this day they were made friends. Herod affected to understand the sending of the Jewish rulers with their prisoner to him, as a high token of respect and deference on the part of Pilate, and he would not be outdone in courtesy.

" 'I am honored and flattered by the attentions of the governor; but, at the same time, it is my duty to acknowledge him as the representative of the Roman power in this province. I am but a transient visitor

here, and far be it from me to interfere with the official duties of one so competent to fill the high station in which Cæsar has placed him. Go again to Pilate, with my respects and gratitude for his polite attentions.'

"On the return of the company to Pilate, he was in extreme perplexity. He had just received a message from his wife: it was this—'Have thou nothing to do with that just man, for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.' (Matt. xxvii. 19.)

"Pilate now resorted to a third device, by which he hoped to avoid giving sentence of death against Christ, and yet to retain the favor of the Jewish rulers. It was now the feast of the passover, in commemoration of their release from bondage in Egypt. It was the most noted anniversary observed by the Jews—the most joyful day to the nation in the whole revolving year. There was an old custom, with which they had long been familiar, that when they came up to Jerusalem, to the annual celebration of their release from bondage, some capital offender, whose life had been forfeited to the laws of the land, should be set at liberty, that he and his friends might add to the general joy. Similar customs have been found to exist among other nations in order to honor some high day. Pilate resolved to avail himself of this old and popular custom, in order to obtain their consent to the release of Jesus Christ. There was now at Jerusalem a notable prisoner, named Barabbas. (Matt. xxvii. 15—18.) He had been notorious as a robber, and recently had been concerned in an insurrection, and some flagrant cases of murder. Pilate thought that by constraining the Jewish rulers to make a choice between Christ and

Barabbas, they would, from a respect to their own character, call for the release of Jesus ; but in this he was wholly mistaken. The scribes and pharisees bestirred themselves among the fickle multitude, and persuaded them to vote for the release of Barabbas ; and presently Pilate was perfectly overwhelmed with loud and vehement outcries, demanding that Barabbas should be released, and that Christ should be crucified.

“ Trembling at the thought of sharing in the guilt of condemning a righteous person, Pilate now, as a *fourth* expedient, determined to make a strong appeal to the *conscience* of the Jewish rulers. He knew that they professed to be religious men, bound to obey the laws of God, and regarded themselves as accountable to God in the judgment of the great day for the deeds done in the body. He knew, also, that they were actuated by envy against Christ. He made, therefore, a powerful effort to wake up their conscience to the guilt of what they were now doing. He avers to them repeatedly, ‘ I find no fault in this man. Herod has found nothing worthy of death in this man. Come tell me yourselves, what evil hath he done ? ’ To this they only replied with boisterous outcries and violent demands for his death. Pilate, finding that he was like to be overborne by their tumultuous and unreasonable impetuosity, took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, ‘ I am innocent of the blood of this just person ; see ye to it. I publicly proclaim that I will have no share in the guilt of shedding his blood.’ (Matt. xxvii. 24, 25.)

“ But to the astonishment of Pilate, the Jewish rulers, instead of being shocked or appalled by this

view of the solemn subject, came promptly forward, crying out, 'His blood — the guilt of shedding his blood be on us and on our children.' 'Awful imprecation!' exclaimed Adam, pausing in the narrative. 'Dreadful prayer! and how dreadfully answered! Through eighteen centuries, that people, scattered, trodden down, a hissing, a proverb, a by-word among all nations, are a monument of the fearful guilt contracted by that presumptuous prayer. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! memorable and mournful was that hour, when the imprecation was uttered, "His blood be on us and on our children."

" 'Pilate had yet,' continued Adam, 'one expedient more, by which he thought to prevail with the Jewish rulers, at least in part; and this was by an appeal to their *sympathy*. He knew that they were fully aware that their charges against Christ were groundless and unjust; he thought, therefore, that if they saw him exposed to severe and unmerited sufferings for a time, they would relent, and consent to his release, and thus his life might be spared.

" 'Pilate, therefore, gave orders that Jesus should be scourged. "And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they smote him with their hands." After his body was thus lacerated and mangled with the scourging, and his head and temples pierced with the thorns, until the streaming blood had stained all his person, and ran down to the ground, Pilate then went forth again, and said to his accusers, "Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him." Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and marking the track along

which he came with his blood. Pilate, fixing his eye on the sufferer, and pointing with his hand, said to the Jewish rulers, "Behold the man! Has he not suffered enough? Will not this content you?" (John xix. 1—5.)

"But in this appeal to their sympathy, Pilate entirely failed. As soon as they saw Jesus, they were seized with a fiendish rage, and cried out, "Crucify him! crucify him!"

"Balked and confounded thus at every turn, Pilate, in extreme perplexity, said, "Take ye him, and crucify him, for I find no fault in him. If you are clear that he deserves it, do it on your own responsibility. But do not ask me to violate my conscience, and sin against my convictions of duty, for I find no fault in him."

"But the leaders of the Jews," said Adam, "had an argument in reserve, that they well knew would bear down all the scruples of Pilate. They knew that Pilate was anxious to retain his office as governor of Judea, which he held from Cæsar. They knew he would be very careful not to run any risk in that quarter; so they addressed him thus: "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend. Whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar: you are stationed here as the representative of Cæsar, and guardian of the rights of his throne. Here is a man who has set up a rival claim; calls himself the king of the Jews. We have arrested this man, and brought him before you, as guilty of sedition. If you refuse to punish him, and let him go, we, as faithful subjects of Cæsar, will carry up the case to Rome, and lodge information, that here, in Judea, you are betraying the

rights of the emperor, who gave you your commission.”
(John xix. 12.)

“ ‘ Pilate well knew that Tiberius Cæsar, who now filled the throne, was a weak and jealous prince, and that so grave a charge as this, carried up by so large and respectable a host of complainants, would be certain to cost him his office, and most likely his life. So, without further attempt at resistance, he yielded to the tide, and gave sentence against Christ, that he should be crucified ; in which act, we have the strange phenomenon of a judge on the bench condemning a man to die, while, at the same time, he repeatedly and publicly declares, that he is free from fault, and innocent of the charge brought against him.’ ”

CHAPTER VI.

THE DARKNESS.

HERE Moloch again lifted up his gigantic form, and turning to the chief, observed, —

“Your majesty stated that Adam spoke of Calvary. I was anxious to know whether he advanced any thing there, beyond what has hitherto been understood among the fallen angels.”

“Much of what he said,” answered Lucifer, “was essentially that which has been taught in the church, on this great subject, from age to age, viz., ‘that the death of Christ was the fulfilment of those sacrifices and significant types given to the Old Testament church; that it was designed to declare God’s righteousness, maintain his law, and atone for sin.’ But when he spoke of the prodigies and convulsions of nature that accompanied Messiah’s death, his observations were perfectly marvellous.”

“Ah,” said Moloch; “did he explain that supernatural darkness, that for eighteen hundred years has perplexed all the philosophers of earth, and confounded the conjectures of all the angels of the bottomless pit?”

“What darkness?” said a demon from Madagascar, who now arose and addressed himself to Moloch: His face was as black as ebony, and his eyes large and white.

“What darkness!” rejoined Moloch. “I speak of that which occurred at Messiah’s death. You know that the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. The earth quaked, the rocks burst asunder, the graves opened, the dead awoke, and for three hours a supernatural darkness hung over all the land.”

“You presume too much on my knowledge,” said the Madagascar demon. “Much that has been mentioned here is entirely new to me. I have been employed among the descendants of Ham since the re-peopling of the world after the flood. My labors have mostly been confined to certain districts in the centre and south of Africa, and some of the African islands. The light of revealed religion has but little interrupted us there. It is true that, about three thousand years ago, when the queen of Sheba returned from her visit to King Solomon, at Jerusalem, she brought some sacred books, and teachers of revealed religion, and some of the people were turned from idolatry to the worship of Jehovah; but, in the course of a few generations, I succeeded in rolling the darkness of heathenism over the population again, and so it has chiefly continued since. But, as to the darkness of which you spoke, was it not a total eclipse of the sun, occasioned by an intervention of the body of the moon between the sun and the earth?”

“That could not be the cause,” answered Moloch, “for two reasons:—

“1st. Because the crucifixion of Christ took place at the Jewish passover, which was always at full moon, when the sun and moon are in opposite directions from the earth. And,

"2d. Because no total eclipse of the sun by the moon can continue beyond a very few minutes, owing to the moon's rapid progress in its orbit; whereas the strange darkness, at the crucifixion of Christ, continued, without mitigation, for the space of three full hours. But," said Moloch, bowing to Lucifer, "your majesty was about to state the explanation which Adam gave of this remarkable phenomenon."

"The explanation given by Adam," said Lucifer, was to me very surprising, and seemed greatly to interest and delight his audience. His commencement resembled Christ's parable of the shepherd, the hundred sheep, and the one that had gone astray. He said that 'the Mediator is the head of the creation of God;' that 'all things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made;' that principalities and powers in heavenly places, visible and invisible, thrones and dominions, were all created by him and for him; that all the starry worlds are his, the countless multitudes of their inhabitants are under his supervision; he leadeth out their hosts by numbers, and calleth them all by their names, by the greatness of his might; and because he is strong in power, not one faileth.

"'Now,' said he, 'one branch of this wide-spread family of God, viz., the race of man, went astray, and the great Shepherd, leaving the ninety and nine, — that is, all who had kept their first estate, — came down to earth, to seek and to save that which was lost. But this wonderful errand of the Son of God was known far and wide through Jehovah's kingdom, not only to the ministering angels, who were eager to look into the

plan of the gospel, but to other orders of holy beings, whom the apostle styles principalities and powers, and dominions and thrones. The great Immanuel was on earth during a space of from thirty to forty years, and through all this period, there was much interest and sympathy felt in other branches of the great family of God, for the cause in which he was engaged. It may be illustrated by the redemption of Israel from Egypt. While they journeyed through the wilderness, led by that pillar of cloud and pillar of fire, and fed by the manna, and drinking of the stream that flowed from the smitten rock, tidings of what God was doing there spread into distant lands, and messengers came from remote nations, like Hobab, the prince of Midian, to see and learn more perfectly the marvellous works of Jehovah. So now, in this greater redemption, of which the release of Israel from Egypt was but a dim and faint shadow, while the Redeemer was on earth, moving forward in the mighty work, frequent messengers came in from the remote tracts of creation, excited and anxious to pry into the mysteries of pardoning mercy — those deep things of God. And when, at length, Christ told his disciples that he was going up to Jerusalem to the passover, and that there he should be condemned to die, should be crucified and slain, to atone for the sins of men, — not only were the disciples startled and astonished at the announcement, but the intelligence was borne with the speed of lightning through fields of creation far remote. And when the appointed moment came, that Immanuel was to bear the heavy vengeance that eternal justice laid on him for crimes that man had done, multitudes came from far to gaze upon the

strange sight ; distant worlds were, for a time, emptied of their inhabitants ; from all parts of heaven they were seen flying as clouds, directing their way toward earth. Over Calvary and over the cross these clouds paused and were condensed, filling all the region of the air. O, it was a gathering together of the sons of God, beyond all that had hitherto taken place during the feign of the Almighty. Never before had an event occurred of such immeasurable interest as the death of God's incarnate Son — never before had such an assembly been convened. All were now animated by one intense desire. All were crowded towards the one great object of attraction. Throng pressed eagerly on throng, to behold the scene, and multitude on multitude, till the light of the noonday sun was shut out, and "darkness covered all the land, from the sixth till the ninth hour," while Jesus bled for the redemption of man.'"

Here Lucifer stopped short in his rehearsal, and the spirits of darkness seemed troubled, while over the assembly appeared strange and varying expressions of countenance. Profound silence, however, was observed through all their ranks, and presently the chief resumed his narrative.

CHAPTER VII.

THE RESURRECTION.

“THE account also,” said Lucifer, “which Adam gave of the Redeemer’s abode in the prison-house of death, and his resurrection to immortality, excited great interest among his audience.

“‘Death,’ said he, ‘had now reigned in the world for four thousand years, and all that is sweet, and lovely, and estimable, in human society, had been withered and crushed by his tremendous sway. All the captives he had taken, through this long period, he had retained in his dark dominion. No victim, as yet, who had once fallen under his power, had been able to escape to the regions of immortality. The resurrection of the widow’s son in the days of Elijah, the resurrection of Lazarus, and some other cases on record, before the death of Christ, were, in each instance, a resuscitation to mortal life, not a resurrection to immortality. Lazarus was subject to sickness and death again. In fact, he died again, and went to the grave, and is in the grave yet. No resurrection, to live forever above the reach of death, had been witnessed, by man or angel, at the time Christ was laid a prisoner in the tomb. But he had promised he would rise on the third day, and bring life and immortality to light. What interests, of vast weight and moment, depended on the fulfilment of this promise!

All the hope of the church on earth was here. They had seen their Lord and Master betrayed, condemned, and nailed to the cross. They had witnessed the mockery, insult, and wagging of the head, while he was enduring the agonies of death; and now, in the silent grave, the ghastly king of terrors held in triumph the cold, prostrate body of Messiah. The little church on earth, shocked, astounded at the depth of his humiliation, was, during the three days he lay in the grave, almost bewildered and lost in the mazes of the mystery of godliness. "Has God forgotten to be gracious? Are his mercies clean gone? Will he be favorable no more? Shall death forever triumph and reign?" Such were the questions in the mind of the church, well nigh disconsolate and heart-broken. And during the first day, and the second day, after the Savior's burial, many a trembling eye was turned to that silent sepulchre, and from many a heaving bosom the inquiry burst forth, "Will he rise? O Son of God, wilt thou come forth out of that house of death, and bring hope, and victory, and redemption to thy people?" But from that grave there was no answer; the silence and mournful gloom remained unbroken.

"There was another company of the friends of God," continued Adam, "deeply concerned in this matter. The saints, I mean, who had died in the faith, and gone to glory, and whose bodies were detained prisoners in the grave. These all knew that for them there could be no resurrection, unless their Redeemer should rise first. The Captain of Salvation must vanquish the monster, burst the bars of his strong prison-house, and lead captivity captive, or his followers could never come

forth singing the triumphant song, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

"In long, shining ranks, the multitude of the redeemed came down, and encircled that tomb, with immortal expectation. But now their harps were suspended, their songs were hushed. Awful silence was over all their legions, save that, from time to time, some ancient patriarch, or venerable prophet, approaching the door of the sepulchre, and stooping down and looking in, would reverentially lift his hands, and in tremulous accents call aloud, "Wilt thou awake and rise? O Son of God, wilt thou come forth from this house of death, for the glory of thy name, and the joy of thy people?" But there was no answer; the stillness of the grave was there.

"There was yet another great class of the friends of God thrilled at this period with the liveliest emotions. They were the holy angels, who, from a very early day, had been employed as ministering spirits for the heirs of salvation. They had worshipped around the throne of Immanuel, before the formation of the world, or the first existence of sin. They had witnessed his first appearance in Eden, when the great promise was given. They had witnessed his appearance to Abraham at his tent, to Moses at the burning bush, to Israel at Mount Sinai, to Elijah at his translation, and to Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego, at the burning fiery furnace; and now, with strange surprise, they had seen him in the manger of Bethlehem, in the garden of Gethsemane, on the cross of Calvary, and a captive in the grave. Mute multitudes of the angelic armies now stood waiting round the tomb. Not a word uttered, not

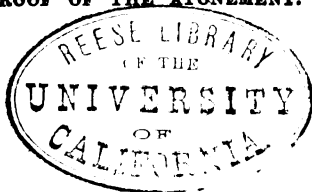
a whisper there, save that, now and then, some strong prince of the seraphim, or some renowned ruler of the cherubic legions, trailing his long robes of glory up to the door of the sepulchre, bending his form with celestial awe, and looking in, interrupted the silence — “Wilt thou awake and rise? O Son of God, wilt thou come forth from this house of death, for the glory of thy name and the joy of thy people?” But none answered; the stillness of the grave was there.

“‘There was yet another host,’ said Adam, continuing his address, ‘that shared largely in the interest of this memorable scene. That is the host of rebel angels. Well was it understood by all the princes of hell, that, could they now shut up the house of death, and prevent the resurrection of the Messiah, their victory would be complete. The promise of God would be forfeited, his counsels overthrown, the hope of the church blasted, and the redemption of man forever frustrated. The powers of darkness were all in arms, and on the alert. And never, since the first moment of his fall, did Satan put forth all the tremendous energies of “archangel ruined” as now. He knew it was the crisis of his empire.

“‘And now,’ said Adam, ‘the night of the second day was far spent. The hour of Zion’s deliverance was at hand. I drew near to the sepulchre,’ said he, ‘and looked in upon the scene. The terror and alarm of the hosts of hell had been communicated to the grim monster himself. Never, since his empire was founded, had he triumphed over such a victim. And now he dreads lest this wonderful victim shall burst from his prison. Excited fear gave unwonted paleness

to his pale cheek, as, brandishing his dreadful dart, of triple barb, yet red and reeking with the blood of Calvary, the fell tyrant stood between the cold body of the Son of God and the door of the tomb, in the stern attitude of most determined resistance. I heard the loud call of Satan; it sounded as if issuing from the caverns of despair. "King of terrors! guard your prey! The hour has come!" I looked round, and saw in the east the rising brightness of the morning star; and behold, the angel of the Lord descended from heaven,—his countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow,—and rolled the huge stone from the door of the sepulchre. The strong bands of death burst asunder with the shock of a mighty earthquake. Within the tomb a moan was heard like the wail of a dying empire. Another moment, and the ghastly monster, ten thousand terrors in his eye, came staggering backward out of the sepulchre, mortally wounded by an arm divine. His dart broken, his crown shattered, backward, backward he falls to earth; his entire frame writhing and convulsed in those frightful throes that portend speedy dissolution.

"'But who may speak of the Conqueror? Who may tell the glories with which he was adorned, when, "travelling in the greatness of his strength," he appeared victorious over sin, and death, and hell? The multitudes of the redeemed hailed, and blessed, and gave honor and hallelujahs to his name. The angelic armies joined in the praise, and even the frame of nature, that was convulsed when he died, seemed to share in the triumph now. "The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy."'"



CHAPTER VIII.

PROOF OF THE ATONEMENT.

At this point in the discussion, a member of the council arose, whose appearance was unlike any I had yet observed. They called him the "Demon of the Isles." I learned that the gospel had recently made great progress in his district.

"Is it your wish to make an inquiry?" said Lucifer.

"It is," said he of the Isles: "your majesty desires that on all these subjects, we should know and understand the truth."

"That is my wish," said Lucifer; "for though among men I am called the father of lies, yet it is only to men that we lie. Fallen angels have no interest in deceiving each other. Milton's doctrine is true, that

'Devil with devil damned
Firm concord holds.'

"In all these discussions, it is my wish that the hosts of hell should understand facts as they are. I wish them to know the truth, in order that they may know how to disguise the truth; how to counterfeit the truth; how to war against the truth."

"Then," said he of the Isles, "I wish to know how it was that one so spotless and innocent as Jesus Christ, came to die a death of such unparalleled horror and

dreadfulness. So far as my experience and observation have gone, the virtuous, those who follow after righteousness, and have guarded against the snares of sin, have peace in their death; often, indeed, their dying hour is a season not only of tranquillity, but of triumph. It is where there has been peculiar and extraordinary guilt in life, that I have witnessed peculiar and extraordinary terror and anguish in the hour of death. Have not such been the observations of your majesty?"

"Just so," answered Lucifer. "I could mention several reasons for the calmness and comfort of the righteous in death, as I once heard them given by a noted divine."

"I should be glad to hear them," said the Demon of the Isles.

"In the first place, then," replied Lucifer, "the hope of immortality is a powerful support. To the atheist, who looks upon death as annihilation, it is peculiarly dreadful. In the heart of man there is a strong love of existence. When the atheist comes to the verge of life, and looks down into the yawning, unfathomable gulf of eternal oblivion, it is not strange that

'Nature runs back and shudders at the sight,
And every heartstring bleeds at thought of parting.'

But the Christian has the hope of immortality. He looks upon death as a narrow stream, deep and cold, it is true; but hope rolls aside the mists and clouds that hang over its surface, and shows him the green fields, the unwithering flowers, and hills of heavenly light that are beyond; and this hope supports the Christian in death: though he goes down into that dark, chilling

wave, yet he is assured that he shall rise on the opposite shore, and climb the everlasting hills, and live forever.

“Another support is the hope of pardon through Christ, and that God is reconciled. The consciousness of unpardoned guilt is an awful load upon the dying man. Where life has been spent in treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and there has been no repentance, and no forgiveness, it is not strange that death should be the ‘king of terrors,’ and that the soul in that hour should be pierced through with many sorrows. But the Christian has the promise that sin is pardoned through Christ; that its condemning power is removed, far as the east is from the west. And this hope of pardon, as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, is another support in a dying hour.

“There is a third support, furnished by the gospel, to the Christian in death. It is the assurance of a *home* in heaven; an inheritance there that never shall fade away. Death removes the sinner from his home, his possessions, and all that is dear to him on earth, and he is quite unfurnished for the world to come. He must go where he has made no provision; where he has no inheritance, no home. It is not strange, therefore, that the pangs of parting from earth should be awful. But the Christian is assured, that when his earthly house is dissolved, he shall find a building with God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; that, when he leaves earth, he shall join the general assembly of the church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven; that there he shall inherit a crown of life, a robe of salvation, an exceeding and eternal

weight of glory, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God. These are the hopes that bear up the Christian in the trying hour. This support gave triumph to Stephen and to Paul amidst the sufferings of martyrdom. This support gave triumph to *Harriet Newell*, to *Payson*, and to thousands who in their last moments have seemed to be conquerors, and more than conquerors, over death itself."

"But I would like to ask," said the Demon of the Isles, "had not Jesus Christ all these supports, in the hour of death, to as great a degree as any of his followers?"

"To as great a degree?" answered Lucifer. "He had all these supports to an extent unspeakably beyond that possessed by any of his followers. As to the first I mentioned,—the doctrine of immortality,—he had this before him, in a clearness and perfection of which neither Stephen, nor Paul, nor any of his followers were capable. He had come from God, and to God he was returning. Heaven was his home, where he had dwelt from eternity.

"As to the second support which I mentioned,—viz., the favor and approbation of God,—he had this in the highest degree. Repeatedly a miraculous voice had come from heaven, saying, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' And he knew that his whole life was perfectly acceptable to his heavenly Father. And as to the third support,—the glory beyond the grave,—the prospect before Christ had a brightness and grandeur unparalleled. He knew that because he had humbled himself, and become obedient unto

death, even the death of the cross, therefore God would highly exalt him, and give him a name above every name, that on his head should be 'many crowns,' and that every knee should bow to him, and every tongue confess, of things on earth and things in heaven. He knew that the day of his ascension to his throne above would be the jubilee of all the celestial world; that the everlasting gates would be lifted up, and the doors of heaven opened wide, that the King of glory might come in; he knew that the rapturous triumph of this scene would incomparably surpass all that cherubim or seraphim, since the morning of their creation, had yet beheld in the palace of the great God."

"Now," said he of the Isles, "that is precisely the point to which I wished to come. With all this glorious exaltation set before him, how did Christ meet death? Did he meet death as Stephen met it? or as Paul met it? or as countless multitudes of saints have since met death? No: at the approach of death his soul is 'exceeding sorrowful;' he is in 'an agony;' his sweat is as great drops of blood falling to the ground; he offers up strong cries and tears; he prostrates himself on the earth, and prays, 'O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.' He exclaims, 'My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me!' And the rending vail of the temple, the bursting rocks, the quaking earth, the opening graves, and the startled dead, all proclaim that a load of enormous anguish pressed on the soul of the Redeemer when he died.

"How is it," said he, "that a life so spotless and pure is followed by a death so ineffably dreadful; and that prospects beyond the grave, that have so amply

supported the followers of Christ in the trying hour, seem to have afforded no support to their Lord and Master, though set before him in a much more exalted and brilliant light ? ”

“ Belial,” said Lucifer, turning to his prime minister, “ come, give an answer to this question of the member from the isles.”

“ It has been remarked,” said Belial, rising and stepping forward, “ that among ourselves we speak the truth. Fallen angels have no inducement to deceive each other. It is to the sons of men that we speak falsehood, for the purpose of deception. Now, the facts that have been mentioned in the sufferings of the Savior, furnish the strongest proof possible that his sufferings were vicarious. That is, he suffered, not for himself, but for the sins of men.”

“ Was this the cause why the sorrows of Christ were so intense and overwhelming ? ” asked the Demon of the Isles.

“ Certainly,” said Belial ; “ no other adequate cause can possibly be assigned. The prophet Isaiah gives the true reason. He says, ‘ He was wounded for our transgressions ; he was bruised for our iniquities ; the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him.’ ”

“ Is this, then,” said he of the Isles, “ the whole reason of the striking contrast between the death of Christ and the death of Paul ? ”

“ This is the whole reason,” answered Belial. “ Christ presented himself before a throne of justice, Paul stood before a throne of mercy ; Christ met death in all its terrors, Paul met death as a foe that was vanquished ;

Christ died to take the sting from death, Paul encountered death after his sting was taken away.”

Here Belial paused, and looked round on the assembly, who all appeared profoundly engrossed with the subject. “The doctrine of the atonement for sin,” said he, “is the corner-stone of the Christian system : it is a doctrine against which all the hosts of hell are most inveterate : long and laboriously have I toiled for its overthrow : from early candle-light, till three and four o’clock in the morning, have I sat by the sceptical expositor of the Scriptures, and aided him with all the devilish ingenuity I possessed, to gloss over, new translate, and wrest from their plain meaning, texts of Scripture in which this doctrine was clearly taught. In this department I have had very gratifying success. But these recorded facts of the awful anguish of the Redeemer, when it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and make his soul an offering for sin — these recorded facts, I say, are stubborn and unyielding : for eighteen hundred years I have studied the subject, and racked my invention to find some way to escape from their force, or set the argument aside ; but as yet I have not had the shadow of success. Ingenuity and perseverance, however, may yet accomplish much. But” — he turned to Lucifer — “perhaps I occupy too much time, your majesty was about to rehearse the account that Adam gave of the doings of the risen Redeemer.”

CHAPTER IX.

THE GOSPEL.

“**THERE** were a few other things,” said Lucifer, “in Adam’s discourse, which I designed to mention. He spake of the ordinances of the house of God ; the Sabbath, solemn assemblies, prayer, and praise ; but dwelt particularly on the Lord’s supper, baptism, and institution of a visible church.

“He said, ‘There is much truth reaches the human soul through the eye as well as through the ear ; and hence, in every age of the world, God has employed visible signs and visible representations of spiritual things. He spake of the rainbow, the passover, and the blood that was shed and sprinkled at the Jewish altar. In like manner, visible signs of great spiritual truths and facts were employed under the new testament.’

“He said, ‘Man, in his lost estate, is guilty, polluted, and an alien from God. In the Lord’s supper, the ground of pardon is set forth ; the bread and the wine are lively emblems of the cost by which *pardon* was purchased.’

“He spake of the appropriateness and power of that ordinance ; how it speaks to the heart, and how, in every land where the Lord’s table is spread, the knowledge of the sufferings of Christ in the room of men is spread far and wide.

“ ‘But man,’ said he, ‘needs purification as well as pardon; and hence the Head of the church has appointed the baptismal water, to represent to the eye and to the heart the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, by which the stain and pollution of sin is removed from the soul. Wherever the Lord’s supper is properly administered, and its design and import clearly expounded, there the doctrine of the atonement will be generally understood. And wherever the ordinance of baptism is properly administered, and its design and import clearly explained, there the agency of the Holy Spirit in cleansing the soul from sin will also be understood. But let the design of either of these ordinances be obscured or misrepresented, and there men will not understand the gospel clearly.

“ ‘The institution of a visible church,’ said he, ‘brings before the eye the great doctrine of adoption into the family of God. Man, who by sin was an alien and an outcast from God, on embracing the gospel is pardoned, and sanctified, and adopted into the family of God; is constituted an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ. The visible church had been established in the world at a very early day; patriarchs and prophets had enjoyed its privileges; but now, under the gospel, the light of redemption shone clearer, and the ordinances of the church were more simple and impressive.

“ ‘The risen Redeemer,’ said Adam, ‘remained with his disciples forty days after his resurrection, teaching and instructing them in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God; and then, just before his ascension to heaven, he commissioned them to go into all the world and preach the gospel, baptizing and administering all

the ordinances of the church ; and he promised them his presence and blessing alway, even to the end of the world. He charged them, however, to begin at Jerusalem.

“ ‘I must not omit,’ said Adam, ‘to mention the joy and triumph with which patriarchs and prophets were inspired, on witnessing the first victories of the gospel. Enoch, Noah, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel, and many others, had been preachers of righteousness in seasons very dark, when the broad road was thronged with heedless and hardened multitudes, and the word of God had little success in turning men from sin. The spirit of prophecy had foretold a brighter day for Zion ; but these venerable men had lived, and labored, and died, while the darkness remained unmitigated, and the powers of sin, like a wide-spreading and resistless flood, carried all before them.

“ ‘When now these old soldiers beheld the cause which they loved becoming victorious, when they saw many thousands in a day turning from Satan unto God, their transports were very great ; and louder hallelujahs were given to God than ever before had been sung by the ransomed multitudes around the throne.’ ”

Here the demon from Madagascar rose again, and stood like a pillar of darkness in the midst of the assembly. “Did you say that Christ commanded his disciples to begin their preaching of the gospel at Jerusalem ? ”

“I did,” replied Lucifer.

“Why, that is very strange,” said he of Madagascar. “I should have thought that Jerusalem was the last place on the globe to which the risen Redeemer would

have sent his gospel. There they had the sacred oracles, that plainly foretold his coming for ages before he appeared."

"Yes," said Lucifer, "they had all the writings of Moses and the prophets."

"And in these sacred writings, the family and the house from which Christ should arise were clearly pointed out, as also the time, place, and manner of his appearing."

"That also is true," replied Lucifer.

"And yet," said he of Madagascar, "the people of Jerusalem laid hands on him as a malefactor, insulted and smote him with their hands in the hall of the high priest, accused him of flagrant crimes before Pilate, and while he hung bleeding in the agonies of death, they walked around the cross, and wagged their heads, and mocked the pangs in which he died."

"True, every word true," answered Lucifer.

"And when he was laid in the sepulchre, they went to Pilate, and urged him to station a strong guard around the sepulchre, to prevent, if possible, his resurrection from the dead. And after he arose, they gave large sums of money to the soldiers, to bribe them to circulate through the city the falsehood — 'His disciples came by night and stole him away, while we slept.'"

"Well," said Lucifer, and what is your inference from all this?"

"Why," said the demon, "I should have thought that Christ would have directed his disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every other people, before any more time or labor was expended with ungrateful, hard-hearted, incorrigible Jerusalem. I say

it is strange, yes, passing strange, that the first message of mercy should be sent to those who were most undeserving. 'Begin at Jerusalem!' Why, the frame of nature might tremble and quake when its Creator was suffering, but the people of Jerusalem were unmoved. The rocks might rend, and earth and heaven put on blackness and mourning, but they exulted and triumphed in his dying agonies. I say, it is strange he should have commanded them to begin at Jerusalem."

"You have raised the very question," said Lucifer, "which was propounded to Adam by one of his audience, who also thought it perfectly wonderful that the Son of God should give such a command, considering the unparalleled guilt of Jerusalem."

"Did Adam explain this difficult point?" asked the demon.

"He did," said Lucifer.

"Let us hear the explanation he gave."

"He said," replied Lucifer, "that three or four strong reasons could be assigned for this command.

"'First,' he said, 'the gospel is the gospel of *light*. It claims investigation. It claims to be received on its own appropriate evidence. God never would have suspended the salvation of men on the condition of receiving a religion which was not supported by competent proof. Now,' said he, 'at Jerusalem there was every opportunity to ascertain the truth of the gospel. There Christ had lived. There his miracles had been performed. There, in one family was the man that had been born blind, and Christ had opened his eyes. His father and mother, sisters, brothers, and neighbors were witnesses of the fact.

“In another family was the daughter that was a lunatic, and Christ had healed her. In another was the man that had the palsy, and Christ had made him whole; and in another was the brother that had been dead, and Christ had raised him to life. Now, members of the family and the near neighbors could not be mistaken in matters of this kind. And these divine works of Christ proved the divinity of the gospel.

“Had the apostles,’ said he, ‘gone into some distant land, beyond mountains and seas, and there founded the church, and made converts, the modern sceptic might have objected that the first converts to the gospel had no opportunity of fairly and fully examining its claims to divine origin. But what said the command of Christ? “Go, my disciples, begin at Jerusalem. There, all the facts of your Savior’s life are within the reach of every honest inquirer. Go, begin at Jerusalem, where the Jewish lawyers and Jewish doctors, men of high talent and profound learning, are most deeply interested in disproving the gospel, if they can. Let those men, skilled and experienced in sifting and searching subjects to the bottom, artful and expert in examining and cross-examining witnesses,—let those talented and influential enemies of the gospel try their utmost. Go to Jerusalem, and go *now*, while the public officers are unchanged; while Pilate, Herod, and the high priest, are still in power. Go *now*, while the events are all recent and fresh in the public mind. And if the gospel can abide the scrutiny and investigation of Jerusalem, if it can triumph over the obstinacy and unbelief of Jerusalem, then carry the joyful tidings to the ends of the earth, and let all the nations know that that gospel is from

God, which achieved its first victories, beginning at Jerusalem." " "

" Tremendous! " exclaimed the Madagascar demon, rising and walking back and forth for a minute or two. " I see the force of that. The gospel is the gospel of light, and calls for an examination of its truth," said he, speaking the words slowly, as if weighing them in his own mind; " therefore begin at Jerusalem."

" But the next reason given by Adam was of equal force," said Lucifer.

" Ah," said he of Madagascar: " pray, let us hear."

" He said, ' The gospel is the gospel of *grace*. It is God's free favor to the guilty, and the *riches* of this grace were best illustrated by beginning at Jerusalem. Fallen man is slow to believe in the *freeness* and *richness* of the grace of the gospel. And it has long been the policy of hell to crowd the minds of men with doubts and unbelief on this whole subject. While men are careless in sin, the plan of the tempter is to let them alone. But when conscience is alarmed, and the awakened sinner begins to examine how the account stands between his soul and God, — when abused mercies, wasted time, despised opportunities, with all the long catalogue of crimes committed against God, rise in black and terrible array before the startled soul, — then the tempter bestirs himself to drive the man to despair of the mercy of God. And often the sinner, at this juncture, concluding that there is no hope for him, will turn spiritual bankrupt in self-defence; that is, he will attempt to pay off the whole by denying the debt. He will turn atheist, deist, or universalist, as the only method of quieting an alarmed conscience. This is

what Isaiah calls "making a covenant with death, and coming to an agreement with hell." Now, the gospel is the gospel of grace, and it is sufficient to reach the case of the chief of sinners. It was the design of the Redeemer that the *freeness* and the *richness* of the gospel should be strongly set forth in the very infancy of its career. "Go, my disciples, begin at Jerusalem. There, light, which kings and prophets desired to see, has been rejected. There, wisdom, greater than that which brought the queen of the south from the uttermost parts of the earth, has been scorned; there, warnings have been given, surpassing those which brought the men of Nineveh to repentance; there, works have been performed which, had they been done in Tyre and Zidon, they would long ago have repented in sackcloth and ashes. Had they been done in Sodom and Gomorrah, they would have remained to this day. Yet go again to Jerusalem. There, the stain of sin is blackest; there, the load of guilt is heaviest; there, the fatal leprosy has fastened its strongest grasp on the vitals of the soul. Preach in Jerusalem the omnipotence of a Savior's love; the efficacy of a Savior's blood; the length, and breadth, and depth, and height, of a Savior's pardoning mercy. Call to repentance those who accused me before Pilate, and those who stood as false witnesses there. Call to repentance those who called for Barabbas, and those who put the crown of thorns upon my head. Tell those who drove the nails through my hands, and the spear into my side, that the blood which they shed cleanseth from all sin. Let the soldiers, who for three days guarded the tomb, and the rulers who bribed them to circulate falsehood concern-

ing my resurrection, know that Christ, who died there, and was buried there, and rose there, is 'mighty to save.' Bid them repent, and look, and be saved. Yes, go and preach, beginning at Jerusalem; and when it is demonstrated that the gospel can wash out the stain of crime, take off the load of guilt, and bring back to the family of God the prodigal at Jerusalem; then bear the glad tidings to every nation, and let every people know that Christ can save to the *uttermost* all that come to him." ' ' "

"Thunder and lightning!" exclaimed he of Madagascar. "I had no thought the reasons could be so strong. Did you say that Adam assigned yet other reasons for the command to begin at Jerusalem?"

"He did: his third reason was this: 'The gospel,' he said, 'is the gospel of power. It is designed to subdue the nations to God. It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.'

"'Now,' said he, 'from the earliest apostasy, the strong current of the human soul had been *downward*, and all attempts to turn it back to God had been attended with but limited success. Patriarchs, prophets, and holy men had labored to arrest this strong torrent of depravity, but it proved too strong. The great majority had preferred the broad road.

"'Now,' said Adam, 'the power of sin over the nations was so great, its empire so firmly established, that it was a question of mighty interest among the friends of God on earth and in heaven,—Is there energy in the gospel sufficient to overturn the fortresses of sin, and turn the world to God? Now, the gospel is the gospel of power, and Christ would give a decisive

demonstration of its power, at the period of its first proclamation by the apostles, "Go, begin at Jerusalem. There, the hearts of men are hardest, and the prejudices against the gospel strongest. Go, begin at Jerusalem, and if the gospel can triumph over the stubborn spirits there,—yes, if it can bring the hard-hearted sinners of Jerusalem, contrite, humbled, to the feet of the Savior,—then let the friends of God on earth and in heaven be assured that the gospel, attended by the Divine Spirit, will accomplish all that glorious revolution in a dark and fallen world, which prophets and holy seers have so brilliantly predicted, and the saints of God have so ardently desired to see." ' ' "

"Strong as the earthquake," exclaimed he of Madagascar.

"There was yet again," continued Lucifer, "a fourth reason given by Adam for this command of the Messiah, which you think so strange."

"Mention it, if you please," said the Madagascar demon. "I wish fully to understand this subject. In the great contest which your majesty has told us is approaching, we shall all need to be thoroughly furnished and prepared."

"Well," said Lucifer, "his fourth reason was this: he alleged, that 'it is the plan of Jehovah to give efficacy to the gospel in answer to prayer. The prayers of the church,' said he, 'bring from heaven a blessing on the preached word."

"'Now,' said he, 'at Jerusalem, and only at Jerusalem, at that period, there was a little church to hold up the hands of the apostles while they labored by effectual and fervent prayer. It was, therefore, wisely

ordained in that dark age, that the apostles should begin at Jerusalem their great enterprise of turning a fallen world to God.' ”

Here the spirits of darkness looked agitated and confused, but continued in profound silence, while the chief made a deep pause. At length the demon of Madagascar inquired, —

“ Were there any other particulars in Adam’s address which your majesty designs to mention ? ”

“ He spake,” said Lucifer, “ of the intercession of Christ in a style that appeared to fill with astonishment and delight the multitudes whom he addressed. He expatiated on the doctrine of the Savior’s intercession, as one of the distinguishing doctrines of the Christian system. ‘ A doctrine,’ said he, ‘ rich in comfort and consolation to the church.’ He drew an illustration from the history of Moses. When Israel, on their journey through the wilderness, were attacked by the armies of Amalek, Moses went up to the top of a mountain that overlooked the battle plain, and held up his hands in prayer to the God of battles; and while Moses held up his hands, Israel prevailed.

“ Said he, ‘ Every soldier, while striving with the enemy in the plain below, was encouraged and strengthened when he lifted up his eyes to the top of the mountain, and saw this holy man earnestly interceding for their success. In like manner, the soldiers of the cross, while engaged in the spiritual warfare, have been cheered and comforted, when, lifting their eyes to the everlasting hills, they have beheld Him who ever liveth to make intercession for them.’

“ But the power and prevalence of the Mediator’s

intercession was the point on which he chiefly enlarged. 'If the prayer of Abraham,' said he, 'in behalf of guilty Sodom, had such power; if the prayer of Moses for Israel was so successful; if the prayer of Elijah could shut and open the windows of heaven,—what shall we say of the efficacy of that intercession offered up in behalf of the church by God's incarnate Son?'

Here a demon stood up, on whose brow was collected the blackness and fury of the thunder-storm. "Did Adam," said he, "speak of the promises given for the success of the gospel?"

"He did," replied Lucifer. "He rehearsed many of those glowing passages found in the prophets on that subject; particularly, 'The word that Isaiah, the son of Amos, saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.' 'Yes,' he exclaimed, 'the Lord's house shall stand, in the view of men, higher than politics, commerce, agriculture, or any earthly interest, established in the top of the mountains, and exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it.' And I will only mention farther concerning his discourse, that he spake of the second coming of the Messiah in terms that surpassed all my ears had yet heard on that awful theme. I had heard

the discourses delivered on that subject by Enoch and by Daniel in their day; I had heard also Paul, and Peter, and John, in the period of their ministry, often preaching on this theme; but the picture which Adam drew of the great day was beyond all parallel. Its effect on the vast audience he addressed I shall not attempt to describe. But I was now fully satisfied that the prospect of success in the enterprise for which I had left earth, was here exceedingly doubtful.

“It was inquired, by one of the council some time since, if I saw Abel in company with his father, Adam? I did not, and yet Adam was not alone. Abraham, the father of the faithful, was with him, and took a large share in the services of the occasion. But of Abraham and his discourse I will tell you at another time, not now.

“I made various attempts,” said Lucifer, “to seduce these worshippers of God from their allegiance. I will not detain you to mention them now. They were unsuccessful. It seemed that the very knowledge of the plan of man’s redemption carried with it an influence disastrous to the empire of sin. I was reminded of the heathen oracles among the Gentiles being struck dumb, when the first proclamation of the gospel came abroad.

“It appeared that the mighty power of attraction that holds such a multitude of suns, and worlds, and systems in the proper relation to their great centre, the *throne of God*, is not so strong as that invisible power that draws all holy beings to the standard of Him who died for the sins of men.”

CHAPTER X.

DAVID.

“I RESOLVED at once,” continued Lucifer, “to try my success in some more distant province of the wide creation. But first I thought it prudent to explore more carefully the region where I now was, and ascertain definitely whether missionaries from the new Jerusalem above, actually occupied every portion of this great field.

“There was a splendid globe rolling in its bright orbit, as near to me as the planet Jupiter is to the earth. Thither I directed my way. On approaching it, the first object that caught my eye was a great assembly of the population, evidently in the attitude of receiving public instruction. The discourse, however, was closed, and they were now attending to a song of sacred praise. When the music began to float around me, its tones, though transcendently sweet, had something of familiarity, at which I was greatly surprised. I had certainly heard that strain before. Another moment, and I could identify the air of one of the *songs of Zion*, often sung in the sanctuary of ancient Israel. The theme was Incarnate Divinity and Redeeming Love. A single voice, which I afterwards found was that of one of the redeemed, sung the body of each

stanza alone ; and then the ten thousand voices of the multitude around would unite to swell the chorus. The words are imprinted upon my memory as with a burning brand, and run thus : —

SONG OF A REDEEMED SOUL.

I.

“How sweet to tell, through heavenly worlds,
The wondrous love of God !
How sweet to sing Messiah’s name,
Who bought us with his blood !
Celestial armies, round the throne,
God’s power and wisdom scan :
But, O, the depth and height of grace
Is only shown to man.

Chorus. — And has Immanuel gone to earth,
And grace divine unfurled ?
Wonder and praise, ye heaven of heavens,
That ‘ God so loved the world ! ’

II.

“Involved in sin, and guilt, and woe,
Far from Jehovah’s face,
Without one cheering ray of hope,
Lay Adam’s ruined race.
The strongest angel bands could bring
No help to those who fell ;
When, lo ! God’s only Son appeared
And vanquished Death and Hell.

Chorus. — And has Immanuel gone to earth,
And grace divine unfurled ?
Wonder and praise, ye heaven of heavens,
That ‘ God so loved the world ! ’

III.

‘Throughout creation’s boundless range.
The joyful news we’ll bear,
And principalities and powers,
In heavenly climes shall hear.

The song of grace, forever new —
 That song shall be our strain ;
 And knees shall bow, and tongues confess
 The Lamb that once was slain.

Chorus. — And has Immanuel gone to earth,
 And grace divine unfurled ?
 Wonder and praise, ye heaven of heavens,
 That ' God so loved the world ! '

IV.

" To Abram first, in early days,
 The precious word was given,
 That ransomed souls should far exceed
 The countless stars of heaven ;
 To each bright star a mission band
 Shall with the tidings go,
 And tell what God has done for man
 In yon dark world below.

Chorus. — And has Immanuel gone to earth,
 And grace divine unfurled ?
 Wonder and praise, ye heaven of heavens,
 That ' God so loved the world ! ' "

" But who was this before me, leading in this anthem of lofty praise ? Will you believe me ? It was David, the Psalmist of Israel, with his ' harp of solemn sound.' The music ceased, and the congregation was dismissed. The discourse I had not heard, my arrival being too late ; but from the beaming eyes, the animated countenance, the eager conversation of the groups that now clustered together and spoke of what they heard, it was plain that they had not only been interested, but that their spirits had been rapt in transports of the sublimest ecstasy.

" In the mean time, David was walking over a field of living green, arm in arm with one with whom he appeared to be on terms of the most established and

intimate friendship. They were not in the act of leaving the place, but, after the public services of the day, were taking delightful recreation, walking back and forth among such flowers as bloom where sin and death have never entered. Their deportment exhibited such warm and extraordinary cordiality, that my curiosity was roused. Who can that be, that the glorified King of Israel dignifies with such peculiar marks of fondness and intimacy? They were now approaching the place where I stood, when, lo! the form of Jonathan, David's early friend, was before me. Ah! thought I, have you been sent out, 'two and two,' as Christ sent out the disciples of old? I was now anxious to learn the subject of their earnest conversation. I soon found it was the strong and mutual attachment formed in their early days when on earth.

" 'Jonathan,' said David, 'let us bless the name of God our Redeemer for this rich ingredient in the cup of our salvation, that the friendship formed on earth, amidst the fretful and feverish agitations of that troubled world, can be revived and perpetuated forever in this immortal state.'

" 'I ascribe it all,' said Jonathan, 'to the good providence of God. But when I saw you take your life in your hand and go forth against that gigantic Philistine, who, day after day, had insulted and defied the armies of Israel; when I saw you prevail against him, and vindicate the honor of Israel and of Israel's God, the attachment formed for you at that hour in my heart, was lasting as life, and strong as the tie that binds soul and body together.'

" 'I knew it, Jonathan, I knew it. Long and severe-

ly were the fidelity and firmness of your friendship tried, during the dark and troubled periods of my earthly history. And O, when I heard you had fallen on Mount Gilboa, how bitterly I wept! The remembrance of all your kindness came over me with tenfold strength beyond what I had realized while you were living. I wondered I had not seen it in that overwhelming light before. I felt that I had lost a friend that could never be replaced on earth; I felt as though a part of *myself* had gone into the grave.'

“‘I was conscious of it, David, I was conscious of it. And that beautiful ode that you composed and sung to my memory, gave me much delight. But there was no token of your friendship, after I was taken from earth, that made half so much impression, as when, after you were confirmed in your kingdom, and had become prosperous and great, amid the nobility, the statesmen, the courtiers and flatterers that swarmed in your capital and around your palace, you still retained the remembrance of your early friend, and searched for and found my poor orphan boy, Mephibosheth, when he was in exile beyond Jordan, afraid of your power. You had him brought to Jerusalem, and when he came trembling into your presence, apprehensive for his life, you said, “Fear not, Mephibosheth; I will restore to thee all the land that was thy father’s; thou shalt eat bread at my table continually, as one of the king’s sons, for I will surely show thee kindness for thy father Jonathan’s sake.” I assure you, David, this conduct on your part gave a new impulse to the joy of my ransomed soul in the Paradise of God.’

“‘I much regretted,’ said David, ‘that it was so long

before I could thus publicly acknowledge the debt of gratitude which I owed to you. But the first years of my kingdom were stormy and full of trouble, and in such circumstances the claims of the worthiest friends are sometimes crowded out for a time. But as to Mephibosheth, often as he sat at the table among my own sons, there would be some lineament of his countenance, some tone or accent of his voice, some gesture or turn of thought, that most affectingly and forcibly brought to my mind the invaluable friend that was gone from earth forever. Often was I constrained to turn away, that I might hide from the youthful company the tears that filled my eyes; and especially when I began to be advanced in life, and had had long and painful experience of worthless and hollow-hearted professions of fidelity in many who crowd around the court of kings; when confidence had been abused, and trust betrayed, and base, black ingratitude had stared me in the face, where I was looking for truth and uprightness; often, with a sick and burdened heart, have I put aside the crown and laid down the sceptre, and gone into my secret chamber, and poured forth floods of tears, when I thought of the immense bereavement I had sustained in the loss of the friend of my youth. "O, had he lived," I exclaimed, "to be my companion, my counsellor, my helper along this dreary pilgrimage of life, I should *now* know how to prize his warm, faithful, unwavering friendship."

" 'And yet,' said Jonathan, 'the ways of the Lord are higher, wiser, and better than our ways, and there is one thought in this connection that thrills all my soul with celestial rapture. The young buddings of

friendship, amid the dark and checkered scenes of earth, are feeble and dim as the moonlight rainbow, when compared with the high, holy, unruffled friendships of this heavenly state. It is now three thousand years since we entered into the joy of our Lord ; and yet we are but approaching the threshold of our inheritance. I would lift up my soul in immortal hallelujahs to God, when I think of the progress, growth, and maturity of holy friendship among brothers in our Father's house, during the long unmeasured years of eternal glory.' ”

Here Lucifer paused — looked slowly round over the audience, who were rapt in profound attention. “The narrative,” said he, “is to me odious, extremely odious; I will pursue it no farther now.

“Belial!” said he, calling on his prime minister, “you were much conversant with the church and house of Israel in the time of David ; you were chiefly concerned in plotting and attempting his overthrow, I being at that time much engaged in forwarding the cause of idolatry in Babylon, Nineveh, Egypt, and other nations. Rehearse to this council and this host such of the transactions of that day as you think it best to make known. I would gladly have a little respite. And well I know, that none has more talent to give instructions how to war against the church of God than thou.”

Belial rose. His appearance reminded me of Milton's description : —

“A fairer person lost not heaven : he seemed
For dignity composed and high exploit ;
But all was false and hollow.”

“Before you enter on your narrative, Belial,” said Lucifer, “there are two remarks I wish to make.

“First. Most of this great assembly have been employed chiefly in heathen lands, since the earliest ages of the world. Their experience has been wholly in promoting those forms of wickedness which prevail in idolatrous countries. They have not been in contact with the Bible or the church, and have little knowledge of the arts by which revealed religion is to be combated. But now a great revolution has come. The Bible is going every where, into the languages of all the nations. The church—the Sabbath—the ordinances of the gospel—are finding their way into every corner of the earth. And it is now important that all the hosts of hell should be trained and disciplined for making war against the church. My plan is, that those of my servants who have had this experience in ages past, shall now rehearse, in the hearing of all the armies of darkness, their contests with patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and saints of old, that all the troops of hell may learn how to promote the cause of sin where the light of the gospel shines.

“My second remark is this. In your narrative go into *particulars*. That history which merely skims over the surface, imparts little information. Sketches of courts and kings are not so much what we want, as a view of the living manners of the times—the facts and doings of every day life. I say again, go into minute specifications. It is the only method to give correct information of men and manners.”

“I understand you,” said Belial, bowing to his majesty. “I shall go into particulars.”

“Proceed then,” said Lucifer, resuming his seat. “One thing more, however, before you begin. I wish

the statement of facts to be given to this council in the most calm and dispassionate manner; as little mixture of emotion and feeling as may be. Our object now is to impart a correct knowledge of facts; and the more coolly and calmly it is done, the better for our purpose. And don't confine yourself to the rehearsal of your own plans merely; but give us a picture of real life in the times of David."

"I would premise," said Belial, "that great solicitude had been felt by the hosts of darkness who surrounded the church in this age to ascertain in what line or family the promised Messiah was destined to arise. The first promise given to Adam had created amongst us much dread and apprehension. We had learned by the promise made to Abraham, that the Messiah should be of his descendants, and from the prophecy of Jacob on his death-bed, that he should be of the tribe of Judah. But no additional information had now been obtained for several hundred years. The priesthood had settled down in the tribe of Levi, and Saul, the first king anointed by Samuel, was of the house of Benjamin. There was nothing yet to be seen in the tribe of Judah to aid our conjectures in the slightest degree. The various branches of that great tribe were spreading abroad in all directions, but nothing definite had yet been discovered. But it was revealed to the prophet Samuel that Saul's kingdom should be rejected. And when I saw him go to the house of Jesse, and anoint David king over Israel, and pronounce some very weighty and significant words, I began to suspect that this was the branch of Judah, where the promised Deliverer should arise.

“But I must not omit,” said Belial, “the scene in the family of Jesse, at the time David was anointed. Jesse and his wife were deeply affected when they learned that the sceptre promised by Jacob, at the close of his life, to Judah, was to be wielded by one of their family. They gave thanks to Jehovah, and implored his divine benediction. But the joy of Zeruah, the elder sister of David, particularly drew my attention. She had for David that ardent and generous affection that is often found in an *elder* sister toward a *younger* brother, David being the youngest of eight.” (1 Sam. xvi. 10—13.)

“The affection of an elder sister for a younger brother,” said Lucifer, — “I have often noticed that. It is frequently one of the striking characteristics in the family circle, among the children of men.”

“Zeruah was now a middle-aged woman,” said Belial, “of fine understanding, and distinguished for piety and patriotism. From early life she had felt much for the honor of Israel and the true religion. She was very young in her father’s house, when Nahash the Ammonite besieged Jabesh-gilead, and would grant the inhabitants no terms, but on condition that he should thrust out their right eyes, and lay it for a reproach to all Israel. (1 Sam. xi. 1—11.) She remembered the excitement in the coasts of Bethlehem, when the messengers of King Saul, carrying bloody slices of the oxen he had hewn in pieces, came running through the country, calling on the men to rally at Bezek, and follow Saul and Samuel to the rescue of Jabesh-gilead. As she came up to the years of womanhood, she sym-

pathized deeply with her afflicted country. Strong garrisons of the foes of Israel were here and there in the country, and now and then invading armies of some warlike nation overran the land, spoiling the inhabitants, destroying their crops, and driving off their cattle.

“Zeruiah greatly deplored this degradation and dishonor of God’s chosen people. She often conversed with her father and mother of the prosperous state of Israel in the days of Joshua, when one could chase a thousand of their foes, and two could put ten thousand to flight. She carefully treasured up in her mind the traditions concerning Gideon, and Barak, and Jephthah, and Samson, and how Dagon, the Philistine idol, had fallen before the ark of God. Such themes as these became the food of the ardent soul of Zeruiah, who, at the period of which I am now speaking, had become, perhaps, the most enlightened and public-spirited woman of the age. Indeed, her patriotic ardor bordered on enthusiasm in the cause of her people.

“The brave deeds of Jonathan now began to attract general attention. (1 Sam. xii. 3; xiv. 1—13.) This noble hero of her people, Zeruiah delighted to honor. But an impression was abroad that the kingdom should not continue in the family of Saul. And when she saw old Samuel come to her father’s house, and anoint her favorite young brother, and promise him that kingdom of which Jacob had spoken at his death, the transport of Zeruiah was very great. She wept, and gave praise to Israel’s God. She blessed David, and invoked blessings on his kingdom, and earnestly besought the Lord to grant that she might have some hand in furthering

the great object for which he had been called to the throne.

“When the public services of the sacrifice at Bethlehem were closed, and Samuel had come to the house of Jesse, to take leave of the family, Zeruiah came before the venerable old prophet, with her three little sons. The appearance of the lads was fine and promising, and the visage of the mother was animated with a sublime enthusiasm that I have rarely seen equalled. ‘Prophet of the Lord,’ said she, ‘we have learned that you were solemnly dedicated to the service of the God of Israel, from early childhood, by a pious mother.’ ‘True,’ answered Samuel, ‘most true;’ and the tear of affectionate remembrance for the mother he loved, the pious Hannah, filled his eye. (1 Sam. i. 24—28.)

“‘You have this day,’ said Zeruiah, ‘anointed my beloved brother David, to be king over God’s chosen people.’

“‘Jehovah make his kingdom a blessing,’ said Samuel: ‘may the sceptre not depart from his house till Shiloh come.’ (Gen. xlix. 12.)

“‘The foes of Israel are many and strong,’ said Zeruiah; ‘David will need the help of those that are valiant, and faithful, and true. I wish to dedicate these my three sons, in the awful name of Jehovah, to be the supporters of his throne and his kingdom while they live, that the Lord may be glorified, and Israel may be a blessing.’

“‘Jehovah bless the lads,’ said Samuel, with strong emotion, laying his hand in succession on the head of Asahel, and Abishai, and Joab. ‘Jehovah make them renowned champions in Israel, and may the name of

the mother and her sons be had in everlasting remembrance.'

"The old prophet drew his hand across his eyes to remove the tears, then pronounced an appropriate benediction on the whole family of Jesse, and departed for his home at Rama.

"The proper training of her sons for the great service to which she had solemnly devoted them, now became the leading object of Zeruah's life. Lessons of truth, chastity, piety toward God, brotherly affection for each other, zeal for the true religion, heroism in the cause of Israel, and firm fidelity to their uncle, now anointed as their king, were daily inculcated, in the most earnest and persuasive manner; while she held up before their young and susceptible minds the names and character of distinguished heroes in the early history of Israel, and animated them with the hope of being *such men* around their uncle's throne.

"Another circumstance, which greatly contributed to the furtherance of her views, was this: There now resided near Bethlehem an old retired officer of the house of Caleb, who had long been renowned for uncommon skill in the use of the sword, the spear, the shield, and indeed all the implements of war. Zeruah engaged this officer to become the instructor of her sons in the arts of war. The old chief was a perfect enthusiast in this department, and finding an extraordinary aptness in the lads to profit by his instructions, this employment became his daily delight. The remarkable talents of the instructor, and the surprising proficiency of his pupils, were the theme of much admiration in a large district around Bethlehem. And

thus it was that the sons of the pious and patriotic Zeruah were prepared for that conspicuous station they afterwards filled in the armies of Israel.

“The apprehensions,” said Belial, “which I had taken up concerning David, were confirmed at the next war with the Philistines. I had tempted and prevailed on the Philistines to invade the land of Israel. This was one of my favorite methods of annoying the church in that age. And by this means I had repeatedly brought them to the brink of destruction.

“A strong Philistine army had now marched into the country, and Saul had collected a large body of troops to oppose them. The Philistines stood on a mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side; and there was a valley between them. Goliath of Gath now came forth as the champion of the Philistines. He was a giant of tremendous power. His height was six cubits and a span. He was clad in complete armor, and the ‘staff of his spear was like a weaver’s beam, and his spear’s head weighed six hundred shekels of iron.’ He now stood and cried to the army of Israel. ‘Bring out your champion,’ said he, in tones most haughty and daring: ‘let him fight with me. If he be able to kill me, the land shall be yours, and we will be your servants. But if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants and serve us.’ (1 Sam. xvii. 1—10.)

“Saul and all the men of Israel heard this challenge of the towering and terrible warrior in silence and dismay. Even Jonathan, who had performed so many prodigious feats of valor, showed no disposition to engage in single combat with the huge giant of Gath.

“Day after day, Goliath stalked forth, morning and evening, in the view of both armies, boasting of the might of his resistless arm. He told them that he was a worshipper of Dagon; that Dagon was his patron and his God. He cursed them in the name of Dagon. ‘If you think the God of Israel is equal to Dagon,’ said he, ‘come and maintain it in a fight with me. Cowards that you are! You know that your God is not equal to Dagon. You are afraid to trust your God in a battle with a servant of Dagon.’

“Sometimes he walked back and forth midway between the two armies, displaying his stature and his strength. Sometimes he marched up close to the lines of Israel, and still the armed men gave back at his approach. ‘The curse of Dagon be upon you,’ vociferated Goliath, ‘to muster here, and call yourselves warriors, and all fly before a single man. Is there no soldier among you, that has confidence in his God, and can meet a man in battle?’

“‘Witness, O ye armies of Philistines! witness, ye armies of Israel! that all the worshippers of Jehovah tremble and fly before a single worshipper of Dagon!’

“The Philistines rent the air with shouts of triumph till the earth rang again. They despatched swift messengers to carry the glad news to Gath, to Gaza, to Ashdod, to Ekron, and to Askelon. They commanded to publish in all the cities of the Philistines, that they should keep a day of public feasting to Dagon their God; that they should crowd his temples, and pay him peculiar honors for this signal triumph over Israel, and over Israel’s God.

“These tidings also spread with great rapidity through the land of Israel, and there was paleness on every cheek, and trembling in every bosom. Some, with loud and bitter lamentations, bewailed that the glory was departed from Israel. Others uttered fruitless and unavailing wishes that Samson were now alive to stand up as their champion. Others, again, offered up prayers to the God of Abraham, that he would remember his covenant, that he would raise them up a deliverer, and wipe away their reproach. While yet another class began to meditate on the expediency of renouncing the service of Jehovah, and taking up with the idolatries of the heathen.

“Such was the attitude of things in the two armies, and in the two countries, when David first appeared in the battle-field, on an errand from his father, bringing provisions for three elder brothers, who were already enlisted in the army of Saul. While he was conversing with some acquaintances, Goliath approached again: this was the fortieth day he had given the challenge, morning and evening. When David heard the defiance and the insulting boast of the Philistine, his color went and came, and the fire of burning patriotism began to flash from his eyes. ‘Where is King Saul?’ said he. They quickly brought him to Saul.

“‘Is there no man,’ said he to the king, ‘to meet that boasting giant, and vindicate the honor of Israel?’

“‘None,’ said Saul: ‘the mightiest warriors in my army quail and fly at his approach.’ At this speech of the king, there was a momentary expression of shame, mortification, and regret in the visage of David. It was but the ebb before the return of the tide. Another mo-

ment, and his cheeks, and neck, and brow kindled up in an ardent glow of patriotic zeal.

“‘Let no man’s heart fail,’ said David to the king. ‘Thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine.’”

“‘Thou art not able,’ said King Saul, ‘to go against this Philistine, for thou art but a youth, and he is a mighty warrior. He is the most formidable foe that has come against Israel since the days of Joshua. Abner, and Jonathan, and all the valiant men in the army know that he is an overmatch for them. And for you, young and inexperienced, the attempt would be madness.’”

“David replied to the king, ‘I kept my father’s sheep near Bethlehem of Judah. And there came a lion, and took a lamb out of the flock. And I went after him, and took it out of his mouth; and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. A bear also came, and caught a lamb, and I slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. Yes,’ said he, ‘the Lord who delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, will deliver me out of the hand of this blaspheming Philistine.’”

“‘Well,’ said the king, ‘if that is the spirit that animates you, and your resolution is so firmly fixed, go, and the Lord go with you.’”

“When the army of the Philistines, that now stood full in view, saw David take his sling, and a few stones out of the brook, and march to encounter Goliath, they were filled with scorn; and the voice of mockery,

derision, and merriment, could be heard all along their line. As for Goliath, he was deeply insulted when he saw David. 'Am I a dog, that you come to war with me in this style? The curse of Dagon be on you.'

"Said David, '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 my hand, and I will smite thee, and take thy 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.'

"At this, the Philistine raised the visor of his helmet, or that part of his armor that covered his face, and threw it back in perfect contempt of David, leaving his face and forehead bare; and now with huge and haughty strides he rushed upon his foe. David ran to meet him, and, as he was running, he put a stone in his sling, and smote Goliath in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead, and he fell to the ground. David ran and stood upon him, and drew Goliath's sword from the scabbard, and cut off his head with his own sword, and held it up in the view of both armies. When the Philistines saw their champion was dead, they were panic-struck, and fled in the utmost confusion. The men of Israel and Judah arose, and shouted, and pursued the Philistines.

"But I must not omit," said Belial, "here to mention the conduct of Jonathan, the eldest son of Saul, and heir to the crown. He was an enlightened and ardent patriot, and a devout worshipper of God. No man in the

twelve tribes, not even Abner himself, the commander-in-chief of Saul's army, had such reputation for personal valor and unrivalled dexterity in the use of the spear, the sword, and the shield, as Jonathan. He was the favorite of the nation. His praise was in the mouth of the old and the young. And in the social hall, and in the public assembly, his many brilliant military achievements were the theme of the orator and the burden of the poet's song. Not long before this period, a strong garrison of the Philistines, fortified and defended in a manner that was deemed impregnable, had been stormed by Jonathan and Machir, his armor-bearer, and the whole garrison put to the sword ; which so terrified the army of the Philistines, that they fled in the utmost consternation out of the country, and Israel experienced a great deliverance. This and other similar feats of extraordinary valor had spread the renown of Jonathan and Machir through all the cities, towns, and villages of Israel.

“Accordingly, when Goliath first appeared and gave his challenge to decide the matters in dispute by single combat, all eyes were turned to Jonathan. It was the expectation of every officer and soldier in the army, that he would accept the challenge. Had the vote been taken, he would have been chosen their champion without a dissenting voice. But Jonathan, with all his patriotic zeal, was endowed with uncommon soundness of judgment and great political wisdom. He saw that Goliath, from his enormous strength, and the perfection of his armor, which covered him from head to foot, so far superior to his own, must be an overmatch for him in single combat ; and though he dreaded not death, and was ready to sacrifice his life for his coun-

try's good, yet he knew that that life was too valuable to his country to be rashly thrown away in a hazardous venture, where the likelihood of success was a hundred to one against him. He knew, moreover, that should he encounter Goliath, and fall, his fall would be the signal of rout and ruin to the armies of Israel. Her towns would be burned, her country ravaged, and her citizens, without distinction of age or sex, put to the sword. He judged it wiser, therefore, to keep the army together; to skirmish with the enemy, and hold them in check; avoiding, in the mean time, any attempt to hasten a final decision of the war by a personal rencounter with Goliath. As yet, in the skirmishing which took place from day to day, the Philistines had gained no advantage, and though the armed men gave back when Goliath advanced, yet as soon as his parading, and boasting, and cursing were over, and he retired, Jonathan could renew the lines again, and still present an unbroken front to the enemy. He knew farther that an invading army is wearied and worn out by delays, and that patriots have every thing to hope from gaining *time*. And more than all this, he cherished a high confidence in God, and hoped and prayed that He who had so often appeared for the deliverance of his covenant people, would not forsake them now.

“These views Jonathan spread freely and fully before the officers and elders of the army, assembled in general council. He had their unanimous approval and commendation. And yet, notwithstanding all this, — for his name was well known to the Philistine army; he had given them ample cause to know him well, — it required

all the strength of his enlightened judgment, and all his self-command, to enable him to bear in silence the bantering and boasting of Goliath, when he came in the name of Dagon, and defied the armies of the living God. Sometimes the monster came striding up, close to the station where Jonathan commanded, and would call him by name, and brand him with cowardice, for declining to stand forth as the champion of Israel. Repeatedly the tumult of his patriotic emotions was so strong, that he was on the very verge of bursting through all the restraints of prudence and judgment, and rushing to the combat.

“And the difficulties of his situation greatly increased as day after day rolled by. For now visitors came in from all parts of the land of Israel, and reported in the army, that it was the expectation and wish of the whole country that Jonathan should accept the challenge of Goliath; that the people were astonished he had not done it at once, when the challenge was first given; that they were growing impatient at the long delay; that they now demanded it, insisted on it, would not be satisfied without it.

“Often,” said Belial, “among the sons of men, has a foolish and frenzied public sentiment forced the wisest and worthiest patriot, against his own better judgment, into the adoption of measures that have resulted in the ruin of his cause and his country. It seemed inevitable, that it must be so now. The people had heard of the public rejoicings in the land of the Philistines; the feasting and thanksgiving in the temples of Dagon. They were stung with bitter vexation, and their demands became so pressing and imperative, that it

required all the weight of Abner's authority, and the weight of the counsel of all the officers and elders in the army, to restrain the purest and bravest man in Israel from rashly sacrificing himself to the unreasonable wishes of his excited and misguided countrymen. The authority of Abner, however, and the counsel of the elders, as yet prevailed.

“Goliath had now presented himself for thirty-nine days, morning and evening, repeating his challenge, and breathing out insult and defiance against the armies of Israel. The skirmishing, however, for the last week had been but inconsiderable, and the host of the Philistines made no attempt to advance. Jonathan asked and obtained leave from the king to make a hasty visit to his family, who were at a town but a few miles distant, and promised to return early the next morning.

“The meeting with the members of his family was most tender and affectionate. His wife was a superior woman, of uncommon beauty and loftiness of spirit. Her family ranked high among the princes of Benjamin, and many of her ancestors were famous in the annals of Israel. She possessed, in its perfection, this essential endowment of a good wife, that is, a warm and wakeful zeal for the reputation and honor of her husband. From the day of her espousal to Jonathan, the affection and fidelity of her heart had been, like the tide of Jordan in time of harvest, full and overflowing; and very highly did she prize her alliance with the royal family. There was now something sad and disconsolate in her air and manner. Jonathan had marked this at his first arrival; but he ascribed it to the troubles of the times,

and the dark clouds that overhung the prospects of his country.

“He was now seated among his children, the three oldest of which were climbing his knees, and covering his manly face with their fond and repeated caresses. In the midst of these endearments, his little son, of four years old, spoke out — ‘Father, I heard the boys in the street, to-day, saying naughty words about you.’

“‘Ah! my son, what did they say?’

“They said you were a coward, because you would not fight that big giant that defies our king and speaks against our God. And I told mother, and she wept.’

“Jonathan sprang to his feet. It was the first word of *reproach* he had heard from his own people, for many of the complaints that had reached the army had not been told to him. He glanced his eye on the agitated mother of his boy, and saw the big, bright tear that was rolling down over her pale and quivering cheek. She turned away to conceal her emotions, but they were too strong for concealment. She burst into a flood of excessive weeping. He took her hand, and attempted to soothe and comfort her, but it was unavailing. ‘I know your truth,’ said she, ‘your virtue, and your worth, but they are not appreciated; and how can I live amidst the daily taunts I hear, of honor lost, and the faded glory of Israel.’

“This was too much. Jonathan kindly endeavored with tender and soothing words, to calm her troubled spirits, but, at the same moment, silently and immovably, fixed the resolution in his own gallant heart, that be the result victory, or be it death, the challenge of Goliath should not pass unanswered another day.

“Early the next morning Jonathan arose, took an affectionate leave of his beloved family, in order to a hasty return to the army. His wife asked, with much tenderness, when she might look for his return. His answer was evasive and obscure. The settled purpose of his soul, though he would not make it known to her, was that expressed, on another occasion, by the far-famed hero of Troy :—

‘No, if I e'er return, return I must
Glorious, my country's terror laid in dust.’

“Soon after his departure, she entered the hall of the domestics, and learned that the subaltern who had attended Jonathan from the army, had stated there, ‘that the unanimous opinion of all the distinguished warriors in the army was, that no man in Israel would be justifiable in meeting the Philistine champion in the present circumstances ; he being covered with armor of proof, from the most renowned manufactory in Tyre, rendered his person wholly unassailable ; that the men of Israel, who possessed no such armor, could not stand before Goliath on such terms of equality as the laws of fair and honorable combat among valiant men required ; that neither honor, patriotism, nor fame could justify the hero of dauntless heart and strong arm, in exposing his unprotected person to the spear and the sword of a champion, who, being himself clothed in sheets of impenetrable iron and brass, was perfectly secure from wounds.’ He stated, moreover, ‘that in the transient engagements that had taken place between the wings of the two armies, the men of Israel had acquitted themselves well, and the enemy had been effectually held in check ; that the council of war had decided to

act, for the present, wholly on the defensive, and wait the indications of the providence of God.'

"After hearing this, the anxieties and fears of the wife of Jonathan were suddenly and violently impelled into a new channel. She had marked the firm and sublime resolve that was in his eye, and in his manner, at his departure. She knew its meaning well. 'Ah!' she exclaimed, 'should my rash and indiscreet zeal, so hastily expressed, drive that dear, noble patriot to sacrifice his precious life, against the light of his better judgment, bitterly, bitterly must my tears flow. My children fatherless! my country bereaved of its brightest ornament! How can I live under the agonizing thought?' and the tumult of her soul was like the waves that are tossed by the wing of the tempest, through all that tedious and memorable day.

"As for Jonathan, he was now urging his way to the field of action. His purpose being firmly fixed, all the agitation of his mind was past and gone, like the mists of the morning before the advancing day. He had called to mind the promises of God, his covenant faithfulness to Israel, and the many instances in which he had appeared for the salvation of his people in the very darkest hour. He now experienced that calmness and serenity of soul, that belong to that man who sees the path of duty plain, and has a high, unwavering confidence in God. As 'coming events cast their shadows before,' he had a strong inward persuasion that the hour of Goliath's downfall was come, and that the name of the God of Israel would be glorified.

"In this frame of mind he reached the army, and went directly to the pavilion of the king, in order to

make his determination known. On his arrival, he saw a young man, of ruddy countenance and noble bearing, in earnest conversation with King Saul. It was David. He had just declared his determination to meet Goliath in battle, and had obtained the consent of the king and his council of war. Although Jonathan, from the view he had that morning enjoyed of Jehovah's goodness and faithfulness to Israel, had not a doubt remaining on his mind, that the man who went against the champion of Dagon 'in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel,' would certainly prevail, yet he was too magnanimous, too generous and brave, to step between the interesting youth that now stood before him and the prospect of distinction and lasting fame.

"When David marched forth to begin the fight, Jonathan took his stand in the fore front of the army. In his hand was his trusty spear, and that sword was by his side that had often turned the tide of battle and led the hosts of Israel to victory. Though he confidently looked for David's triumph, yet his position and demeanor revealed his intention, that in case David should fall, he himself would rush upon Goliath and conquer or die.

"When Goliath fell, and the Philistine host began to fly, and the men of Israel and Judah arose, and shouted, and pursued them, the pursuit was headed by Jonathan. The thrust of his spear was resistless, and the sweep of his sword terrible to the foes of his country. Many and strong were the armed men that he dashed to the earth, as over valley, hill, and mountain, they fled from the land of Israel. Nor did he pause in the pursuit till the affrighted fragments of the flying army had poured

their confused masses into the gates of Ekron, and the pale and trembling city of Dagon closed and barred her gates against the victorious hosts of the living God. It was in view of the splendid feats of valor performed on this day, that David, long afterwards, when composing that celebrated elegy to the memory of Jonathan, said, 'He was swifter than the eagle, and stronger than the lion.'

"Never shall I forget," said Belial, "the scene which transpired, when the pursuit of the Philistines was over, and the troops of Israel were mustered again in the presence of the king. Abner, the commander-in-chief, took David, and brought him before King Saul, with the head of the Philistine in his hand. Jonathan, having put off his battle garments, was now arrayed in the rich and costly robe which he wore as heir to the crown. He came forward in view of all the officers and the long ranks of the armed men, and, in the most graceful and dignified manner, tendered to David the thanks and gratitude of the king, of the officers and of the army, the thanks and gratitude of his country, and blessed him again and again in the name of his God; then, in a transport of affection and enthusiasm, he clasped him to his bosom, called him his brother, his friend, the light and glory of Israel. He then took off his beautiful garment, and gave it to David, and gave him the broad ornamented belt or girdle that was around him, and gave him his sword and his bow. 'Take these,' said he, 'and wear them as a token of the regard and esteem of your brother Jonathan;' and then and there they made a covenant of eternal fidelity and friendship — a covenant which was never violated.

“The army was now marching back to the cities where their families had been left when they went to the war. At their approach, the women came out singing and dancing to meet King Saul and his victorious soldiers. The sister, the daughter, the wife, and the mother, had taken tabrets, and harps, and instruments of music, and were in perfect ecstasy at the deliverance of their country, and the safe return of their friends.

“In the procession which they had formed, the little girls, with baskets of flowers, were placed in front, the smallest foremost, then the larger girls, then wives, sisters and mothers completed the extended train.

“The long and joyful procession was headed by two females of commanding demeanor and exquisite form ; the one was the wife of Jonathan, the other was Zeruah, the sister of David. The emotions of Zeruah were too strong for utterance ; indeed, they seemed perfectly overwhelming. But what shall I say of the wife of Jonathan ? Praise to the God of battles was her theme ; honor and imperishable renown to the brave soldiers of her country, as with glowing cheek, with lifted hands, and eyes that sparkled through tears of joy, she dictated and sung the following stanzas, which were eagerly caught up and chanted by the animated and triumphant train that followed her : —

SONG OF THE WOMEN OF ISRAEL.

I.

‘Hail to the bannered hosts of God !
And hail to him who fills our throne !
You’ve jeopardized your lives and blood
For those Jehovah calls his own.

We strew these roses in your path ;
 Come, welcome to your homes again.
 King Saul his thousands overthrew,
 And David hath ten thousands slain !

II.

'The foe came on, how fierce and grim !
 How proudly through our fields they strode,
 And vowed they'd make our dwellings swim
 In widows' tears and orphans' blood.
 But at the call of Israel's king,
 Her heroes mustered on the plain,
 And Saul his thousands overthrew,
 And David hath ten thousands slain.

III.

'Goliath led their armies on,
 Blasphemed and blustered in their van,
 And boasted his enormous strength,
 "His height, six cubits and a span."
 But Israel's stripling shepherd boy
 Soon stretched the giant on the plain,
 And Saul his thousands overthrew,
 And David hath ten thousands slain.

IV.

'Aghast the hosts of Dagon saw
 Their tall and towering champion fall,
 And paleness, trembling, panic seized
 Their vaunted warriors, great and small.
 O'er hill and dale, from Israel's land,
 Their frightened legions fled amain,
 And Saul his thousands overthrew,
 And David hath ten thousands slain.

V.

'Hosanna to Jehovah's name !
 To distant lands the tidings tell,
 How all the flower of Dagon's host
 With their blaspheming monster fell.

To sons unborn the tale rehearse,
 Let them to theirs rehearse again,
 How Saul his thousands overthrew,
 And David hath ten thousands slain.

VI.

'Hail to the bannered hosts of God !
 The men who did their country save ;
 Come, sisters, wives, and children, join
 To hail the valiant and the brave.
 We strew these roses in your path ;
 Come, welcome to your homes again ;
 King Saul his thousands overthrew,
 And David hath ten thousands slain.'

"The long ranks of armed men stood silent and still, as the female procession drew nigh, singing this triumphal song. Enchanted and chained by the power of music they stood, while warm floods of gushing tears washed many a manly face, as fathers, husbands, sons, and brothers listened to this delightful welcome.

"The sweet and rapturous music floated wide over the surrounding vales, and echoed and reverberated again from the hills and high mountains of Israel.

"From this period Jonathan and David were much in each other's society. Many an hour did they spend in delightful social intercourse ; many an hour in consultation for the good of their beloved country ; and many an hour—for both were deeply pious—did they spend together in the praise and the worship of their God."

CHAPTER XI.

DAVID'S TRIALS.

“Now,” continued Belial, “when I had witnessed these things, I became confirmed in my suspicions relative to David, that were first awakened by Samuel anointing him king. Very shortly, however, all doubt was removed, when a divine vision was granted to David, and the promise plainly revealed, that the great Messiah should be of his house. On ascertaining this alarming fact, I set my heart against him. I resolved to employ all the talent and artifice of hell in order to accomplish his ruin.”

“David!” said a spirit of darkness, of harsh and savage aspect, who now started up and addressed himself to Belial. “Did I not see David at Mizpeh of Moab, about the period of which you speak?”

“Very likely,” said Belial; “for he soon afterwards fled to Moab, on account of the jealousy and persecution of King Saul.”

“O, I remember him well,” said the demon. “I was then engaged in promoting and extending idolatry in the kingdom of Moab. David came there, and was hospitably received by the king. The king himself was of the family of Ruth, who had been a convert to the Jewish religion, and who was also the grand-

mother of Jesse, the father of David. So there was a relationship between the families. But what I chiefly remember of David, was the psalms and sacred songs that he sung, morning and evening, in the palace of the king, to the praise of the God of Israel. The king of Moab was often deeply affected when hearing the weighty truths of religion that in these psalms and sacred songs were combined with strains of most enchanting melody."

"Psalms and sacred songs!" I believe you," exclaimed a demon of yet fiercer and sterner look. "I heard them too, in the court of Achish, king of Gath, when David was there. And not only was the king impressed, but many of the worshippers of Dagon renounced his service, and went to the land of Israel, and returned no more."

"Yes," answered Belial, "David was also at Gath. But I will proceed with my narrative.

"There were *four* distinct and well-devised plans that I laid for the destruction of David. I will mention them in order.

"The *first* was by inflaming against him the jealousy of Saul. When the women, in their songs and rejoicings, ascribed to David the slaughter of ten thousands of their foes, and ascribed to Saul but thousands, he was much displeased, and began to eye David with suspicion. Presently I contrived to have it told to Saul, that Samuel had anointed David, and promised him the kingdom. This put him perfectly frantic. In short, I succeeded beyond my expectation in marshalling all the power and resources of King Saul for the ruin of David. Often was he brought to the very brink of

destruction, and was saved only by some hair-breadth escape, that was absolutely wonderful. How it happened I never could tell to my own satisfaction. David, I know, ascribed his deliverance in such cases to the hand of God. But I always disliked the doctrine of a special and particular providence in the affairs of men. I much prefer, when any unexpected event has occurred, to speak of it as *chance*, *accident*, or what has just *happened* so, rather than allow it any connection with the *hand* and *counsel* of God. There were three influences, however, that plainly contributed to the escape of David from the snares of Saul.

“*First*, the friendship of Jonathan, that never failed him even in the most dark and trying time. I had labored with all the art I possessed to stir up jealousy also in the bosom of Jonathan. I represented David as his rival in military fame, by whom he had been eclipsed, and thrown quite into the shade. I told him, further, that David was an opposing candidate for the crown, who was likely to supplant him and all the house of his father. With these and many other strong temptations, I tried to arouse jealousy in the soul of Jonathan; but all such attempts were fruitless and vain. You might as well have attempted to corrupt the diamond, or fix a blot on the brow of the morning star.

“When Saul, his father, earnestly strove to prevail on Jonathan to aid in the destruction of David, he remonstrated in a strain so eloquent and just, that even Saul quailed under it, and for a time reversed his purpose.

“‘Let not the king,’ said he, ‘sin against his servant, even against David, because he hath not sinned against

thee, and because his works have been to theeward very good ; for he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the Lord wrought a great salvation for all Israel. Thou sawest it, and didst rejoice ; wherefore, then, wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause ? ’

“ When assailed with the malignant temptations which I suggested in relation to the claims of David to the crown and kingdom, he repelled them at once. His self-denial filled me with astonishment, and his acquiescence in the revealed will of God was almost without parallel.

“ ‘ If the Lord has chosen David to rule over his people Israel,’ said he, ‘ who am I that I should rebel against God ? I know his will is always wise, always good ; therefore, amen ! the will of the Lord be done.’

“ Moreover, Jonathan warned David of the mischief practised against him by Saul, aided him to escape, and repeatedly brought his own life in danger in attempting to save the life of his friend ; and yet he always speaks of his father with respect and reverence. Though Saul was now acting sometimes very foolishly, and sometimes very wickedly, Jonathan always speaks of him with tenderness and affection. And further, he caused David to make a covenant with him and with his house. ‘ I know that thou shalt be king over Israel, and the Lord be with thee, as he hath been with my father, and thou shalt not only while yet I live show me the kindness of the Lord, but also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house forever ; no, not when the Lord hath cut off the enemies of David, every one from the face of the earth.’ And Jonathan caused David to swear

again, because he loved him as he loved his own soul. And though the fortunes of David afterward, for a long season, were gloomy, forbidding, and often desperate, and though friends deserted and sought to accomplish his ruin, yet the fidelity of Jonathan never wavered. His friendship for David was lasting as life. What am I saying? From the statement of great Lucifer just now given, it appears that their friendship is lasting as eternity.

“Such was Jonathan. My narrative for a time must take leave of him here. But his name will go in a stream of light to all succeeding generations.

“The worshippers of Jehovah admired and commended him while he lived, and affectionately embalmed his memory when dead. He was long a favorite theme of conversation in the social circle. Many eulogies were bestowed upon his acts and character; they styled him ‘the affectionate and dutiful son; the warm, worthy, and valiant patriot; the rival of unparalleled generosity and greatness of soul; the pure, spotless, amiable man; the devout, consistent servant of God; and the finest illustration of firm, faithful, exalted friendship to be found in the annals of Adam’s race.’ Many rejoiced when they saw that the acts of Jonathan were written in the book of the chronicles of the church of God — that book which is now spreading round the globe. They rejoiced that its pages will hold up the name and character of Jonathan as long as the sun and moon shall endure, for the wonder, the instruction, and the imitation of the sons of men.

“A *second* source of aid to David amidst the stratagems of Saul,” said Belial, “was the counsel of Ahith-

ophel. This extraordinary man was endued with forecast and political discernment to an extent that was perfectly astonishing. The finest eulogium ever bestowed on the talents of earthly politician, is recorded by the writer of the Second Book of Samuel: 'The counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, was as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God; so was the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom.'

"Modern nations may talk of their Talleyrands, their Chathams, and their Cannings, but never, in all my walks among the sons of men, have I encountered the equal of Ahithophel, the counsellor of David. Often, when Saul and his advisers had thrown around David snares from which it seemed impossible he should escape, it required but a single suggestion from Ahithophel, and all these well-laid plans were left like the remains of that building, where the living coal has touched the powder magazine.

"He seemed to know, with an accuracy that was marvellous, the exact condition of his foe, and the measures he would most certainly adopt. And then, on the question, How shall these measures be counteracted and covered with confusion? his judgment was unerring.

"He never tampered with an adversary. His only aim was total defeat. And his counsel, when followed, was like the red artillery discharged from the black cloud in heaven, shivering to atoms all that is in its pathway, and burying in one common ruin the pygmy and the giant.

"A *third* agency that favored David at this period, was that of a host of valiant men by whom he was surrounded. The names of thirty and seven of his

mightiest men have been handed down in the histories of those times.

“ All of the thirty-seven were not with David yet, though some of the most famous were. I would mention Jashobeam the Tachmonite, and Eleazar the son of Dodo, men of great renown. The Tachmonite had with his spear, in one day, slain eight hundred of the foes of Israel. Eleazar the son of Dodo had also slain three hundred of the Philistines in one battle.

“ But there were two nephews of David, the sons of his sister Zeruah, of whom I wish to speak more particularly. The first I will name was Abishai, a man of an iron frame, and possessing the heart of a lion. In the line of battle he was a pillar of fire, and to encounter the weapon he wielded was certain death. When a troop of Philistines broke into the country, and the men of Israel fled, Abishai planted himself before them, like an impregnable tower, and slew three hundred with his single hand. He was afterwards a famous commander in the armies of David, and has rarely been equalled in any age or country. It is worthy of remark that David, when embarking in any desperate adventure, was sure to select this man to be his companion, and see him through the danger.

“ When Saul came out with three thousand men to seek for David in the wilderness of Ziph, David, from the top of a neighboring mountain, watched the place of Saul's encampment. In the dead of night, when he calculated the men of war, fatigued with a long day's march, would be sound asleep, he determined to go into Saul's camp, and give him some proof, that he had no wish to take his life, or injure him, even when it was clearly in his power. And yet the attempt was

very perilous, for should the guard be awake, he might be taken, and thus fall into the hands of Saul. 'Who will go with me into Saul's camp?' said David to his men. 'I will go,' said Abishai, volunteering in a moment. So David and Abishai came, and behold Saul lay sleeping within the trench, and his spear stuck in the ground at his bolster. But Abner and the people lay round about him. Then said Abishai to David, 'God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand. Let me, I pray thee, smite him with the spear *once*, and I will not smite him the second time.' But David said to Abishai, 'Destroy him not, for who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed, and be guiltless? And moreover,' said David, 'as the Lord liveth, the Lord shall smite him, or his day shall come that he shall die, or he shall descend into battle and perish. The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth my hand against the Lord's anointed. But, Abishai, take the spear that is at his bolster and the cruse of water, and let us go.'

"David, from the top of a distant hill, called to Abner, and reprov'd him for the careless manner in which he had guarded the king, and appealed to Saul if he was not now convinced that he designed him no harm, since he had taken the spear and cruse of water from his bolster, and had made no attempt on his life.

"Such is a sketch of Abishai. You will hear of him again. But I must now say, that Joab, David's other nephew, was a man even more remarkable. Not so broad in the shoulders, nor so heavily built, as Abishai, he was considerably taller, and his whole frame firmly knit from head to foot. He possessed that symmetry of form, those exquisite proportions, that combine activity with strength in the highest perfection. He was, in fact,

the very finest military figure I have ever seen, and to no man could the appellation be given with more propriety, that he was 'born to command.'

"As to his courageous and noble bearing in the horrid front of war, I will rehearse one instance, out of many that might be given. When David was anointed king over all the tribes of Israel, some years after the period of which I have been speaking, he resolved to select Jerusalem as the capital of his kingdom. But the castle of Jerusalem, a very strong fortress, was now in the possession of the Jebusites, the ancient inhabitants of the land. The fortifications of this castle had been constructed at vast expense, and with such consummate skill, that it was deemed absolutely unassailable. It was indeed the Gibraltar of that age and country. The armed men, who defended this tower, scoffed at David from the top of their walls, and boasted that they were beyond his power. David knew that the possession of this place was essential to the prosperity of his kingdom. And yet he knew that the difficulty and danger were such, that he published he would confer the chief command of his army on the man who would take this castle by storm. No sooner was this proclamation made, than Joab, his sister's son, put on his armor, took with him a chosen band, in whom he knew he could confide, and with the agility and fierceness of the Asiatic tiger, scaled the battlements, cut his way through the armed warriors that attempted to resist, and threw them down from the top of their own towers, or at once subdued them by the sword. Thus Joab became commander-in-chief of the army, during the reign of David.

"As a disciplinarian, Joab has had few equals and no

superior in the annals of the military world. The perfect training of the troops under his command stands conspicuous till this day on the pages of the history of those times. When Abner, confiding in the strength of numbers, having all the tribes of Israel, except Judah, under his command, challenged Joab, and the servants of David, to a trial of their skill in arms at the pool of Gibeon, he soon found he had encountered his superior. But the moment that Abner, in his flight, called to Joab, requesting him to stop the pursuit, Joab blew a trumpet, and his army, though flushed with victory, stood still, and pursued after Israel no more. (2 Sam. ii. 28.)

“In like manner, in that decisive battle fought with Absalom, — though the strongest excitement was acting on every mind, — twenty thousand men had been cut down in the terrible strife, and the slaughter was yet at its height, scattered over the extended plain and throughout the wood of Ephraim : yet the instant that Absalom fell, Joab, to prevent the needless effusion of blood, ‘blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing after Israel, for Joab held the people back.’

“As another proof of the extraordinary perfection of the discipline of the army, it is recorded, that when David was flying from Jerusalem, and Shimei came out and cursed him in a manner so rude and provoking, the most valiant man in the life-guards durst not lift his hand to take vengeance on Shimei, without first asking leave of his superior. (2 Sam. xvi. 5—13.)

“I will mention but one example more of the admirable training of the army under this distinguished commander. Long after David had come to the throne, the Syrians, in alliance with the Ammonites, declared

war against him. David sent Joab, and all the host of the mighty men. When they found the enemy, an army of Syrians was encamped in the field, near a city of the Ammonites. Just as Joab had drawn up his army in front of the foe, behold, the gates of the city opened, and a strong body of armed Ammonites poured out, and attacked his troops in the rear. Though this was unexpected, and the foe had planned it with a confidence that it must prove fatal to Israel, yet it required but a moment for such a general as Joab to provide for the emergency. He gave the word of command, and half his army wheeled to the right about, and presented their front to the children of Ammon: he then said to his brother Abishai, 'Take the command, and I will lead the other half against the Syrians.' Then, in one of the noblest military addresses ever delivered at the head of an army, he went on: 'If the Syrians be too strong for me, then shalt thou help me; but if the children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then I will come and help thee. 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.' I need scarcely add, that the Syrians and Ammonites both fled at the first assault; for what could stand before such valor, combined with such discipline? (2 Sam. x. 8—12.)

"Such was Joab. The drilling and mustering of his army, preparatory to some great engagement, was, in that military age, universally regarded as a splendid spectacle.

"Such was the unlimited confidence with which he inspired his soldiers, that they looked only for victory when he was their leader. And in the shock of con-

tending armies, — the critical crisis of battle, when spear meets spear, and sword encounters sword, and the fortune of the day is trembling in even scales, —

‘ One blast upon his bugle horn
Was worth a thousand men.’

“ He never gave a challenge, nor declined a challenge when given. He never asked quarter, nor refused quarter when asked. He never boasted of his own valiant deeds, nor decried the valiant deeds of another. Nor was he ever seen to change color, or appear in the slightest degree fluttered or discomposed, even in the worst extremity. Collected, calm, resolute, he looked danger in the face with an eye that never quailed, and met and mastered the foes of his country wherever they appeared.

“ For forty years, he headed the armies of Israel, and never sustained a defeat. He fought perhaps more than a hundred pitched battles, and was always victorious.

“ In all the campaigns of Israel, while Joab was commander-in-chief, there is not a solitary Flodden field, or field of Waterloo.

“ Such is a *sample* of the brave men who surrounded David during the years of his adversity. And let me repeat, that through these influences, viz., the friendship of Jonathan, the counsel of Ahithophel, and the valor of his soldiers, all the stratagems and efforts of Saul for his destruction were rendered ineffectual and vain.

“ I will now,” said Belial, “ point out the *second* class of snares by which I thought to ruin David. After the lapse of some five years, he became wearied out with

the persecutions of Saul, and resolved to leave the country of Israel, and go and sojourn in the land of the Philistines. He accordingly took his residence in the dominions of Achish, king of Gath.

“Achish was the enemy of Saul, and the enemy of Israel. He gave David a very cordial reception. He saw it was weakening the host of Israel. It was fostering their divisions. And he was glad to have a warrior of such renown, and such a company of valiant men, added to the forces under his command. And as David and his men brought their households with them, Achish considered this a sufficient guaranty of their fidelity. (1 Sam. xxvii. 1—7.)

“Achish, also, to confirm David and his men in the interest of their new prince, gave them the city of Ziklag for their permanent home. This was exceedingly gratifying to them, after the long years of wandering and peril through which they had passed.

“I was much delighted,” said Belial, “with this new arrangement. I saw it would give me advantages against David, which, until now, I had not anticipated.

“Since the death of Moses, and the settlement of the tribes in Canaan, I had rarely known an Israelite who, either from choice or necessity, left the land where God had planted his people, and settled permanently in the midst of a heathen nation, but he gradually fell in with the idolatries that were prevalent and fashionable around him, and ultimately abandoned entirely the worship of Jehovah. I hoped this result would follow in the case of David.

“Idol gods, of costly material and splendid work-

manship, were now set up throughout the land of the Philistines, and wealth and respectability, fashion and public sentiment, exerted all their influence to hurry the multitude along in the broad way. I had, for a time, high hopes that David and his men, exiled from their own country, would be carried away by this strong and sweeping tide. The king of Israel had sought his life with a persevering bitterness that seemed to know no limit, and few of the people of Israel had so sympathized during his multiplied and protracted wrongs, as to offer him shelter or protection. Achish, a worshipper of Dagon, had not only received him kindly when houseless and friendless, but had generously given the city of Ziklag, with its fields and its vineyards, to him and his men for their permanent home.

“David acknowledged, in public and in private, the obligations under which he was brought by the generous and hospitable treatment of the king; and such were his professions of gratitude and fidelity, and, indeed, such the general tenor of his conduct, that Achish now reposed in him the highest confidence, and gave him one of the most honorable and important commissions in his army: that is, he made him commander of the life-guards that were about his own person.

“I now brought before the mind of David every plausible temptation I could invent, to induce him to adopt the religion of King Achish. I assured him that the personal advantages would be immense; that nothing he could do would so highly gratify the king, and that it would open to him the most splendid prospects of advancement. But he would not entertain the temptation; no, not for an hour.

“The psalms and sacred songs composed by David have been mentioned already. He was a poet of the highest order, and his psalms abounded with celebrations of the mercy and truth, the wisdom and power, the justice and glory, of the God of Israel. Many of them were historical, containing a sublime rehearsal of the mighty acts of Jehovah in behalf of his covenant people in the earlier ages of the world. Others were prophetic, looked far into the future, dwelt on the promises of God, and the glorious things that were spoken of the church for generations to come. David also excelled as a musician. Early in life his reputation as a skilful performer on the harp brought him to the court of King Saul, to cheer him in those seasons of melancholy to which he was subject; and old Jewish records, till this day, speak of his ‘melodious voice,’ and of his being ‘master of hymns.’

“Now,” said Belial, “long experience has convinced me that divine truth embodied in beautiful poetry, and accompanied by the charms of music, is peculiarly to be dreaded by the hosts of hell. Truth presented in that form arrests the *attention* of men, fastens on the *memory*, and penetrates the *heart*. I will speak on this subject again. But, powers of darkness, in all your wars with the church of God, guard that point, — I warn you, guard it.

“David, while in the country of the Philistines, often employed his evenings, and other seasons of leisure, in celebrating the praises of Jehovah in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. His soldiers joined with him in these seasons of worship. The scenes to them were impressive and solemn. It was ‘singing the Lord’s

song in a strange land.' Many of the Philistines would gather round on these occasions, and listen with profound attention. It was mentioned by one, not long since, that many of the Philistines, at this period, were converted to the religion of Israel. Yes, indeed, those Gittites that came with David from Gath, and those Cherethites and Pelethites that were afterwards so famous in his armies, were chiefly Philistines, who, about this time, embraced the religion of Israel. Indeed, this sojourning of David in the country of the Philistines 'a full year and four months,' though not originally designed as such, proved to be the most successful 'mission to the heathen,' that had yet been performed by the church of God.

"It was at the close of one of those beautiful days so common in the fine climate of Palestine; night had thrown her sable mantle over mountain, lake, and plain, announcing to wearied, care-worn man the season of rest; a broad, bright moon had just appeared above the eastern horizon, and David's men had gathered around him for the purpose of evening devotion. Abiathar, the priest, who had fled to David when Saul, in a fit of frenzy, had slain his father and all the priests of the Lord, was now reading to the company in the book of the law of Moses. A young man, of stately form and modest countenance, entered the room, took his seat in silence, and listened to the reading of the law. The portion selected by Abiathar, on that evening, was the history of the death of the first born in Egypt, the departure of Israel, the pursuit of Pharaoh, and the destruction of his host in the Red Sea. Then David took his harp and led the music, while the whole com-

pany joined to sing the song of Moses, recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Exodus. Then a season was spent in prayer.

“After the worship was concluded, David addressed the young man, whom he well knew as a younger son of the king of Gath.

“‘The blessings of the evening be upon you, Ittai. We are glad to have you with us at our devotions.’

“‘I have long desired,’ said the youth, ‘to learn more of the fame of the great God of Israel.’

“‘You have long desired it?’ inquired David.

“‘Yes, long,’ answered Ittai. ‘My mother, when I was a child, told me of strange things that were done at Ashdod, and at Ekron, and at Gath, when the ark of the God of Israel was brought into our country, and how Dagon fell before it, time after time, and how the head of Dagon, and the hands of Dagon, were cut off, when he fell before the God of Israel.’

“‘Ah! have you been told of those things?’

“‘From very early childhood,’ said Ittai. ‘And there was something in the manner my mother talked on these subjects, that led me to doubt whether she believed that Dagon was the supreme God. This gave me great distress, for I had thought there was no God in the world equal to Dagon, and I wished to think so still; but my mother’s words had excited painful apprehensions. I was then between ten and twelve years old. I went into the temple of Dagon; I looked at him. He was great and grand. His head, and face, and arms, and all his upper parts, were like a huge, gigantic man, but all his lower parts were like a great fish. I looked at his eyes, and tried to get him to look at me. I

would go to one side of the temple and stand, and then walk to the other side, to see if he would turn his eyes after me; but he kept staring right forward, and did not seem to notice me. I was perplexed. As yet, I doubted not that Dagon was a god, but I was anxious to have him prove to be greater than the God of Israel. I left the temple, and went to an old, gray-headed bard and soothsayer, that was about my father's court. I asked him if he could tell me about the wonderful works of the God of Israel.

““Certainly,” said he, “certainly: they are among the first things I remember. The dim and early recollections of my childhood are full of them. When I was a small boy, there were old, venerable bards then living, who rehearsed many marvellous traditions. They related that the God of Israel divided the Red Sea, and led his people through on dry ground, and that a great king of Egypt, who attempted to follow them, and all his army, were drowned. They related that there was a large fiery cloud went before the armies of Israel, and that it burned so brightly that it could be seen from the temple towers and mountain tops of Palestine many months before their arrival; that when they came to Jordan, at a time when the waters overflowed all its banks, their God divided the river, and caused all their armies to go through on dry ground.” Said the old bard, “I myself, when I travelled in that country, have seen a stone pillar, that was set up by Joshua at Gilgal, near Jordan, to perpetuate the memory of that marvellous event. And, moreover, I was told by those aged fathers of song, that when the Canaanites mustered all their armies to fight with Israel, the great

Jehovah defeated the Canaanites, and caused the sun and moon to stand still for the space of a whole day, while the Canaanites were flying and Israel pursuing, that the victory might be the more complete.'

" 'Here,' said Ittai, 'I asked the old bard, if he did not think that Dagon could divide the Red Sea, and stop the stream of Jordan, and make the sun and moon stand still, if he would try.'

" 'But the old man dropped his eyes to the ground, looked confounded, slightly shook his aged head, and remained silent. I left him more perplexed than ever. I went back to the temple of Dagon again. I looked more closely at his eyes; I began to think he could not see at all. His hands appeared motionless and stiff. I was now imboldened, and spoke to him; but he was dumb. I began to doubt whether he had any knowledge, — in short, whether he was a god that could see, or hear, or help those who called upon him. From that period,' said Ittai, 'my mind has been troubled on this subject, and I have come to-night to learn more of the knowledge of the God of Israel.'

"David admired to hear these statements from the young prince; yet, being now in the employment of Achish, he judged it best to say but little of Dagon; but he spoke in kind and encouraging terms to the young prince.

" 'We have here, Ittai,' said he, 'the sacred books that will give you the information you desire concerning the great Jehovah; that he is the living and true God, that created the world, the great sea, and the dry land; that he created the sun and the moon, and all the stars of heaven, and upholds them all by his mighty

and matchless power. These books will tell you that God created man at first holy and happy. O, he was not then in the sinful and wretched state you find him now. He was not the child of wrath, the heir of misery, the victim of death, when he came from the forming hand of God. Sin committed against God is the source of all our sorrow and woe.'

"'I have heard,' answered Ittai, 'of a golden age, when the world was much happier than it is now.'

"'These sacred books,' continued David, 'will tell you of God's mercy to man in the midst of his guilt and his ruin; also of that great Redeemer God has promised to man, who will bring everlasting righteousness, and prepare us for a better world. Here, also, you will find the history of holy men, in ages that are gone, who loved and served the Lord, and are now in the world of glory. Come and visit me often. Abiathar or myself will be happy to read for you in the holy oracles; or, as you are learned, you can read them yourself. You will find there divine truths more precious than thousands of silver and gold; sweeter, also, than honey and the honey-comb.'

"'I shall certainly avail myself of your invitation,' said Ittai. 'It is the information I have most ardently desired. But, perhaps before I leave you to-night, you and your singing men would be willing to let me hear another hymn to the praise of the great Jehovah.'

"'Willingly, willingly,' said David, taking up his harp, and striking a lively and beautiful air. The countenances of his men, who had been listening to this conversation, were beaming with delight, and they

joined their voices with the deep tones of the harp, and sung the following

HYMN TO JEHOVAH.

I.

'Come worship Jehovah, the holy, the high,
Whose hand formed the ocean, the earth, and the sky;
The boundless creation arose at his word;
Hosanna ! hosanna ! aloud to the Lord.

II.

'O sun, speak his praise in the firmament bright;
Ye far distant stars, speak his praises by night;
Let earthquakes and tempests rehearse his great name,
And lightnings and thunders his grandeur proclaim.

III.

'O man, thou art formed his blest image to bear:
The stamp of his own immortality 's there.
Ye nations, look up, from the field, from the flood,
And sing hallelujahs aloud to your God.

IV.

'The heathenish idols, how senseless and vain !
They're rudely and stupidly fashioned like men ;
What folly to yield them our worship or love, —
Their tongue cannot speak, and their feet cannot move.

V.

'Shall rational man put his confidence there ?
Can dull, wooden ears hear the language of prayer ?
Can eyes that are blind see when dangers are nigh ?
Can hands that are motionless help when we cry ?

VI.

'Come worship Jehovah ; to him let us pray,
Whose blessings surround us by night and by day.
How rich is the promise his mercy hath given
Of pardon on earth and salvation in heaven !

VII.

•His word, like the mountains, stands stable and sure;
The sun and the moon not so long shall endure.
Hail, hope of redemption from death and the grave;
Hail, promised Messiah! thou mighty to save!

“Ittai departed for the night, but often repeated his visits; and read, under the direction of Abiathar, the five books of Moses, the books of Joshua and Judges, and soon became a believer in the religion of Israel, and a worshipper of Jehovah.

“I discovered,” said Belial, “that things were going very differently indeed from my first anticipations. There is enormous difficulty in drawing that man into idolatry, or any kind of vice, who punctually and firmly maintains the ordinance of family worship. Instead of David and his men falling in with the religion of Dagon, they were leading the Philistines to embrace the service of Jehovah; and I determined that as speedily as possible this whole business should be broken up.

“I set all my forces to work, brewing war with Israel through all the country of the Philistines. I saw, with the clearness of demonstration, that this would throw around David mountains of difficulty from which there could be no escape. To the war he must go; as commander of the life-guards, there was no avoiding it. If he turned traitor to Achish, who had so nobly befriended him in the day of his deep calamity, it would blast his name and memory forever, where truth and honor are regarded; and on the other hand, if he fought with the Philistines, under the banner of Dagon, against his own people, who were fighting under the banner of his God, infamy, black as the night of Egypt, must over-

whelm his character among them, and fatally blight all his hopes of reaching the throne. My prospect of success here was brilliant, and my hopes were high. It was by far the best snare I had yet been able to set for David. Escape appeared impossible. I looked upon his overthrow as certain. Every thing succeeded admirably. War was declared. Achish mustered his numerous armies and marched to the battle. David, as commander of the life-guards, was summoned to attend. He and his men had been newly and elegantly equipped for this great expedition. When marching along with King Achish, their appearance was exceedingly fine; the unrivalled discipline and beautiful array of the life-guards was the theme of remark through the whole army. I may observe here that Achish himself was now very favorably disposed towards the Jewish religion, if he had not actually embraced it in his heart: he speaks of the 'angel of God' as you might expect a pious Jew to speak, and appeals to Jehovah, and swears by his name, as no Philistine had been known to do.

"And now the crisis approached. The battle was nigh, and David must either fight against his own people, or turn traitor to the hospitable Achish. Look which way he would, disgrace and ruin seemed inevitable. But just at this critical juncture, whether it was chance, or whether it was providence, I never could learn; I have since strongly suspected it was by some adroit manœuvre of that unaccountable Ahithophel, who was now with David as his counsellor: all at once the lords of the Philistines became jealous, angry, outrageous against David and his men. They came up in a body to King Achish. 'What do these Hebrews here? Is

not this David, of whom they sung, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." Make him return, lest in the battle he be an adversary to us. For wherewith should he reconcile himself unto his master? Should it not be with the heads of these men?' King Achish, finding that the lords of the Philistines were jealous of David, commanded him to return early the next morning to Ziklag, expressing, at the same time, in the strongest terms, his own unshaken confidence, and commending the conduct of David all the while he had been with him. (1 Sam. xxix. 1—11.)

"Thus," said Belial, "all my fine stratagems were swept away like the smoke of the traveller's tent before the wind of the desert."

"But you should tell," said the Philistine demon, now rising again, and seeming not to be altogether pleased with the version of the story as it had been related, "you should tell how the battle went."

"The battle," said Belial; "O, the Philistines gained the battle — a decided victory."

"Yes," said the demon, "and a glorious victory it was, and the men of Israel fled, notwithstanding all you have said of the valor of Joab and Abishai."

"Joab and Abishai were not there," answered Belial: "they were with David, and returned to Ziklag, when David was sent back by King Achish. But the victory of the Philistines was complete. King Saul was slain, and his three sons, and, indeed, the flower of his army."

CHAPTER XII.

ZERUIAH AND SAMUEL.

“It is now necessary,” said Belial, “to notice more particularly some circumstances in the history of the family of Jesse, the father of David. The residence of this family was at Bethlehem, on the lot of land that fell to Salmon, one of the princes of Judah, when the inheritance in Canaan was divided among the tribes by Joshua. Salmon was renowned among the ancestors of the house of Jesse. He was one of the two spies that Joshua sent to search out Jericho, who were saved from the wrath of the king of Jericho by Rahab, who hid them among some stalks of flax upon the roof of her house, and then sent them in safety away. Salmon afterwards married Rahab, and she became the mother of Boaz, whose history is so particularly detailed in the book of Ruth.

“The family estate on which Jesse resided, having been, during a number of generations, occupied by the princes of Judah, was improved, adorned, and beautified in a very high degree. The house of Jesse was one of the favorite resting-places of the prophet Samuel, while he travelled as a circuit judge, administering the laws among the people of Israel. And the members of the family had thus enjoyed the privilege of forming inti-

mate acquaintance and friendship with the venerated old prophet. (1 Sam. vii. 15—17.)

“Zeruiah, the oldest daughter, had taken great delight in pointing out to Samuel those parts of the establishment that were connected with interesting family traditions, and exhibiting to him such memorials as had come down to them from former generations. She showed him the field in which Ruth was gleaning after the reapers, when she first attracted the attention of Boaz, and the veil in which she carried the barley to her mother-in-law, also the cord of scarlet thread — for it was still preserved in the family — by which Rahab had let down the two spies, over the wall of Jericho, that they might escape to the mountains till the pursuit should be over. (Ruth ii. 5—17; iii. 15. Josh. ii. 18.)

“Samuel carefully availed himself of these opportunities, by pointing their minds to the hand and providence of God, as it appears in the early history of the church, and aiding them to apprehend the great doctrines of religion, as unfolded in the oracles of God. Indeed, the prophet Samuel was one of the most powerful men that ever arose in Israel. Of the power which attended his preaching there is a record, 1 Sam. xix. 18—24. Saul had sent a company of rude soldiers to take David. Samuel was holding a meeting, of several days’ continuance, at Naioth, and David with him. Saul’s soldiers came, and were subdued by the power of divine truth. Another company, and then another, came; and at last the king himself ventured nigh, and was disarmed and overcome by the solemnity and power present in this religious meeting.

“When the jealousy of King Saul became inflamed

against David, it was not long till it began to manifest itself towards all his father's house. The three oldest sons of Jesse had for a time been soldiers in the army of Saul, and they had been very acceptable to the king. But now, causes of alarm became daily more and more apparent, until it was plain that the family could no longer remain at their beloved and peaceful home in Bethlehem, but at the imminent peril of their lives.

“Doeg, the Edomite, the armor-bearer of King Saul, was excessive in his cruelty and vindictiveness against such as were thought to be favorable to David. The family of Jesse, therefore, with tears and anguish of spirit, fled from their habitation at Bethlehem, and came to David at the cave of Adullam. David knew, however, that his aged parents could not endure the exposure and hardships of such a life as he must lead. He, therefore, went to the king of Moab, and said, ‘Let my father and my mother, I pray thee, come down and be with you, until I know what God will do for me.’ The king of Moab gave them a welcome reception, and they remained there all the while David was so hotly persecuted by Saul. (1 Sam. xxii. 1—4.)

“But the persecutions of David continued long. Darker and yet more dark grew the clouds that threatened and thickened around him. The whole energies of Saul's administration were now mustered for his destruction. Jesse was now becoming an aged man. The frailties and infirmities of advancing years began to bear heavily upon him. Being weary of exile, and hearing that his house and possessions at Bethlehem had been laid waste by Doeg, the Edomite, it seemed that his trials were becoming heavier than he could bear. His

sons were all away with David. But his wife and the dutiful Zeruah endeavored to cheer his heart, and call up such motives to constancy, and confidence in the promises of God, as their minds could suggest. Yet they, too, were often almost overborne by discouragements.

“Zeruah herself had entertained the brightest anticipations, when she saw her brother David anointed by Samuel, and heard the promise that he should have the kingdom over God’s covenant people. But now things had fallen out so widely different from all her fond expectations, that she was perplexed and bewildered in the mazes of doubt and uncertainty.

“Her father’s despondency and discouragement weighed heavily on her spirit, while month after month, and year after year, rolled by, and yet she could see no prospect of the dawning of a brighter day.

“In this juncture of affairs, Zeruah resolved to make a visit to their old friend, the prophet Samuel, in hope to obtain some light on the mysterious and frowning providences by which they were surrounded, and also hoping that this experienced servant of God, so long and so highly venerated by the family, could send some message of comfort and consolation to sustain the drooping heart of her aged father.

“Samuel himself was now almost at the end of his earthly journey. His cheek was pale, his frame emaciated and frail, and his hands trembled with age. But there was a light and serenity in his eye, and a happy cheerfulness in his voice, which showed that his soul was leaning on some invisible support, which he regarded as sure and steadfast.

“Zeruah came before him, and stood in silence.

“ ‘The blessing of Jehovah be upon thee, my daughter: the Lord will yet perform all that he hath spoken.’

“ ‘My father,’ said Zeruiah: her utterance failed, while the tears streamed over both her cheeks and ran down to the floor.

“ ‘Your father,’ said Samuel, ‘is distressed because of the unreasonable and long-continued persecutions of Saul. Ah, long and deeply did I mourn for Saul. But the Lord rebuked me, and told me that he had rejected him. But your father and his family are not in personal danger; are they not secure in their exile?’

“ ‘We are sheltered by the king of Moab,’ said Zeruiah, ‘and our lives are not in immediate danger. But our homes and estates have been ravaged and ruined. The people among whom we live, you know, are all idolaters; the name of Israel’s God is a by-word. Shocking forms of wickedness come before our eyes every day. It is distressing to live in such society. We hoped at first that our exile would be but of brief duration. But it has now continued long; and our prospects seem to be growing darker. We fear our youth will become contaminated by the vile practices they must witness every day.’

“ ‘O, let me inquire,’ said Samuel, ‘where are those three interesting little sons you dedicated to the support of Israel’s throne, on the day your brother David was anointed? They must be grown to the stature of men by this time.’

“ ‘They are all away with their uncle,’ said Zeruiah, ‘sharing his privations and his dangers. They have resolved, with one heart, to protect and defend him to the utmost; and if he perishes, to perish with him.’

They will shun no hazard to themselves, they will shrink from no personal risk in order to sustain David. It is the lesson I have taught them since the day you laid your hand on their dear heads at Bethlehem; and though I feel all a mother's anxiety for their safety, yet I glory in the cause to which their lives are devoted.'

" 'The Lord preserve and bless them!' rejoined Samuel. 'I have often thought of them, and made mention of them in my prayers, since that day when you made the solemn dedication of them in Jehovah's great name. May Jehovah be their Guide and Defender; may they be all that your heart has desired and longed for; and may they be remembered through all succeeding ages as successful and famous champions in Israel.'

"The old prophet uttered these invocations with an earnestness and fervor that sent strong and thrilling vibrations through the mother's heart. She stood for a few moments in profound silence, while her lips moved, as if in prayer. She then resumed her first topic.

" 'My father is so discouraged with our multiplied and protracted trials, that I fear his heart will sink. Can you not send him some word of encouragement, that will cheer and strengthen his spirit amidst our present distresses?'

" 'Certainly,' answered Samuel, 'certainly. Tell him to make the eternal God his refuge, and to lean on the everlasting arms. The book of God has been much read in your family, I know, for I have found you often reading it when I have visited your house.'

" 'We have read much,' answered Zeruah, 'in the Book of the Law of the Lord: it has been a light to our feet and a lamp to our path.'

“ ‘Learn then,’ said Samuel, ‘the lessons of wisdom that are there, concerning the providence of God; often too deep and mysterious for us to comprehend at once, but always divinely wise and divinely good. Tell my old friend Jesse to read attentively the history of Joseph: he will there find a beautiful illustration of the perfection of divine providence, even when thick darkness is around his people.’ (Gen. xxxvii. xxxix.—xlvi.)

“ ‘We have read the history of Joseph much in our family,’ answered Zeruah, ‘and particularly of late.’

“ ‘Well,’ said Samuel,—and he rose from the couch on which he had been reclining, and sat upright, while a peculiar glow of pleasing animation overspread all his visage,—‘well, it is most appropriate to your present condition. Now remark,—

“ ‘1st. Joseph was torn from his kind father and sold into bondage; and sold too by brothers whom he loved and honored. This made the trial doubly severe.

“ ‘2d. He was carried far away into the heart of a heathen country, where the name of his God was dishonored and blasphemed.

“ ‘3d. There he was not only put into the condition of a slave, but was falsely accused of the foulest crime, and thrown into prison, among the vilest offenders. And none appeared to plead his cause, or vindicate his character, and he had no means whatever to make his innocence appear.

“ ‘4th. In that prison he remained for the space of thirteen years, deprived of his liberty, and the darkest imputations resting on his name and character.

“ ‘Now, how strange all this must have appeared to Joseph, conscious of his innocence, during these thir-

teen years! How often was he ready to exclaim, "Has God forgotten me? Is his ear deaf to prayer? Will he be favorable no more?" And I may say further, How strange did all this appear to good old Jacob! That well-remembered coat, all stained with blood, he kept hanging up in his tent. How often he looked upon it with eyes that were dimmed with tears! It was all that was left of Joseph. He refused to be comforted. "I will go down to the grave," said he, "sorrowing for my son."

"But now, Zeruiah, my daughter," said Samuel, 'look at the providence of God in all this. During this long, dreary wintry season, as I may call it, see what a rich harvest of joy he was preparing for Joseph, for Jacob, for the church of God in that age, and in all ages until the end of time. First, Joseph is brought out of that prison in circumstances that showed Pharaoh, and showed all Egypt, the folly and nothingness of the idols they so wickedly worshipped, and that the God of Abraham was the only living and true God. He alone could foresee the coming famine, and instruct them how to make the needful preparations.

"Again; This great lesson is not confined to Egypt. But all surrounding lands, that come into Egypt to buy corn, learn the story. They return to their homes, and tell the wondrous history there—the strange dreams of Pharaoh—the perplexity and confusion of the magicians and astrologers of Egypt, who could not interpret the dreams of the king—then, how Joseph, a servant of the true God, is brought forward—how he expounded all to the king—was

made governor over all the land — made extensive and ample provision for the coming famine, by which so many thousand lives were preserved, that otherwise must have perished. These facts were rehearsed through all surrounding lands, to the honor of the true religion, to the confusion of their idols, and to the glory of the great name of the God of Israel.

“ ‘ And, moreover,’ continued Samuel, ‘ I might add that Joseph himself, by the sore trials through which he was led, was matured in piety, as gold is refined in the furnace, and fitted for the high station for which the Lord designed him. We should not have had such a lovely and instructive character exhibited in the history of Joseph, had he not been thus disciplined and trained in the school of affliction. And further still ; the venerable old patriarch, Jacob, was comforted ; saw that the Lord had done all things well ; and was encouraged to hope in God, and look with unwavering confidence for the fulfilment of all his divine promises. Yes,’ exclaimed the old prophet, elevating his voice, and kindling with the majesty and grandeur of his subject, — ‘ yes, after so many years of clouds and darkness, the sun at length broke out, and shone with peculiar serenity and sweetness on the head of the patriarch through all the remainder of his years upon earth.

“ ‘ Now, Zeruah, my daughter, these things were written for our instruction, that we may not faint in seasons of trial, but have confidence in God. He is a rock ; his work is perfect. Blessed are all they who put their trust in him.’

“ ‘ I see great beauty in the history of Joseph,’ said

Zeruiah, 'and the instruction is delightful. But, prophet of God, are we to believe that divine providence is the same now that it was in the days of Joseph? Is there the same careful, constant, almighty guardianship around the worshippers of God now, that there was in the time of the early patriarchs?'

"'Unquestionably!' exclaimed Samuel, with an earnestness that was vehement, 'unquestionably! There is no change with God. His wisdom, goodness, and power are as active, and as near to us now, as in the days when Enoch, Joseph, or Moses were in their pilgrimage through the earth. Those who, in future ages, shall read the history of the church in this period, will see that the trials through which your brother David is now passing, were just as necessary, and as wisely appointed, to prepare him for the important station to which God has called him, as were the trials I have mentioned in the case of Joseph. There is no variableness with God. He is the same from everlasting to everlasting.

"'Rehearse to your father what I have told you now. It is surely calculated, with the blessing of God, to strengthen his heart.

"'But,' continued the old prophet, 'the question you have asked suggests the propriety of giving another and more modern illustration of the same truth. I know there are many who are not aware that God is as nigh to the church now as in days of old. I will therefore mention an instance that has occurred within my own life.

"'You were not born at the period of which I speak, but your father will remember it well. I allude to the

dreadful distress and desolation of spirit that overspread all the land, on the loss of the battle of Eben-ezer. The venerable Eli was priest of the Lord in those days. He was an amiable and excellent man, though he failed much in the government and proper restraint of his family. His sons were very wicked, and among the people there was much proneness to idolatry. The Lord had sent a warning, that he would "do a thing in Israel at which both the ears of every one that heard it should tingle."

"Soon the Philistines, with a powerful army, invaded the country. Our people went out to resist them, and pitched their camp beside Eben-ezer. In the first day's battle our army was worsted. About four thousand men were slain. But it was not a rout, or a defeat, for they maintained their ground through the day, and returned to the camp in tolerable order. That evening, the elders of Israel held a council, and concluded that, if they should send and fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh, and take it with them the next day into the battle, then the Lord would give them the victory. It was a foolish and vain confidence they had in the ark, for the Lord was angry with them for their sins.

"When the ark came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again. When the Philistines heard the shout, they were afraid. They had heard traditions of the mighty works of our God in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness, and they thought that this dreadful God was now come into our camp. So the leaders went among the soldiers, and urged them to fight in the next day's

battle with desperate bravery, lest they should be overcome by the God of Israel.

“The taking of the ark from Shiloh to the army made an awful impression in that city. Many of the people wept at its departure. Such a thing had never, since it was stationed there, been done before. My venerable instructor, the aged Eli, looked as if his heart would burst with grief; but he was silent, and made no objection. His two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, went along to carry the ark. Anxiety and dread were depicted in every countenance. We passed a sleepless night in Shiloh.

“Early the next morning, all eyes were turned towards the camp at Eben-ezer. Eli, the high priest, was now ninety and eight years old. His eyes were dim that he could not see. He requested me to lead him, and fix his seat by the wayside, at a little distance from the gate, that he might catch the first news from the army. His heart trembled for the ark of God. While leading him along, I felt the quivering of his hand, and the shuddering of his whole frame. It seemed ominous and awful.

“The doors and windows that looked towards Eben-ezer were now crowded. Indeed, the house tops and city wall were thronged with eager spectators, while hour after hour passed by. The suspense and agitating uncertainty was scarcely supportable. At length a single messenger was discovered coming from the army at the utmost speed. On his nearer approach, he was identified as one of the princes of Benjamin, a man of great worth, renowned for valor and patriotism. Every bosom throbbed as he drew nearer and nearer. We

could see that his clothes were rent, and he had earth upon his head.

““ All is lost ! ” he proclaimed in a loud and bitter cry, and shrieks, plaints, and wailings of despair spread through the city.

““ What ! what is the meaning of this tumult ? ” said Eli. And the man came hastily before him, and said, “ I am he that came out of the army, and I fled to-day.”

““ Eli raised his sightless eyeballs towards the messenger, and lifted his hands.

““ What is there done, my son ? ” ”

““ In all my life,’ said Samuel, ‘ I have heard nothing from the lips of man so awfully eloquent as the four sentences in which that man of Benjamin replied to the question of Eli.

““ The messenger answered and said, “ Israel is fled before the Philistines ! and there hath been a great slaughter among the people ! and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead ! and the ark of God is taken ! ”

““ The venerable old Eli bore up under it all, as it came, sentence after sentence, heavier and heavier, till the messenger reached the last clause — “ the ark of God is taken ! ” That broke his heart. He fell backward from his seat, and died.

““ As another evidence of the dejected and desolate state of the mind of the people of God at this time, I would mention that the wife of Phinehas, who died that same day, a pious and excellent woman, gave to her infant son the name Ichabod, saying, “ The glory is departed from Israel, for the ark of God is taken ! ”

““ Now, my daughter,’ said Samuel to Zeruiah, ‘ ob-

serve the providence of God in all this. We thought the glory was departed from Israel when the ark of God was taken. The Philistines thought so too. They took the ark of God in triumph, and brought it to Ashdod, to the house of Dagon, their god. They were worshippers of idols, and many of them were so stupid as to think that this was really the God of Israel they had taken captive. They all thought that Dagon had triumphed over Jehovah.

“They put the ark before Dagon as his captive, and they had public rejoicings through all the land, in honor of Dagon. But the next morning, when they came early to Dagon’s temple, to renew their honors, “behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the Lord.” Astonished, ashamed, mortified, the priests of Dagon took him up and set him in his place again. They were not a little grieved at this dishonor of Dagon; but they tried to explain it away, alleging that it was only an accident.

“But, the next morning, when they came early to the temple again, “behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord, and the head of Dagon, and both the palms of his hands, were cut off upon the threshold; only the stump of Dagon was left to him!”

“The tidings of these marvellous and memorable events spread on the wings of the wind through all the country of the Philistines, to the confusion of their idols and the honor of the God of Israel.’

“Here the excitement of the old prophet became remarkable. His eyes sparkled; his countenance glowed; his whole frame appeared animated with a divine en-

thusiasm. 'Yes,' he continued, 'the tidings of these marvellous events came and spread through all the land of Israel, to the joy of the friends of God, and the confirming of all who delighted in his worship. The Philistines were stubborn and unyielding for a long time; but the hand of God was heavier and heavier upon them. They carried the ark from Ashdod to Gath, and from Gath to Ekron; but the scourge of God was upon them, — pestilence and the plague thinned their population. They cried to Dagon for help; they prayed to all their idols; but it was vain. At the end of seven months, scourged and humbled under the mighty hand of God, they resolved, by a unanimous vote of their rulers, with their priests and diviners, to send back the ark of the God of Israel. The five lords of the Philistines brought it, accompanied with rich presents, and delivered it into the hands of the men of Bethshemesh.

“‘No event,’ said Samuel, ‘since the days of Joshua, has had so mighty an influence in weaning Israel from idols, and confirming them in the true religion. And among the Philistines themselves, I have the surest information, that many have been led to know that their idols are vain, and that Jehovah is the only living and true God.’

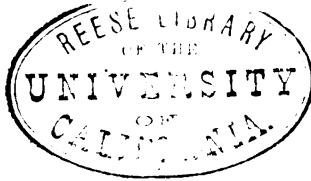
“‘Now, my daughter,’ said Samuel to Zeruiah, ‘rehearse these things to your father; he will remember well the events of which I have spoken. Tell him the providence of God is as wise, as good, and as perfect now, as in these earlier instances. Tell him to be strong in the Lord. It is my last message to him, for I am now going the way of all the earth. And once

more, tell your three sons from me, to be true to their God, to their country, and to stand as pillars around the throne of David while they live upon the earth. Tell them I have prayed for them, that their lives may be a blessing, and that their names may be honored in the church of God till the end of time. Jehovah bless thee, my daughter! Adieu! I feel that my work is done!'

"The old prophet sunk back on his couch, exhausted with the excitement and efforts of this interview, and soon afterwards his spirit took its flight.

"When it was known abroad that Samuel was dead, multitudes of Israel came together and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah.

"As for Zeruiah, she returned to her father in the land of Moab. Jesse and his family were much strengthened and encouraged by the views of God's wise, wonderful, and perfect providence communicated to them from Samuel. They remained in safety with the king of Moab, until the news came of Saul's death on Mount Gilboa. They then returned to the land of Judah. And when the princes and heads of the tribe of Judah assembled at Hebron, to crown David king over the house of Judah the family of Jesse was collected there. Zeruiah there met again her three sons, and heard with a mother's delight of their deeds of valor at Keilah, and at Ziklag, and in other famous fields. The anointing of David was performed by the prophet Gad. It was a joyful day in Judah, and from this period, the declining days of Jesse were days of calmness, comfort, and peace."



CHAPTER XIII.

DAVID'S KINGDOM.

A DEMON now arose in the assembly whose complexion was of a yellowish cast, and he was remarkably broad between the eyes. I understood he had been for three or four thousand years in the heart of the Chinese empire, and from his rapt attention it appeared that every part of Belial's narrative was entirely new to him.

"And now I suppose," said he, addressing Belial, "Saul and his sons being dead, David became king over all Israel without opposition."

"Not exactly," said Belial: "he went to Hebron, and was proclaimed king over the tribe of Judah; but Judah was only one tribe out of the twelve. One son of Saul, named Ishbosheth, was still living. Abner, the commander-in-chief of the army, was the most noted man, now remaining, who was strongly in the interest of the house of Saul. The officers of the government generally, had the same bias, for the popularity of Jonathan had been very great till the day of his death; and even Saul, though the people thought he had done many very foolish and very unjustifiable deeds, yet he had been patriotic and brave, and possessed in their estimation many redeeming qualities, so that on the whole he stood

well with the mass of the people. Abner had a deep dislike to David. He had been repeatedly out-generalled by David and his men ; and particularly when David and Abishai had taken away Saul's spear and cruse of water from his bolster, while Abner was asleep. David, from the top of a neighboring hill, addressed Abner, in the hearing of both armies, in a tone of strong and biting irony : ' Abner, art thou not a valiant man ? Who is like to thee in Israel ? As the Lord liveth, ye are worthy to die, because ye have not kept your master, the Lord's anointed.' This was a severe reflection on his honor, such as a soldier was not likely to forget.

" I now," said Belial, " suggested to Abner that he had influence sufficient to make Ishbosheth king over all the tribes, except Judah ; that this would hugely disappoint and vex David ; and that as Ishbosheth was a weak and inefficient man, Abner himself would have the control and administration of the government almost exclusively in his own hands. This exactly chimed with the views and feelings of Abner. So he took Ishbosheth and crowned him, and proclaimed him king over the eleven tribes that had not followed David.

" Abner was a great warrior, and had many veteran and valiant troops under his command ; yet knowing the men that were around David, he occupied two whole years making himself strong ; training and putting his army in the best condition, before he made any public move, to subdue the house of Judah.

" After this long and careful preparation, Abner left Mahanaim, with the choice of his forces, and crossed Jordan, and came to Gibeon, within a few miles of He-

bron. And now," said Belial, glancing his eye towards the Philistine demon, "you will hear again of the sons of Zeruah — Joab, and Abishai, and Asahel. On learning that Abner had invaded the dominions of David, they went out and met him at the pool of Gibeon. Both parties were reluctant to commence hostilities, for they were worshippers of the same God, and all belonged to the commonwealth of Israel; so the two companies sat down on opposite sides of the pool of Gibeon. At length, Abner, whose forces were by far the most numerous, said to Joab, 'Let the young men now arise and play before us.' And Joab said, 'Let them arise.' Twelve on each side first met, and commenced the affray; but presently both armies became excited, and rushed into the engagement, 'and there was a very sore battle, and Abner was beaten, and the men of Israel, before the servants of David.' In the flight, Abner was closely pursued by Asahel, the younger brother of Joab, who was exceedingly swift of foot. Abner, vexed at his persevering in the pursuit, turned and ran him through with his spear, that he died. When Abner was wearied in his flight, he called to Joab, and said, 'Shall the sword devour forever? Knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end? How long is it, then, ere thou bid the people to return from following their brethren?' Joab replied, 'Surely, if you had not given the challenge and dared us to the fight, we had all in the morning marched home again without bloodshed.' So Joab blew a trumpet, sounding a retreat, and all the people stood still. Whether Joab at this time knew of the death of Asahel, his brother, I cannot say. But it afterwards cost Abner his life. Joab slew him to avenge the death of

his brother Asahel. This battle was fought on the plain of Gibeon, where there were no fortifications, and the parties met in a fair field ; and yet when they had gathered all the people together, there lacked of David's servants nineteen men and Asahel, that is, twenty in all. But they had smitten of Abner's men, so that three hundred and sixty died, that is, Abner's loss over Joab's was eighteen to one. I mention this," said Belial, "as another instance of the astonishing discipline and valor of David's troops while Joab was their commander."

Lucifer here turned to the speaker : " I would ask a question."

" Will your majesty be pleased to speak ?" said Belial.

" Have not many commentators," said Lucifer, " given what the church considers a very favorable view of Abner's character ? "

" If they have," answered Belial, " they have shown that their acquaintance with the subject was very imperfect. The following facts establish the true character of Abner : —

" First. He went all lengths with Saul, in his violent and long-continued persecutions of David. Saul, in his jealousy and madness, neglected his public duties much, that he might accomplish the ruin of David. Jonathan remonstrated, and besought his father in David's behalf : many others, among the pious in Israel, pronounced Saul's conduct ' shameful and criminal in a high degree.' But Abner went into all of Saul's measures with perfect cordiality ; coöperated and assisted him in all his efforts for David's destruction.

" Second. On the death of Saul, Abner, though he knew well that Jehovah had promised the kingdom to

David, and though he acknowledged Jehovah, as the true God, yet he set up Ishbosheth as king, and for a number of years exerted all his energies to sustain this rival kingdom. That he knew he was acting against the revealed will of Jehovah, is plain from his own words, after Ishbosheth had reproved him for his licentiousness. 'Am I a dog's head, which against Judah do show kindness this day to the house of thy father? God do so to Abner, and more also, except as the Lord hath sworn to David, even so I do to him, to translate the kingdom from the house of Saul, and to set up the throne of David, over all Israel and Judah, from Dan even to Beersheba.' (2 Sam. iii. 6—10.) Abner, for seven years, had 'made himself strong for the kingdom of Ishbosheth. Yet here he acknowledges that he was fighting against the revealed and known will of God. There is, perhaps, not another such instance on record, of bold and daring opposition to Jehovah's acknowledged authority.

"Third. Abner renounced Ishbosheth and his kingdom, not because he repented of his conduct as wrong, but because that prince had rebuked him for his intimacies with an unchaste woman. Burning with resentment, he went to David, and proposed a league with him; but before his plans were carried out, he was slain by Joab, to avenge the death of his brother Asahel."

"It has been said by some," remarked Lucifer, "that Joab was jealous of Abner's great military reputation."

"What?" said Belial; "jealous of the military reputation of one so lately defeated in battle by himself!"

"Go on," said Lucifer: "I will not at present further interrupt your narrative."

"After the death of Abner," said Belial, "David

was chosen king over all the house of Israel. And his kingdom gradually advanced in prosperity and in power.

“Soon after David was proclaimed king over all the tribes, I roused the Philistines against him. I had often brought the house of Israel low, by exciting against them that hostile nation. The lords of the Philistines were particularly vindictive against David. The fame he had acquired by Goliath's overthrow was still to them a source of grief and mortification. But though they now invaded the country once and again, they were repulsed with great loss, and the kingdom of David continued to grow in strength.

“He now determined to exert the influence he possessed in order to give an impulse to the cause of religion among his people. Indeed, I may specify this as one of the great characteristics of David, that in the worship of Jehovah he was firm and uncompromising. Temptations to go after idols, in whole or in part, so often successful with others, were entirely lost on him. In the worship of the God of Israel, he was steadfast and immovable. In this respect especially, he was long held up as a pattern to the kings of Israel and Judah. The ‘ark of the covenant of God,’ which Moses erected at Mount Sinai, was now at Kirjath-jearim. It had remained there since the day it was brought back from the country of the Philistines. David resolved to bring it up to Jerusalem, the capital of his kingdom. His design was to honor the name of his God, to remind all the people of the great covenant at Mount Sinai, and to direct the public mind more generally to the worship of Jehovah.

"I dreaded this movement," said Belial.

"Well you might dread it!" exclaimed Lucifer, abruptly, in a voice that startled the assembly. "When public *attention* is strongly directed to the claims of God, and the duties of religion, then let devils tremble."

"I know it," answered Belial: "long experience has convinced me that we should oppose to the utmost all such measures as are calculated to call the *attention* of men to the subject of religion."

"For that reason," said Lucifer, "those great annual feasts, appointed by Moses, were so disastrous to our cause. Those feasts were, in fact, great religious meetings, of seven days' continuance. Three of them, appointed by law, came regularly every year. I have often thought, that had it not been for the mighty impulse given to the interests of religion in these great assemblies, I should have succeeded in my attempts to extinguish the light of revelation in Israel."

"You remember the great celebration of the feast of the passover, in the days of Hezekiah," said Belial.

"Yes, indeed," answered Lucifer; "they continued their public solemnities for fourteen days. The passover in the time of Josiah also, and the feast of tabernacles in the time of Ezra, produced astonishing results. Thus the public mind was waked up to attend to the things of God. The policy of hell is to induce men to 'forget God,' to '*neglect* the great salvation.' We should guard with all possible vigilance against every thing that is calculated to direct the attention of men to the law and the gospel of God."

"For that reason," said Belial, "I much regretted

this undertaking of David, to bring up the ark of God from an obscure part of the country, and give it a station in the city of David, at Jerusalem. But he was intent on the accomplishment of his design. He 'gathered together all the chosen men of Israel,' and marched to Kirjath-jearim. The prophets, and the heads of the tribes throughout all Israel, identified themselves with this enterprise. As the ark was moving in the direction of Jerusalem, the king and the princes, the priests and the prophets, in long procession led the way. 'And all the house of Israel played before the Lord on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals.' Thus 'David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.'

"The prophets availed themselves of this occasion to address the people on the subject of their peculiar relation to Jehovah. They spoke of the call of Abraham to be the friend of God. They expatiated on the divine mission of Moses, and rehearsed the history of the release of their fathers from the house of bondage in Egypt. They spread before the congregation the solemnities of that covenant ratified in the wilderness, in which Jehovah promised to be their God, and they engaged to be his people; and told of the works of the Lord when he brought them over Jordan, and gave them the land of Canaan for an inheritance.

"These public services, when the ark was brought to Jerusalem, made a deep and lasting impression on the great multitude assembled there. Indeed, the impression spread throughout the entire kingdom, for all the tribes were represented in that assembly. The book

of the law was read, with increased attention, from Dan even to Beersheba, and great numbers were brought to realize the relation in which they stood, as the peculiar people of God.

"I have often noticed," said Belial, "that those worshippers of Jehovah, who frequently call to mind the circumstances and solemnities of their first covenant with him, are generally the most active and steadfast in his service."

"True," answered Lucifer, "but I must repeat that other remark — that all the powers of darkness should particularly guard against those things which awaken general attention to the claims of religion. I have never known religion to prevail extensively among any people, where it was not, at some period in the year, connected with great solemn assemblies, of several days' continuance. Hence I abhorred those great religious meetings, ordained by the law of Moses — the passover, (2 Chron. xxx. 1—27; xxxv. 1—19;) the feast of tabernacles, (Neh. viii. 1—18;) and the feast of pentecost, (Acts ii. 1—11.) There were periods when these great solemnities sent terror and trembling to the very heart of the empire of hell. Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, was the first that took decisive measures against such meetings, (1 Kings xii. 26—30;) and I am anxious to have many others copy his example. I dread to have religion exalted and made prominent.

"Guard against that, ye powers of hell!" he exclaimed; "exalt earthly objects in the view of men — politics, commerce, pleasure; but suffer not religion to become the great object of attention and concern."

CHAPTER XIV.

DAVID'S TRANSGRESSION.

BELIAL now resumed his narrative. "David," said he, "continued to prosper on every hand. His armies were victorious in every field, and surrounding nations were subdued. Moab and Ammon, Edom and Syria, with many other nations, became tributary. His riches and grandeur had now become great. He was riding on the high tide of unexampled prosperity.

"The kindness which, about this period, he showed to Mephibosheth, for his father Jonathan's sake, has been mentioned in another connection; I will not enlarge upon it at this time. A number of years had now gone by, without presenting any favorable opportunity for the powers of darkness to accomplish much against David. He appeared to be growing in piety, and in favor with God and man. But now his riches, and honors, and magnificence had become so abundant, and the contrast so great between his former condition, when he kept his father's sheep, or when hiding in dens and caves from the wrath of Saul, and his present life of ease and luxury, that I resolved to try him with the snares that beset the great. And this may be called number *third* of the principal schemes I projected for his ruin.

“I would premise, however, that extreme conditions in life have their peculiar trials. Extreme poverty has its trials, and they are often great. In the well-known case of Job, one of the most wealthy, prosperous, and pious men in the East, Satan, who is an excellent judge of human nature, was confident that by taking away his sheep and oxen, and camels and servants, and reducing him to the depths of poverty, he would dishonor his profession, and even curse Jehovah to his face. Job, it is true, passed through the trial like gold through the furnace.”

“Yes,” exclaimed Lucifer, from the seat where he was sitting, in a voice that thundered through the whole cavern, “but you must remember that his wife was driven into presumption and blasphemy.”

“True,” answered Belial, “most true; and I was going to remark, that though Job passed through these trials surprisingly, yet the man who can grapple with such trials, and come down from wealth to poverty, without violating the rights of his neighbor, or dishonoring the religion of his God, is a rare man in the earth.

“Prosperity and wealth, also, have their peculiar temptations; and they are so insnaring and powerful, that Solomon lays it down as a maxim, that ‘the prosperity of fools, that is, sinners, shall destroy them.’ There is no artillery, in all the magazines of perdition, more formidable and resistless than that which can be brought to bear upon the man who is ‘clothed in purple and fine linen, and fares sumptuously every day.’ With this artillery of hell, I now resolved to rake the palace of David.

“I sent to the land of Moab for Baal-Peor, superlatively skilled in all the arts of licentiousness and wanton intrigue. He had formerly brought the house of Israel to the brink of destruction, on the plains of Moab, even while their venerated Moses was living among them. I had him concealed in David’s court. My expectations were high ; but his success ran ahead of my liveliest anticipations. He had not been in the court of David exceeding a week, when he contrived to bring before his eyes, in an unguarded hour, the bewitching form of Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, the Hittite. And can ye believe it, O ye hosts of hell? The pious and far-famed king of God’s covenant people, the sweet Psalmist of Israel, fell into the sin of adultery. And to hide his guilt, he plotted and accomplished the death of the valiant Uriah, who was bravely fighting the battles of his country under the banners of his God. It was the proudest achievement,” said Belial, “I had performed since our expulsion from heaven. I felt that I had almost rivalled the success of our matchless chief in the garden of Eden. Speedily did I send the tidings abroad through heathen lands ; I commanded to ‘tell it in Gath, and to publish it in the streets of Askelon,’ to the confusion of those who had been inclined to the true religion, and to the confirming of all who were steadfast in the worship of idols. I sent the story, with many additions and embellishments, through all the coasts of Moab, Midian, Edom, Ammon, Syria, and distant heathen countries.”

“Is that story,” said the Chinese demon, interrupting Belial in the midst of his enthusiasm, — “Is that story recorded in the Bible ? ”

"Recorded in the Bible!" replied Belial; **"certainly it is, in all its blackness, and in all its details."**

"I think strange of that," rejoined the Chinese demon: **"as the writers of the Bible wished all mankind to embrace the religion it teaches, I should have thought policy would have led them to conceal, rather than publish to the world the history of such conduct; it being calculated to disgrace one of the most noted professors of their favorite religion."**

"The Bible," answered Belial, **"is a singular book. Other books record only the virtues and praiseworthy deeds of the heroes whose history they contain. Take, for example, the life of Cyrus, as recorded by the ancients; or, among the moderns, the history of the life of Columbus, or the life of Washington, and it will be found that the writers represent Cyrus, Columbus, and Washington, as almost faultless men. They had no blemishes, or those blemishes are passed over in silence by the historian. Not so the Bible. It records the faults as impartially as the virtues of Noah, Abraham, Samson, David, Peter, and others. It has been contended by the advocates of the Bible, that this fact furnishes strong internal evidence of its divine inspiration. They have alleged that the religion unfolded and enjoined in the Bible, being founded on the immovable Rock of Ages, has nothing to fear from the full disclosure even of the faults of those who have professed it. They have affirmed, that the Bible, being dictated by the inspiration of God, could not only afford to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, respecting those who, in ages past, have been called by his name; but also that this is wisest and best for the instruction**

and warning of those who shall live in ages to come. On these points, however," said Belial, "I will not enlarge on this occasion, though I have often combated the arguments to the satisfaction of multitudes."

"But what became of David?" said the Chinese demon: "was he not blasted with the red wrath of avenging Heaven?"

"The most marvellous part of David's history," answered Belial, "is yet to come. I expected to see him smitten dead by some sudden judgment of God. But how it was I cannot tell; there is something in *repentance* that is not comprehended among the principalities and powers of hell. David poured forth floods of penitential tears, and called for help on One who is designated by the prophets as 'mighty to save;' and through that marvellous provision made in the plan of man's redemption for the pardon of sin, the transgressions of David, by which I had hoped to accomplish his ruin, were forgiven.

"I will here mention more particularly," said Belial, "the manner in which David was brought to repentance. The prophet Nathan had now for many years been acquainted with David, and was often at the palace. Nathan was remarkable for fortitude and firmness in his vocation. When he considered that duty called him, he was very plain in his dealing with the old and the young, the great and the small. His influence at this period was very great in Israel, and his labors were directed with tremendous energy against the cause of darkness. There was no man in the kingdom, at this time, whom I so much dreaded. The

transgression of King David had, by some means, reached the ears of Nathan.

"I would observe, in the hearing of all this assembly," said Belial, "that I have often had most gratifying success in tempting the ministers of religion, who were called upon to officiate in high places, to lay aside the simplicity of their high vocation. I have repeatedly been able to manage, so that sermons preached before assemblies of nobles, and before kings and queens, should abound with studied adulation, calculated to flatter vanity and foster pride, rather than with such messages from God as alarm the conscience and penetrate the heart.

"A minister of the class to which I allude, had he been present there, would, most likely, not have attempted to rebuke David for his sin; or, had he made the attempt, it would have been somewhat in the following style:—

"'Most illustrious and benign sovereign, in the plenitude of your royal indulgence and condescension, suffer one of the most grateful and devoted admirers of your majesty delicately and respectfully to intimate, that apprehensions are abroad, that events have transpired, within the royal residence, not altogether compatible with regal decorum and strict propriety.'

"Such is the style in which it has been my policy to have princes and kings addressed, if rebuked at all for their crimes.

"I found that Nathan designed to call upon the king."

"Did you not try to prevent the interview?" asked the Chinese demon.

"I did," answered Belial. "That was my first

attempt ; but it failed. And when I saw that he would go to the king, I made every exertion to prevail on him to make a smooth and flattering address."

"How did you succeed?" inquired he of China.

"You shall judge, when I have repeated his discourse," replied Belial.

"The hour was early in the morning, when the prophet, with unusual solemnity and concern depicted in his countenance, entered the palace and stood before the king.

"Have you a message?" asked the king.

"I have," answered Nathan. "There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds, but the poor man had nothing save one little ewe lamb, which he had brought and nourished up; and it grew up together with him and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock, and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come to him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him." (2 Sam. xii. 1—6.)

"David's anger was now greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan,—

"As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die. And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

"And Nathan said to David, 'Thou art the man. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I anointed thee

king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul ; and I gave thee thy master's house, and I gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah ; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight ? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from thy house ; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.

“ ‘Thus saith the Lord,’ continued Nathan : ‘Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbor, in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly ; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.’ (2 Sam. xii. 1—12.)

“David was aroused by this address of the prophet. His conduct now appeared in a new light. He smote upon his breast, and wept bitterly : then he cried out, ‘I have sinned against the Lord.’

“ ‘Thou shalt not die,’ said Nathan. ‘The Lord, in view of thy repentance, hath pardoned thy sin. Nevertheless, by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.’

“Although David,” said Belial, “was assured by Nathan of forgiveness from God, yet it seemed as if he never could forgive himself. Through all the remainder of his life, he had an aching and troubled heart, whenever he thought of the fate of the valiant Uriah.

“Not long after this period,” continued he, “I suc-

ceeded in alienating from David his far-famed counselor, Ahithophel. The arts I employed for this purpose need not be particularly detailed here; but the rupture was irreparable. This I regarded as a great point gained. The talents of Ahithophel were tremendous, and his long intimacy with the king had furnished him with the means of becoming a most formidable foe.

“When Ahithophel left the court, he retired to his private residence at the city of Giloh. He was a man of too much judgment and prudence to utter noisy threats; but his mighty spirit brooded in awful silence over his imagined wrongs, and meditated schemes of retaliation and revenge.

“The troubles foretold by the prophet Nathan that should arise in David's family, now began to make their appearance. Amnon, one of the king's sons, conceived a strange and unnatural attachment for Tamar, the sister of Absalom. Amnon by violence ravished Tamar. Absalom cherished the hidden vengeance that was in his heart, till occasion offered, and then slew Amnon by the hand of his servants.”

CHAPTER XV.

ABSALOM.

“ A TRANSACTION is recorded in the fourteenth chapter of the Second Book of Samuel, that strongly illustrates the intellectual eminence of Joab, in the age in which he lived, and how extensively the sway of his powerful mind was felt and acknowledged at the throne, and throughout the kingdom of David. Indeed, I might have mentioned examples of this much earlier. One instance is recorded in the history of Abner. (2 Sam. ii. 18—22.) Abner, in his flight from the battle at Gibeon, was reluctant to smite Asahel, because he wished to be able to ‘hold up his face,’ in the presence of Joab. Abner was a general of more than forty years’ standing. Joab was now but a youth; yet such already was his force of character, and such the power of his presence, that Abner was controlled by it even when flying for his life. Another example follows:—

“ Absalom, after he had slain his brother Amnon, had fled to Talmai, king of Geshur, his grandfather on his mother’s side, and remained there in banishment for three years. The slaying of Amnon was, in the eye of the law, a flagrant crime; but yet the provocation and the injury he had sustained from Amnon were

very great. And many thought that Absalom's part in the matter was somewhat excusable on account of the magnitude of insult and wrong done by Amnon.

"After three years, David became restless and anxious about Absalom's long absence; but being chief magistrate of the nation, and bound to maintain the laws, he saw not how to indulge the feelings of a father. The eagle eye of Joab penetrated the true state of David's mind, before it was discovered by others.

"On a certain day, when the king was in the judgment seat, busied with the affairs of the kingdom, a middle-aged woman, in mourning apparel, came before him, in much distress. Her dress and appearance indicated that she dwelt at some distance in the country, and that her condition was that of one in the middle walks of life. The beamings of a strong intellect appeared in her countenance, mingled with expressions of woe, showing that she was one that had long been mourning for the dead.

"She threw herself down upon the ground before the king, and cried out in a lamentable voice, —

"'Help, O king!'

"'What aileth thee?' asked the king, moved by her distress.

"'I am a widow woman,' said she; 'my husband is dead. Thy handmaid had two living sons; and after the death of their father, they were together in the field alone. They quarrelled, they fought, there was none to part them, and one smote the other that he died. And now, my lord, the whole family and neighborhood have risen up against me, and say, Deliver up him that smote his brother, that we may kill him for

the life of his brother ; and thus,' exclaimed the woman, bursting into a flood of bitter tears, 'they will quench my coal that is left, and will not leave to my husband name or remainder upon the earth.'

" 'I will attend to it,' said David: 'go home to your house ; I will give charge concerning your son.'

" 'If there should be any thing wrong in sparing him,' said the woman, 'let the iniquity be on me and on my father's house, and the king and his throne be guiltless.'

" 'Go home, go home,' said David: 'I will give charge concerning your son ; whosoever saith aught unto thee, bring him to me, and he shall not touch thee or thy son any more.'

"But the woman was not to be put off so easily. She was," said Belial, bowing to Lucifer, "one of those talking country women, who can tell over the same story in more ways than one ; and when you think they are through, and are about to start home, are only collecting breath to give a new edition of their complaint or argument."

"I have seen them," said Lucifer, "I have seen them often."

"Well," said Belial, "the woman rose up, took a step or two towards the door, then turned round and addressed the king again.

" 'I am afraid of the revengers of blood. My son cannot go to the city of refuge. It would break my heart to be left without him. Let my lord the king forbid the revengers of blood to destroy any more, lest they destroy my son.'

" 'As the Lord liveth,' said David, a little excited,

‘there shall not one hair of thy son’s head fall to the ground. Will not that satisfy you?’

“‘I like the king’s words,’ said the woman, ‘very much; but your actions do not correspond with them. There is your own son, Absalom, the heir to the crown; he is in banishment for killing his brother. The people wish him to return, but you do not call him back. Shall the avenger never cease to destroy? My lord knows we must all die, parents and children, and are as water spilled upon the ground, that cannot be gathered up again. Let not our brief lives be embittered by cherishing the spirit of vengeance. You should imitate the clemency of God, by whose appointment kings reign. He is just; he is righteous; yet he pardons the guilty. He deviseth means that his rebellious and banished children may be restored to him. You should imitate the clemency of God. Perhaps I have gone too far, and said too much; but when my lord the king spake such comfortable words for my son, I thought I would say a word about his own. Perhaps, in showing pity to my poor, unfortunate son, he may see the propriety of showing pity to his own poor, banished Absalom.’

“David hung down his head, and the gushing tears streamed from both his eyes; then slowly raising himself up, and wiping away the tears, he said kindly to the woman,—

“‘Hide not from me, I pray thee, the thing that I shall ask thee.’

“And the woman said, ‘Let my lord the king now speak.’

“And the king said, ‘Is not the hand of Joab with thee in all this?’

“ ‘God save the king!’ said the woman: ‘I see it is vain to attempt to deceive the king. Why, Joab sent me here, and he put all of these words in my mouth.’

“ ‘Go and call Joab,’ said David, to an officer who was near. When Joab came in, said the king,—

“ ‘Behold, now I have done this thing at your request. Go therefore, bring the young man Absalom again.’

“ And Joab bowed himself, and fell to the ground on his face, and thanked the king; and Joab said, ‘To-day thy servant knoweth that I have found grace in thy sight, my lord, O king, in that the king hath fulfilled the request of his servant.’ So Joab arose, and went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to Jerusalem.

“I have mentioned this incident,” said Belial, “in further illustration of the character of Joab. Though David’s kingdom was now so large, comprehending five or six millions of people, and though his capital was now surrounded with statesmen and officers of great distinction, yet when he found himself instructed and overcome by the argument of this plain country woman, he at once suspected that it must be the powerful intellect of Joab that was bearing upon him.

“The same thing appears in Absalom, after he came to Jerusalem. David would not see his face, but commanded that he should turn to his own house. So Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, and saw not the king’s face. Absalom was in trouble, and sent for Joab, to intercede in his behalf with the king. There was no man in all Israel in whose influence he had so much confidence. Joab at first was somewhat backward. Perhaps he had seen in Absalom something that he did not altogether approve. But at

length he went to David, and spoke in his behalf, and David consented, and received Absalom into favor.

“The personal appearance of Absalom was remarkably captivating and commanding. The writer of the Second Book of Samuel gives this testimony : ‘In all Israel there was none to be so much praised for his beauty as Absalom. From the sole of his foot, even to the crown of his head, there was no blemish in him.’ He was also bold, enterprising, and eloquent. He possessed, in an extraordinary degree, those accomplishments which qualify a man for gaining popularity with the multitude. I may further add, that Absalom was notorious for his disregard of the laws of God. He was the son of a heathen princess. And long experience has convinced me, that the influence of a mother is very great in moulding the moral character of her son. A pious mother educates the *conscience*, as well as the intellect, of her son ; and not only so, she treasures up in heaven a magazine of *prayers* in his behalf, that seem to have power with God. Often have I seen the young man escape the dangers of the rough and stormy deep ; often, in the great and growing west, have I seen him rescued from the yawning and devouring snares of vice, where others became easy victims ; often, on the perilous Mississippi, amidst the bursting of boilers, the snagging and sinking of steamboats, have I witnessed strange deliverances, for which I could see no adequate visible cause at the time ; but when I traced back the history of that young man, I found that a praying mother, who had now, perhaps, been in the cold grave for more than twenty years, had in her lifetime crowded the files of heaven with petitions in his

behalf, whose influence, it seemed, could never be exhausted. The stream of blessings from above that comes in answer to such prayers, appears to be lasting as life; and I am not certain but it may be lasting as the ages of eternity."

"Belial," said Lucifer, stamping on the pavement with fury, "Belial, what are you saying?"

"I thought," answered Belial, in a submissive tone, "that it was important all your majesty's allies should understand this painful subject. It is one of the most dreaded influences with which the powers of hell have to contend. But as it is unacceptable to your majesty, I will pursue it no further.

"Absalom," continued he, resuming his narrative, "had not this influence — his mother being the daughter of the idolatrous king of Geshur; and, though young, he was very rash and reckless, and I considered him a fit instrument for any desperate enterprise.

"I now determined to make a *fourth* great effort for the overthrow of David, by exciting Absalom to rebel and seize on the crown.

"Many things conspired to render this enterprise promising at this period.

"First. David's treatment of Uriah had given a tremendous blow to his reputation. Uriah was yet well remembered as the gallant and brave soldier, who had been most cruelly sacrificed; and the matter was still talked of, through all the tribes of Israel, to David's disadvantage.

"Second. The kingdom had now grown very large, and it was impossible for any one man to meet the expectations of all. There were complaints of neglect,

and that justice was not punctually and promptly administered.

“Third. There were still in the land many old adherents of the house of Saul, men who had been officers in his army, or in the state, during his administration. Many of these had been displaced when David came into power, and they and their families were not cordial.

“Fourth. There were many restless persons, who were weary of what they styled *monotony*. These were glad to have a rebellion; some from the mere love of novelty and change; others, a large class, who had nothing to lose, and who hoped that a revolution might better their condition.

“Fifth. David was now growing old; the infirmities of age were beginning to come upon him; and many were ready to pay their devotions rather to the rising than the setting sun.

“Sixth. Absalom was the real heir to the crown, and many thought that by being forward in asserting his claims, they would ingratiate themselves with the new administration.

“Seventh. Absalom possessed an engaging person, captivating manners, and well understood how to render himself prepossessing and popular.

“And last, but not least, Ahithophel, being wholly alienated from David, would throw all the weight of his talents and influence into the scale of Absalom.

“By the advice of Ahithophel, Absalom now began to put on state, and assume the airs and bearing of a sovereign. He prepared horses, and chariots, and fifty men to run before him, and was most gorgeously arrayed,

and thus appeared in the most public places about the capital. This excited neither surprise nor suspicion, for he was immensely rich, and was the acknowledged heir to the crown. In this splendid attire he spent much of his time at the gate of the king's palace, among those who had come from distant quarters of the land with lawsuits, to obtain judgment from the king. Absalom was all affability and attention to such, inquired of each the nature of his claim; never failed to express an opinion decidedly favorable, and deeply regretted that men should be detained unreasonably from their homes and their business in order to obtain justice in a very plain case. He spoke publicly of the necessity of more promptness and despatch in the transacting of public business, —

‘And cast between
Ambiguous words and jealousies, to sound
Or taint integrity.’

“In a little time the beautiful person, the elegant and refined manners, the generous and unparalleled condescension, and the impartial public spirit of the young prince, were the theme of conversation and eulogy from Dan even to Beersheba.

“Ahithophel had particularly enjoined it on Absalom to spare no pains in gaining over the princes of Judah. Judah he regarded as the spinal marrow of the kingdom, and with the princes of that tribe Ahithophel himself possessed great influence.

“That eagle-eyed politician had long since noted a striking peculiarity, perhaps I may say defect, in the general policy of David. In his eagerness to secure new friends, and confirm them in his interest, he would often

bear hard on friends of long standing, whose attachment and fidelity he regarded as fully established.

“ This Ahithophel thought he had observed in the very harsh treatment David sometimes gave to the two surviving sons of his sister ; than whom, as he expressed it, ‘ no earthly prince was ever followed by more faithful and efficient servants, in times that tried men’s souls.’

“ The same policy, on a larger scale, was practised after the eleven tribes had come to Hebron, and acknowledged David as their king. The tribe of Judah had, with great unanimity, rallied around David, immediately on the downfall of Saul. Single-handed, they had sustained him for seven years. And now, when all the tribes received David, they thought that old friends should not be forgotten. Very likely they overrated their claims, and were unreasonable in their expectations. But Ahithophel saw that many of the princes were cooled, others deeply disappointed and nettled, and that, on the whole, there were abundant materials to favor a revolution. With a general revolt in Judah, and Absalom’s great popularity throughout all Israel, there could be little doubt of triumphant success.

“ Ahithophel advised Absalom to fix on Hebron as the place where his banner should first be unfurled. Hebron was the principal city of Judah. It was the place of Absalom’s birth. David himself had reigned there the first seven years of his kingdom ; and there were strong local feelings excited among many of the citizens, when the seat of government was removed from Hebron to Jerusalem.”

CHAPTER XVI.

JOAB AND AHITHOPHEL.

“THERE was another influence that Ahithophel was very anxious to secure to the cause of Absalom; that is, the coöperation of the two sons of Zeruah. Their popularity with the army was very great, and he was confident that, could they be prevailed on to declare for Absalom, many of the soldiers would follow their example. But how to approach them, was the question. They had ever been the firm, unwavering friends of David, and seemed to think, feel, and act alike in all public matters. Indeed, while Asahel lived, the three brothers appeared animated, as it were, by one spirit. And since the death of Asahel, Joab and Abishai were always of one mind; brothers by blood, brothers in affection, and brothers in arms. And although each had great military reputation, nothing like the shade of rivalry, or selfish emulation, had ever been discovered between them. Each seemed to regard the reputation and honor of one as the reputation and honor of both—a rare and memorable example of brotherly affection.

“It was approaching noon, on the day previous to that appointed for erecting Absalom’s standard, when an old man was seen riding slowly up the way that led to the house of Joab. Joab was engaged in some

domestic cares, when he discovered the approach of his visitor. 'Welcome, Ahithophel; this is friendly, indeed,' said Joab; 'come in, come in, I am glad to see you.'

" 'I visit but little of late,' said Ahithophel; 'but I thought I should like to call on an old friend once more.'

" 'I am happy you are come to my house,' said Joab. 'You are now almost a stranger at court.'

" 'Yes,' said Ahithophel; 'I have very much laid aside public cares, and give my attention chiefly to matters at home. But how are things moving on about the city?'

" 'Quietly,' said Joab; 'nothing, I believe, of uncommon interest.'

" 'I learn,' said Ahithophel, 'that Absalom seems to have a ready turn for public business, and is thoughtful and active for the good of the people.'

" 'Absalom,' said Joab, 'is much of the time in public places, extending his acquaintance among those that resort to the palace, and no doubt wishes well to the people. I think he is growing in public favor.'

" 'He often expresses his great obligation to you,' said Ahithophel, 'for procuring the king's consent to his return from banishment.'

" 'Well,' said Joab, 'I thought it would be better for his father and himself that they should be reconciled, and if their happiness is increased by it, I shall rejoice.'

" 'Absalom has told me repeatedly,' said Ahithophel, 'that he will be grateful to you while he lives for procuring first his return from Geshur, and then his restoration to the favor of David. I think David forgets

obligations to his friends very easily, and often, indeed, very unreasonably.'

" 'David is but a man,' said Joab, 'and, of course, is liable to have some of the imperfections of a man.'

" 'That pompous mourning,' said Ahithophel, 'which the king made over Abner, and the very severe terms in which, on that occasion, he spoke of some of his firmest friends, struck me as uncalled for and improper. Abner had been to David a bitter and unrelenting foe. But the king's conduct was designed, no doubt, to secure the favor of the eleven tribes, who, as yet, had refused to give in their allegiance to him. Yet, when his own sister's son, the valiant, the swift-footed Asahel, in the excess of his burning enthusiasm to sustain his uncle, against an overwhelming majority, sacrificed his young life, his fall was passed over without any public honors whatever.'

" Joab was silent. He could never hear an allusion to the untimely fall of the gallant Asahel without emotions that were too strong for utterance.

" Ahithophel was confident he had now made a favorable impression, and proceeded thus:—

" 'I have long thought that David is over harsh with old and long-trying friends. Indeed, I have thought that with you and your brother Abishai, considering your great services, he is sometimes quite unreasonable.'

" 'Well,' said Joab, 'there may have been some ground for that opinion; but where shall we find a man or a prince that is wholly free from defects?'

" 'I have ever thought,' said Ahithophel, 'that the fame you acquired by defeating Abner at the pool of Gibeon excited the king's envy. He felt that your

military reputation had eclipsed his own; and he has never been so pleasant to you since.'

" 'Perhaps my too partial friends,' said Joab, 'dwelt on that achievement too much. It was certainly improper to bring David's generalship into the comparison to his disadvantage. But, however, Ahithophel, this is a delicate subject. If I make no complaint of the king's treatment of me, my friends had better be silent.'

"With these words, he fixed his keen, penetrating eyes on Ahithophel, as if in search of his object in agitating such matters. Ahithophel was somewhat confused by the manner of Joab, but, after a moment, concluded it was best to come right to the point he had in view.

" 'There are many,' said Ahithophel, 'who think, as David is now growing old, and public business is very burdensome, and especially as Absalom shows so much public spirit and capacity, it would be advisable to have him introduced into a share of the administration with his father. I should like to have your opinion.'

"Joab gave the counsellor another scrutinizing look, and asked, 'Is it David's wish?'

" 'I am not certain,' was Ahithophel's reply.

" 'Has the king been consulted?' asked Joab, abruptly.

" 'Perhaps not,' said Ahithophel.

" 'That is the very first step to be taken,' said Joab. 'I hope the subject will not be breathed to a living soul again till the full and hearty approbation of the king is obtained; otherwise, I am bound in duty to set my face against it.'

" Ahithophel now saw clearly that it would not do to

press the subject, and, after some general conversation on other topics, took leave, and returned to his home."

Here Lucifer turned to the speaker and said,

"Belial, your memory appears very retentive of ancient events; but have you not forgotten the remark which I made at the time you commenced your rehearsal?"

"Your majesty," said Belial, "observed that I should not dwell exclusively on the history of kings, courts, and men in public life."

"And further," said Lucifer, "that you should not confine yourself to a recital of your own devices merely, but that you should give sketches of individuals in the common walks of life; in short, something of a picture of society as it existed in Israel in the times of David."

"I understand your majesty," said Belial, "and shall attempt to follow the direction. Let me then remark, once for all, that this whole rebellion was entirely of my projecting, and that Absalom and Ahithophel were the chief instruments I employed. It will not be necessary, therefore, in the prosecution of the story, to refer continually to my own agency and plans.

"I shall presently go more minutely into particulars concerning a number of individuals in the various departments of society. Let me, however, first remark, that there was yet another influence which Ahithophel was exceedingly anxious to bring to the support of Absalom's cause; that is, the influence of the priests, the ministers of religion. But this was very difficult. Zadok and Abiathar were the firm friends of David — always in his society; and no sufficient inducement to

revolt could be laid before them. But their two sons, Jonathan and Ahimaaz, had been Absalom's playmates in childhood and youth; they might be drawn into the conspiracy; and then their fathers would either be induced to join for their sakes, or, at any rate, they would make but little resistance. To accomplish this design, Ahithophel projected that Absalom should tell his father that he had a very solemn vow, which he had made while in exile in Geshur; and that this vow must now be performed at Hebron, with costly sacrifices. This would be a sufficient reason for taking the young priests with him, to officiate at the sacrifice. He was also to take with him a large number of persons from respectable families in Jerusalem, who, being thus brought into circumstances of suspicion, would be likely to identify themselves with Absalom; and this would strongly influence their families and family connections."

"'And why go to Hebron, my son?' asked David, when Absalom came to obtain his permission.

"'Hebron is my birthplace,' said Absalom: 'it was there that I first became conscious of existence, and there I wish publicly and forever to dedicate myself to the service of Israel's God. Such was my solemn vow, made when sickened with the loathsome idol-worship practised in the court of Geshur.'

"'And you take with you these worthy associates, Ahimaaz and Jonathan. Then go, my son; and a father's blessing go with you. Why, this is the consummation of all my wishes,' said the king, looking on the beautiful form of Absalom, as he left the room. 'Ah, he'll be the comfort of my declining days, and close my eyes in death.'"

CHAPTER XVII.

THE REBELLION.

“A CALM and brilliant day, which had thrown its radiance over the broad and fertile inheritance of Judah and Israel, was now drawing towards its close. The beams of the declining sun were richly reflected from the tall, majestic groves on the sides and summit of Mount Olivet. Tranquillity, without a cloud, reigned over Jerusalem and the surrounding fields and vineyards. Shepherds were preparing to lead their flocks and herds from the hills, where they had been feeding through the day, to the folds in which they might rest during the night.

“David and the elders of Israel, in connection with the chief officers of the army, had been deliberating on some interesting state policy; but their deliberations were about to conclude, when a single horseman was discovered on the high road leading from Hebron, making towards Jerusalem at the utmost speed. Down the steep he rushed — over rock and hillock, and all obstructions, he hurried his headlong course to the city gate. The guards opened at his approach, for they knew him well. He passed without a word, and urged his jaded horse, covered with foam, and panting for breath, up the street to the palace of the king. There

he sprung from the saddle, while the horse quivered for a moment, through every limb, then dropped on the pavement dead. The rider ran up the stairway to the council-chamber, and with flushed cheek and brow, and disordered raiment, stood before the king.

“‘How now, Ahimaaz!’ said David, somewhat startled, ‘I thought you had gone with Absalom.’”

“‘Treason! my lord, O king, treason!’ cried Ahimaaz: ‘the hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom!’”

“At this astounding announcement, the elders of Israel stood aghast. David clasped his hands in an agony of grief too strong for utterance, and sunk back in his seat. The Tachmonite grasped his huge spear with a violence that made the long steel point quiver. Abishai and Eleazar, the son of Dodo, laid each his hand on the hilt of his sword. The action was imitated by most of the mighty men, who stood round the hall in silence, knitting their brows in anger and biting their lips. Joab was the only man that remained perfectly unmoved. When Ahimaaz entered, he was leaning carelessly against a stone pillar, listening to an officer who was speaking on the subject before the council. When the alarming news was told, that filled the hall with horror and agitation, he never changed his position, laid no hand on either sword or spear, but steadily directed his eyes towards David, as if waiting and ready for the orders of his king.

“David had now somewhat recovered from the first shock, and asked Ahimaaz, —

“‘Were the people at Hebron many?’”

“‘Multitudes, my lord,’ said Ahimaaz; ‘most of the princes of Judah, many of the rulers of Benjamin, of

Ephraim, and of Dan. The conspiracy is strong, for the people are increasing with Absalom continually.'

" 'Will they continue at Hebron?' asked David, in a voice that trembled with emotion, 'or will they attempt to come to Jerusalem?'

" 'They are now on their march, my lord,' said Ahimaz. 'They will soon be here. When I cast back the last look towards Hebron, I saw their columns in motion.'

" 'Man the walls!' cried Eleazar, the son of Dodo: 'we can defend Jerusalem against them.'

" 'With your majesty's orders,' said Joab, 'we will march and disperse them.'

" 'My tried and faithful servants,' said David, 'I know your courage and your power in the field of battle. But, O, this is unlike all the wars in which you have been engaged when fighting with the enemies of Israel. These are my own people, misguided, deluded, but still my own people. And alas! their leader is my own son! my rebellious, dear, guilty, beloved Absalom! And how can I send forth such formidable and resistless swordsmen, as I know you are, against the life of my own people, and the life of my own son? No, we must fly. There may be some strange mistake about this matter. It is possible he only wishes to share the government with me during my declining days, and has taken this rash, foolish method to bring it about. Let him take possession of all, rather than jeopardize his life; let him take possession of sceptre, throne, palace, and kingdom. A few hours of reflection may cause him to relent; and this shocking, distressful matter may yet be settled without the shedding of

precious blood. Let us fly! let us speedily fly, lest he come upon us in the first moments of his rashness, and calamities ensue which can never be repaired.'

"The deep and warm pathos with which these words were spoken, and the flowing tears with which they were accompanied, melted the iron hearts of the stern warriors around the king. And they answered, 'Behold, thy servants are ready to do whatever our lord the king, shall appoint.'

"David now commenced his retreat. It was not twenty minutes from his first reception of the news of the conspiracy until he forsook the throne and the palace, and set his face towards the wilderness. The life-guards and the Cherethites and Pelethites led the way. The company of Gittites that came with him from Gath, proselytes to the Jewish religion, headed by Ittai, the son of Achish, passed on before him; and all the people of the country through which they passed, wept aloud to see him whom they regarded as a brave, just, and pious prince, reduced to such extremities. And the king himself, as he went up the ascent of Mount Olivet, covered his head, and wept. He felt that he was under the rebuke of God; that he was dishonored in the eyes of the nation; and that heathen princes, in neighboring countries, who had been envious at his prosperity, would rejoice to hear of the sad reverses that had overtaken him; and all this through the wickedness of a son he had so dearly loved, and around whom so many of his fond hopes had clustered. Many of the soldiers who were marching by the side of the king, on witnessing his deep distress, covered their heads and wept.

“Zadok and Abiathar, the priests, together with a large body of Levites, had taken the ark of the covenant of God, and brought it out of the city, designing to carry it with David in his flight. But the king commanded them to bear it back to its appointed place. ‘If I shall find favor in the eyes of the Lord,’ said David to Zadok and Abiathar, ‘he will bring me again, and show me both the ark and his habitation. But if he say thus, “I have no delight in thee,” behold, here am I; let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.’

“So Zadok and Abiathar, with the Levites, carried back the ark to its place.

“In the mean time, messengers were arriving from various quarters, bringing tidings how the rebellion was spreading, and how the people, in immense masses, were rising and declaring for Absalom. ‘The men of Manasseh,’ said one, ‘are marching in great number to join the insurgents.’ ‘The banner of Absalom,’ said another, ‘is floating from the top of their towers in most of the cities of Benjamin.’ ‘The signal trumpet,’ said a third, ‘has been blown throughout all Mount Ephraim, and the revolt is almost universal.’ And now a fourth messenger comes running, with paleness in his face and terror in his eye, and cries, ‘Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom.’ ‘Are you certain of that, Jonathan?’ said David, stopping short, and looking earnestly at the messenger, who was no other than the young priest, the son of Abiathar. ‘I saw him with my own eyes,’ said Jonathan, ‘and learned that Absalom had pledged himself to conduct the whole rebellion according to his counsel.’

“ I could observe,” said Belial, “ that nothing which had yet come to the ears of David, excited his alarm, to compare with this message brought by Jonathan. He knew the awful talents of Ahithophel. And he was aware that such a man would not have come out so publicly, and identified himself with the insurgents, unless his designs were desperate. The news that whole cities had revolted, that entire tribes had gone over, produced no such agitation as the announcement, ‘ Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom ! ’ His terror, for the moment, was excessive. ‘ Matters,’ said he, ‘ will be driven to extremities, indeed, if that man is their counsellor. I must look to God ; for against his devices there is no help on this side of heaven.’ And lifting up his hands and eyes, he cried, ‘ O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.’

“ When David had reached the top of the Mount of Olives, he spent a longer season in earnest prayer, that Jehovah would have mercy on his covenant people, and save them from the fearful ruin that now was thickening and blackening around them ; and especially that, in the exercise of his unsearchable wisdom and almighty power, he would frustrate the dark, desperate, and diabolical counsels, into which Ahithophel would certainly attempt to lead Absalom and the armies of Israel. The men of war stood round, and bent their sunburnt visages to the earth, as the king, with a fervor that almost amounted to agony, offered up his prayer to God, in whom was all his hope.

“ There was but one man in all Israel who was at all capable of coping with Ahithophel. This was

Hushai the Archite, a counsellor of great talent and long experience, who now dwelt in Jerusalem. He was esteemed as a man of great worth, had long been David's companion, and, from their uncommon intimacy, was generally styled David's friend. He was remarkably eloquent and able in debate ; and even when his side of the question was not the most promising,

‘His tongue
Dropped manna, and could make the worse appear
The better reason.’

“Just as David had concluded his prayer, this man came up, with his clothes rent and earth upon his head, and stood before the king in silence and grief. His arrival at that juncture seemed the merest accident, though,” said Belial, “I have often since doubted whether it were altogether *accident*.”

“‘Hushai,’ said David, ‘you have come to accompany me in my exile. It is kind on your part, but you must not go. Return to the city. Report yourself to Absalom. Get into his confidence, and among his advisers, if you can, and then mayst thou, for me, defeat the counsel of Ahithophel.’ Hushai bowed, and departed instantly, and returned with so much despatch and secrecy, that it was not publicly known that he had been absent from the city.

“There is one other circumstance in the flight of David that I wish to mention here. In most communities,” said Belial, “there is a class of men, who have little or no principle, that may be called time-servers. In any revolution in church or state, who is right, or what is right, is no inquiry of theirs. Their sole lookout is, which is likely to be the strongest party.

And as soon as they have made that discovery, you will find them noisy and conspicuous. Those can always have the assistance and coöperation of this class of men, who do not need them. But if they find that their party is likely to be in a minority, they will desert at once, and become equally loud and boisterous on the other side. There was one of these men at Bahurim, a little town a mile or two north-east of Jerusalem, through which David passed in his retreat. His name was Shimei, the son of Gera, a Benjamite. He saw that the tide of public favor was running tremendously with Absalom. David was in full retreat, with but a small body of adherents. News from every part of the country left no doubt on his mind that Absalom would be triumphantly successful. So this he thought a favorable opportunity to distinguish himself. As David and his men were passing by, Shimei came forth, and cursed still as he came; and cast stones at David, and at the servants of the king, and at all the people, and all the mighty men that were on his right hand and on his left. And thus said Shimei, when he cursed, 'Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial. The Lord hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned, and the Lord hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom, thy son. And, behold, thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man.'

"Then said Abishai to the king, 'Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head.' What proof is here of the perfection of discipline in David's army! Abishai

was a famous general, second only to Joab. And yet even he must not lift his hand against Shimei without the order of his superior. I have seen men in modern times," said Belial, "who in such a juncture would have dashed over and swept off Shimei's head in the first place, and then discussed the propriety of it afterwards. Not so in the army of David: perfect discipline was maintained. And here is the great secret of the unexampled success of that army. David rebuked Abishai for being too resentful, and acknowledged it as a chastisement from the hand of God.

"So let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David. Who then shall say, Wherefore hast thou done so? And David said to Abishai and to all his servants, Behold, my son seeketh my life: how much more may this Benjamite do it! Let him alone, and let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him.'

Here Beelzebub, who had not spoken a word since Belial commenced his narrative, raised his Atlantean bulk, and stood erect amidst the council of fallen angels. There was a troubled anxiety in his countenance, mingled with the beamings of a powerful intellect.

"Belial," said he, "how is it David speaks so plainly of the agency of God in Shimei's cursing him?"

"Bible saints," said Belial, "often employ strange language on that subject, and language in many cases exceedingly strong. Joseph, you know, said to his brethren in Egypt, 'God sent me here.'"

Beelzebub replied, "And was there not in Nathan's message to David something that implied that the hand of God would be concerned in the troubles that

should arise in David's house, including, no doubt, the murder of Amnon and the rebellion of Absalom?"

"There was, indeed," said Belial, "something in Nathan's language that strongly implied it."

"I have dreaded that doctrine," said Beelzebub, "for thousands of years. It is so closely connected with the doctrine that God's 'counsel will stand,' and he will do his whole pleasure. If the hand of God is concerned in the death of the sparrow, and in feeding the young ravens, and if his providence enters into all the minute affairs of men, I fear that when his designs are complete, and the 'mystery of God is finished,' it will be found he hath done all things well, and that the head of the serpent has been bruised. I fear that all tears will be wiped from the eyes of the saints forever, and that the angels and all holy beings will be satisfied with the administration of God from the beginning to the end."

"Do not be alarmed," said Belial: "the doctrine of a particular, special providence is growing more and more unpopular in the world. The tide of public sentiment is strongly against it. Multitudes at this day reject it, and advocate the doctrine of *chance* and *accident* as strongly as we could desire."

"But is there not great danger, now," asked Beelzebub, "when the Bible is spreading, and coming into the hands of almost every family and every individual, that the doctrine of God's providence, that stands out on every page, will be revived again?"

"The Bible," answered Belial, "is not *read*, however it may be circulated."

"I thought," said Beelzebub, "this is becoming a

reading age. Is not the habit of reading rapidly increasing ?”

“ True,” said Belial, “ but they do not read the Bible. Their reading is chiefly in the light and frothy novels, so current at the present day.”

“ Excellent,” said Beelzebub : “ I should tremble to see the public attention fixed closely on the Bible. It brings God so near to men. The policy of hell is to keep God as much out of sight as possible. If men will not deny his existence altogether, let them, at least, be persuaded that he is very far off, and that his hand and counsel have little to do in the common events of life. When you spake of David owning the hand of God in the reproach he received from Shimei, and Nathan teaching that the hand of God was concerned in the troubles that sprung up in David’s family, I was distressed ; for the doctrine of a special, particular providence is not only unpleasant, but terrible to the hosts of hell.”

“ There is nothing to fear,” answered Belial : “ public sentiment now, among multitudes who do not profess to reject the Bible, is decidedly opposed to the doctrine of a particular providence in all the affairs of men.”

“ But,” said Beelzebub, heaving a deep sigh, and rolling his huge eyes around the gloomy cavern, “ is there not danger that when the Jews return, and are converted, and become teachers of religion, the old Bible doctrine may be revived again ? The Jews, you know, study the Bible very attentively. And the public sentiment you speak of may go, like the public sentiment at the time of Absalom’s rebellion.”

“ I have no fears,” answered Belial : “ I tell you the

doctrine you dread is very unpopular, and is daily growing more so."

"I am glad of that," said Lucifer, keeping his seat, however, — "heartily glad of that. But come, come; this is no theological seminary for the discussing of such subjects. Proceed with your narrative, Belial."

Beelzebub now resumed his seat, and Belial proceeded.

"I mentioned," said Belial, "that Hushai the Archite, returned to Jerusalem immediately after his interview with David. The general confusion and tumult made by the flight of David and the expected arrival of Absalom, was such, that Hushai was able to reënter the city without having it known that he had been with David in his flight. He arranged with Zadok and Abiathar, the priests, that their two sons, Jonathan and Ahimaaz, who would be under suspicion because they had left Absalom at Hebron, should be secreted at Enrogel, or the Fuller's Fountain, a short distance from the city, that they might carry to David any information concerning Absalom's plans and movements that it was important he should know.

"This was scarcely done when loud strains of martial music, from the heights on the Hebron road, came floating on the breeze. Another moment, and in full view appeared the advancing columns of armed men, while banners of costly material and exquisite workmanship were waving over their extended lines. No sooner were they full in sight, than a signal flag, according to a previously concerted plan, was run up on the tallest tower of the city of David, announcing that the city was in the possession of the friends of Absalom: at sight

of this, the advancing army rent the air with shouts of transport; these were answered by ten thousand voices from the city, in a style that made valley and mountain ring. Often, as the enthusiastic shout began to die away, it was renewed, now from the army and now from the city, till Absalom, and even Ahithophel himself, found the extravagant ardor of the people go beyond all previous calculation. At the head of the advancing army could now be identified the martial form of Amasa, Absalom's chief commander. He was the nephew of David, and the cousin of Absalom. Near the centre of the moving multitude could be discerned the gorgeous equipage and elegant person of Absalom, wearing a brilliant diadem, and attended by all the pomp and circumstance of royalty.

“The gates of Jerusalem opened wide to receive its new monarch, and as the long procession moved up the main street of the city towards the palace, waving signals of welcome from door, window, and house-top, with the splendid ensigns of the several tribes, as they passed in succession, imparted to the whole scene an air of the most imposing grandeur.

“Absalom was conducted to the throne by the princes of Judah, Ephraim, Benjamin, and Dan. And the nobles of many a house, famous in Israel, were emulous which should first press forward and give in his allegiance to the young king. At this juncture Hushai the Archite, David's friend, came forward and said to Absalom, ‘God save the king! God save the king!’ without saying who the king was. Said Absalom to Hushai, ‘Is this thy kindness to thy friend? Why wentest not thou with thy friend?’

Hushai's answer is the best example of the *equivocal* that is to be found in all ancient history. 'And Hushai said unto Absalom, Nay; but whom the Lord, and this people, and all the men of Israel choose, his will I be, and with him will I abide. And again, whom should I serve? Should I not serve in the presence of his son? As I have served in thy father's presence, so will I be in thy presence.' (2 Sam. xvii. 18, 19.) The answer *may* mean, that Hushai will now be the firm friend of Absalom, as he once was the friend of David; or it may mean just as well that he will be true to David now in his adversity, as he was when he sat on the throne. But Absalom took it as a high compliment to himself, and received Hushai into his confidence.

"During all this pompous ceremony," said Belial, "I watched narrowly the countenance of Absalom, if I could detect any indications of remorse, or shame, or regret, for the degradation and misfortunes of his aged father. But there were none. Intoxicated with vanity, success, and popularity, he seemed wholly wrapped in supreme self-complacency, and altogether unmindful of the threatenings of God against a rebellious son.

"When the congratulations and waves of tumultuous joy had begun gradually to subside, Absalom beckoned to Ahithophel to approach, and the aged counsellor came near.

"'What next?' said Absalom.

"'I have a word,' said Ahithophel, 'for your own ear.'

"Absalom signified to the nobles that they should fall back, that he might speak in private with his counsellor. Ahithophel had been long practised in courts.

The schemes and intrigues of the wily politician had been to him 'the breath of life.' And such a life," said Belial, "you all know, is calculated to blunt the finer sensibilities and sear the conscience. 'It hardens all within, and petrifies the feeling.' But there was something in the suggestion he was now about making to Absalom, that brought to his pale, ashen countenance a blush that spread over cheek, and brow, and temples, till I could see the red glow between the long locks of his snow-white hair.

" 'Your majesty's followers,' said he, 'are devoted, faithful, and enthusiastic; and yet there is one point on which it is essential they should be thoroughly satisfied.'

" 'What is that?' said Absalom.

" 'Whether there is any likelihood of a compromise between your majesty and the former occupant of the throne.'

" 'None whatever,' rejoined Absalom.

" 'On that point,' said Ahithophel, 'it is necessary to fix the firmest conviction on the public mind. It is well known that David, when he left the city, calculated you would propose a compromise, and that a partnership in the throne, during his life, is all you have in view. Now, while this impression is on the mind of the people, they will be timid and cautious as to any decisive step in your majesty's service; thinking that David may yet be brought back, and then any strong measures against him at this time will be remembered and avenged. But show them you are going to make thorough work; that the breach between you and David is irreparable. "And then their hands will be

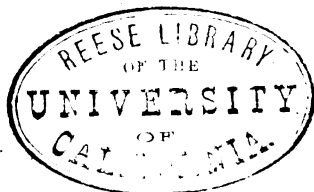
strong," and they will hesitate at nothing in order to establish your throne.'

"'I see,' replied Absalom, 'the importance of your suggestion; but how shall it be effected?'

"'Your majesty is aware,' answered Ahithophel, 'that conquerors take possession of all that belonged to the former king — his throne, his treasury, his palace, and his wives. Now, there are ten young women here, concubines of the conquered king. If your majesty would take them as your concubines, in a manner that shall be entirely public, that will at once convince all the people that no accommodation or compromise is thought of, and then they will go all lengths to establish your dominion.'

"'I said,'" continued Belial, "that Ahithophel, though inveterate in wickedness and hard-hearted, blushed deeply, at making this proposal. But such was the gross and enormous depravity of Absalom, that on his part there was no blush nor hesitation. He signified at once his approval of Ahithophel's counsel. The sun was yet above the horizon, for the events I have described had passed in rapid succession. 'So they spread a tent upon the top of the house, and Absalom went in unto his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel.'

"'Although this transaction met with the general sanction of scheming politicians, yet many of the plain country people, who had gathered to the standard of the revolution, were shocked at what they regarded as hideous and abominable wickedness, and immediately many of Zebulon, and Naphtali, and Issachar, and Asher, sick at heart, quietly left the city, and returned to Absalom no more.'



CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DEBATE.

"ABSALOM now assembled the princes and elders of the various tribes who had declared openly for him, to consult what further measures should be taken to strengthen and confirm his government. Not less than five hundred leading men, numbers of them famous in the annals of their country, were gathered in grand council; but all eyes were turned to Ahithophel, whose long experience and unrivalled reputation for political wisdom gave him an undisputed preëminence.

"Now," said Belial, "I cannot go on with this history, without requesting this large and respectable assembly to give special attention to what I am about to relate. I was prodigiously interested at the time, and I have never spoken of it since without the strongest emotion."

At this request, there was a general movement through the whole assembly. Huge demons, from remote heathen lands, were seen putting themselves in an attitude of renewed attention, and fixing their eyes on the speaker with awakened expectation.

"I have witnessed debates," said Belial, "between the most renowned orators in heathen lands. When the great masters of eloquence in Greece and Rome were in the zenith of their glory, I have heard their argu-

ments. Among modern nations also, I have attended to the discussions of their ablest statesmen. But the debate that now ensued, whether we consider the talent arrayed on opposite sides, or the momentous results that followed, has had, so far as my observation has gone, few parallels in the history of parliamentary discussion.

“Absalom first broke the silence, calling out his renowned counsellor. ‘Ahithophel, give counsel what we shall do.’

“Ahithophel rose, and with both hands threw back the long locks of his hoary hair. There was a gladness in his eye, an air of satisfaction that entirely overspread his remarkable countenance, that told how largely he shared in the triumph already achieved. With a reverential, prolonged, and graceful inclination of his person towards Absalom, he thus began:—

“‘The success, thus far, of this glorious and memorable revolution has equalled, nay, I may say, transcended far, the liveliest anticipations of your majesty’s warmest admirers. The same wise counsels followed a little further, and the work is done. Your majesty’s dominion is established, firm as the foundations of Lebanon, over all Israel, from Dan even to Beersheba. One obstacle only remains in your path,—one man. Have him swept entirely and forever out of the way, and then your long and prosperous reign goes on without hazard or molestation. As to that man, mark what I say,’ (three times rapping his finger on the table before him,) ‘take time by the forelock! Pause not! delay not! till the *final blow* is given, that secures to your majesty all that your heart can desire. The de-

throned monarch left the city late this afternoon in consternation and fright ; he has as yet no plans of resistance or defence. This is evident from the fact that, with Jerusalem in his possession, and all the munitions of war in the city at his command, no attempt was made to bar the gates or man the walls against the followers of your majesty. This,' said he, 'in one respect, is to be regretted,' looking round over the glowing countenances of the proud aspiring nobles that thronged the spacious hall ; 'for multitudes around your majesty eagerly coveted the opportunity of demonstrating their enthusiastic loyalty by cutting to pieces whatever opposition might have been vainly attempted to the advancement of the prince of their choice.'

" Here bursts of tumultuous applause overwhelmed the speaker. He yielded to the torrent, while loud and extravagant protestations of zeal and devotion resounded from all parts of the assembly. Prince vied with prince and noble with noble, Ephraim with Judah and Judah with Ephraim, Benjamin with Dan and Dan with Benjamin, who would be foremost to sacrifice limb and life in a cause so ardently beloved. Absalom at length called to order, and Ahithophel proceeded : —

" ' But no such opportunity was offered ; not even the shadow of attempt at resistance was made. Jerusalem, with all its defences, was abandoned, and the gates left open wide for the reception of one who is worthy to reign. The throneless exile, as I learn, in his flight went up the ascent of Mount Olivet, barefoot, with his head covered and weeping. His meagre handful of dejected and degraded followers, as I learn, covered every man his head, and went on weeping. Their appearance

was so forlorn and miserable, that the common people of the country, who witnessed their retreat, had their pity and sympathy so much excited, that men, women, and children, lifted up their voices and wept. These wretched refugees, I have certain intelligence, are now huddled together in the open field, quaking with terror and exhausted by their precipitate flight, a little beyond the town of Bahurim, wholly unprepared for resistance or further escape. But, mark me !' — here his emphasis was awful, while he smote the table at full force with his clinched hand, and stamped on the pavement with all his might — 'mark me ! Take time by the forelock ! This precious, golden opportunity must not be lost. This auspicious time must not be sacrificed. Beware of delay ! If *time* be given, the old warrior will recover from this shock. His martial spirit will awake. His old military habits will be aroused and called again into action. His old soldiers, now scattered through the kingdom, will rally around him again, and he will become formidable in battle. Let me now choose out twelve thousand men, that each tribe may have an equal part in this glorious and conclusive deed ; and I will arise and pursue after David this night ; and I will come upon him while he is weary and weak-handed, and I will make him afraid ; and all the people that are with him shall flee ; and I will smite the king only. And when it is publicly known that David is dead, then all Israel will turn to thee, and thy kingdom shall be established in safety and in peace.' (2 Sam. xvii. 1—3.)

“ ‘Admirable ! admirable !’ exclaimed Absalom : ‘ what wisdom could equal this !’ The princes smiled, and gave signals of assent and approbation from all parts of

the council chamber; whilst Ahithophel left the room, as if some preparatory arrangement had occurred to his mind, necessary in order to his taking the proposed command.

“In this interval, Absalom inquired if any of the princes had a word to offer before the final decision was made. None answered.

“‘Is Hushai the Archite in the assembly?’ said Absalom: ‘we should like to hear his opinion.’ (2 Sam. xvii. 5.)

“Hushai rose, and began to move slowly through the crowd of nobles, as if he was desirous to get nearer to the king. I thought,” said Belial, “I could discover that while he wished to show that he was going to occupy the floor, he was anxious to give as much time as possible for the waves of emotion excited by Ahithophel’s address to subside. I have told you that he was an experienced and talented counsellor, who had rubbed through many a hard dilemma, though never one that equalled this. He saw, with the clearness of a sun-beam, that if Ahithophel’s counsel was followed, unless God interposed by miracle, David must be crushed; and yet, as he was proverbially called David’s friend, if he too strongly dissented from Ahithophel, he would at once fall under suspicion, and ruin his cause. His introduction was modest and cautious in the extreme.

“‘Illustrious monarch,’ said he, ‘your attention, and the attention of the princes of Israel, has again been engrossed by the enlightened views of the most renowned and fortunate statesman that ever graced the council of a king; renowned, I say, for who has ever equalled him in wisdom? and fortunate, for who would not be

pronounced fortunate, who had the happiness to have the one tenth part of his agency in conducting this most desired and desirable revolution to its present successful completion? I say completion: there let me respectfully differ with him; for I regard the revolution as now complete, and the throne of your majesty as now firmly and forever established. I should have continued silent at the feet of this unequalled counsellor, and delighted, as in days past, to learn lessons of wisdom from his lips, did not zeal for your majesty impel me to notice what I think a slight oversight in the proposed expedition against David.' Here, with a most respectful and insinuating bow to the young king, he said, 'Thou knowest thy father, that he is a man of war, and will not lodge with the people. Your majesty has had opportunities of understanding his character, far beyond any of your counsellors, and I am well persuaded you have not forgotten the many tales that interested and delighted your childhood, of his artful escapes from Saul; how, with untiring and interminable cunning, he outwitted and outmanœuvred that persecuting king, with all his wily advisers, and all the resources of his army and his kingdom. From city to city, from wilderness to wilderness, from cave to cave, for the space of seven long years, was he hunted and chased by the unscrupulous and insatiable jealousy of Saul; and yet all his deadly snares and deep-laid plots were foreseen, circumvented, and frustrated, so as to result in nothing but sheer disappointment and shame; and all this, I may add, in the days of his inexperience and youth. Is this the man,' said Hushai, warming and collecting confidence as the argument advanced, — 'is

this the man who now, at a more wary period of life, and trained in the lessons of ripe experience, you are going to find in the open field, a mile or two beyond the village of Bahurim, carelessly and thoughtlessly exposed to be slain or taken in a night attack? I doubt it, in my inmost soul I doubt it. Behold, he is hid now in some pit, or in some other place of secure concealment; and if Ahithophel goes with his twelve thousand men, the probability is, five hundred to one, he will not find him. And how ominous and sadly changed will be the aspect of our affairs, if, after expectation has been raised to such a height by this expedition, the news must spread through Jerusalem, and through all the multitudes that are collecting here, that it is a total failure; and that in the first attempt at hostilities, David had out-generalled and over-matched all those who have risen up against him.'

"At this, Absalom dropped his eyes on the floor, raised his right hand to his brow, and pressed it for a moment, while the princes of Judah looked one upon another with an air of doubt and misgiving. Hushai saw the impression he had made, and assumed a bolder tone and more resolute manner.

"There was another position assumed in favor of the proposed hasty and hurried expedition, from which I must beg leave strongly to dissent. It was said, David will be *afraid*, and the men that are with him will *fly*. It was said that in their retreat from the city, there were such marks of terror and consternation, that no resistance is to be expected if they are attacked: his attendants were styled a meagre handful. There is some strange mistake here; his life-guards are with him, and

the renowned Cherethites and Pelethites. The Gittites that came with him from Gath are with him, those old tried and trusty soldiers. And, moreover, he had with him his far-famed phalanx of mighty men, that are admitted to have no equals in the present age. Who has not heard of Jashobeam the Tachmonite, who, on one battle-field, with his single spear, slew eight hundred men? Who has not heard of Eleazar, the son of Dodo, before whom, in a single day, three hundred Philistines fell? Who has not heard of the two sons of Zeruiah, Joab and Abishai, and of Shammah, and others almost their equals in celebrity? There cannot now be with David less than twelve or fifteen hundred men; — yes, and *such* men as these.

“As to the style in which they retreated, I say again, there is some strange mistake. I have the best authority for saying, that David prevailed with these men to retreat, not because he was unable to offer resistance, or unable to defend the city, but because he was unwilling to endanger the life of his own son, and the lives of his own people, in a bloody battle, when, perhaps, by a little moderation and forbearance, all existing difficulties could be amicably compromised. But the retreat itself was in perfect order. The life-guards led the way, the Gittites came next, then the Cherethites and Pelethites. And as David marched along, he had on his right hand the Tachmonite and Abishai, and on his left, the lion-like Shammah, and Eleazar, the son of Dodo, whilst Joab brought up the rear. Yes, Joab was the hindmost man in this retreat, and far was he from being fluttered or in consternation. All the mighty men appeared calm, but it was the calmness that precedes the earthquake.’

“ ‘ Although these men retreated peaceably at David’s request, they are now full of indignation. I learn that it required all of David’s authority to prevent Abishai, the son of Zeruiah, from cutting off the head of Shimei, the son of Gera, who spoke rudely and insultingly to the king as he passed through Bahurim. Yes, they are now chafed in their minds, bitter, enraged, as a bear robbed of her whelps in the field.

“ ‘ Now,’ said Hushai, raising his voice, ‘ with twelve thousand hastily recruited and undisciplined men, it is proposed to rush, in a night attack, on this compact body of trained, veteran warriors, indignant and desperate as they are. And your father, if found among them, *will be afraid!* It will be the first time, yes, the first time, in the history of his long, eventful life. If he retreated from Saul, it was because he was conscientious about lifting his hand against the Lord’s anointed. But was he ever known to tremble before an enemy of Israel? Is it forgotten that he took up the challenge of Goliath, and slew him, when no other man in the twelve tribes dared attempt it? Is this the man that will be *afraid?* And the men that are with him will fly! Who? who will fly? Joab fly? Abishai fly? Jashobeam the Tachmonite, fly? Eleazar, the son of Dodo, fly? The Cherethites and Pelethites, that never yet lost a battle, fly? The valiant men from Gath, that have gathered laurels on every field they have fought for twenty-five years, fly? Is this, I ask, our brightest hope of success, that these men will fly? To cherish such a hope is delusion, is madness, is ruin. Has God forsaken us? Has angry Heaven permitted some demon of destruction to come

and mingle in our counsels, and decoy us into a measure like this, with the delusive hope that these stern warriors will fly? Look for the rocks of Mount Zion to fly!' he exclaimed, raising his arm to its utmost height; 'look for the stream of Jordan to turn back, and go foaming and thundering over the loftiest peaks of Lebanon, into the Sea of Tyre; look for the firm ordinances of day and night, summer and winter, to fail in their seasons; but do not look for such men as are about David to fly, when they hear the clash of arms — men who know only to conquer; men whose sweetest music is the shout of the onset, the din of the war-strife, and the loud peal of victory. The very fowls of heaven and beasts of the earth know their war-cry, and for twenty-five years past have followed them through fields of slaughter. Go on this ill-advised, precipitate expedition, and how many eyes, now bright and beaming with hope, instead of greeting the light of to-morrow's morning, will be torn from their sockets by the crooked beak of the foul vulture or the croaking raven! How many hearts, now beating high with patriotic ardor, will be hurried into a horrid grave in the maw of the prowling wolf or the hungry hyena?'

"Here there was a ghastly paleness in the countenance of Absalom and several of the princes of Judah. Ephraim and Benjamin were trembling as they stood. Hushai saw it, and called aloud, 'But where will you get soldiers for this expedition? Who, that knows David and his men, will volunteer to go on this midnight assault? Where is the heart that will not utterly melt, if summoned to go through the darkness to storm this den of lions?'

“Here Hushai made a pause of some duration. This branch of the argument had been carried as far as he thought advisable, and the impression was clearly as deep as he desired.

“And now, in a mild and somewhat colloquial style, he proceeded, ‘But who is to take the *command* of this expedition? Who is to reap the *honor*, in case it shall prove successful? Ahithophel reserves this to himself. He is distinguished in counsel, though I have not learned that he has been equally so in war. There may be great talents for the cabinet where there is little for the field. But,’ said Hushai, with some hesitation, ‘I do not blame him.’

“Here,” said Belial, “I could observe a slight elevating of the shoulders, and there played upon his cheek, and about the corners of his mouth, something that approached, though it did not fully amount to, a sarcastic smile.

“‘I do not blame him for coveting this distinction. I should be glad myself,’ said he, bowing most respectfully to Absalom, — ‘I should be glad myself to appear in your court, and about your throne, during all the years of your long and prosperous reign, as the man to whom, of all Israel, you were most indebted for your kingdom and your crown. I should be glad to have my name go down to distant ages, as the renowned leader who struck the main, decisive blow in this great revolution, so rich and abundant in its beneficent bearings on the whole land. But your majesty has called us to consult for the public good; and where the *public good* is in jeopardy,’ he cried, with an impatient stamp of the foot, and a look of awful sternness, ‘confusion

and perdition to all such artful, cunningly devised schemes for individual aggrandizement !

“ My decided opinion is, that where the fate of the whole nation depends on the issue of a single engagement, the very best talents should be in the command and at the helm. I counsel thee, therefore, that thou go to the battle in thine own person. And let the highest honor go where it is most certainly merited.

“ Will your majesty allow me to ask these distinguished princes a question that much concerns us now? ’

“ Certainly,’ said Absalom, ‘ certainly.’

“ Princes of Judah,’ said Hushai, ‘ are all your people, who are willing to serve our illustrious king, already here? ’

“ Not the half of them,’ was the reply. ‘ To-morrow, by the time the sun is risen, our numbers will be doubled.’

“ Princes of Ephraim, what say you? ’

“ In twelve hours more, our numbers will be fourfold,’ was the answer.

“ Princes of Dan, what of the sons of your tribe? ’

“ By the going down of the sun to-morrow, twenty thousand Danites, now on their march, will be at Jerusalem.’

“ And thus it is,’ said Hushai, ‘ beyond all doubt, with every other branch of the great house of Israel. Let me beg, let me implore you, illustrious monarch, not to be hurried by rash, precipitate counsels. Give your faithful, zealous subjects time to rally around your standard. Your popularity, immense and unexampled, will bring all Israel, from Dan even to Beer-

sheba, into the ranks of your army, if only the necessary time be allowed. And then, with you for our commander-in-chief, we will pursue the dethroned king. So shall we come upon him in some place where he shall be found, and we will light upon him as the dew falleth on the ground, and of him, and of all the people that are with him, there shall not be left so much as one. I wholly disapprove of the counsel that says, 'Smite the king only,' and leave all those old rebel officers, that are hostile to your majesty, to create vexation and annoyance in after years. No, my voice is, extirpate them utterly. Crush the whole hornet's nest at once, and then will your majesty's reign be peaceful and unmolested.

“As to the apprehension, that the exiled king, if not pursued to-night, may get into a defenced city, and thus become formidable, it is an idle dream; let him fly into a defenced city, if he thinks it will avail him. The army that follows your majesty will be so numerous, that should each soldier take one stone from the wall of that city and throw it into the river, there will not be enough left to mark the place where it stood. But now, in conclusion,' said Hushai, lowering his voice, and speaking in a calm, cautious, confidential tone, 'let me frankly declare, that all depends on your keeping the reins in your own hand; your honor, your crown, your kingdom, your lasting fame are all suspended here. Let no artifice, however cunningly proposed, induce you to commit that command to another, which the great house of Israel have intrusted to you. I regret to mention it, but the necessity laid upon me is imperative, and fidelity to your majesty forbids that I should be silent. Let me then

say, that should this command be given to Ahithophel, the faithful friends of King Absalom will soon blush and cover their faces with shame, when they are compelled to hear the hints, and whisperings, that will be busily circulated through all the multitudes collected here, "that there is a power behind the throne greater than the throne;" "that our king is only a king in name, a mere child in leading-strings, a feeble and flexile tool in the hands of a mighty manager that is behind the curtain;" "that a certain great counsellor, like Abner with Ishbosheth, hath projected and planned this whole revolution; and that it is the popularity of the counsellor, not of the king, that hath drawn these immense masses of armed men around Jerusalem."'

"'A word to the wise is enough,' cried Hushai, again lifting his voice to a lofty key; 'and well I know that your majesty will drive all such idle and injurious delusions from the public mind, as the whirlwind drives the dust from the face of the marble. Let King Absalom fill the throne himself, wield the sceptre himself, command his armies himself, and then shall his kingdom prosper and prevail; all Israel will take shelter under the shadow of his throne. Distant lands shall learn his fame, and unborn generations shall embalm his memory and rehearse his greatness.'

"At the close of this address, Absalom appeared perfectly lost in a wild maze of contending emotions. Astonishment, shame, rage, seemed alternately to prevail. At length a venerable chief, of the house of Ephraim, arose and moved, as the sense of the meeting, 'that the counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel!'

“The decision was entirely unanimous, and then Absalom, somewhat recovered, in the most public and polite manner thanked Hushai for the light he had imparted. ‘The obligation shall be remembered,’ said Absalom, ‘and you shall all see forthwith that I am king, and I am counsellor.’

“Belial,” said Beelzebub, who now spoke out with some emotion, “does not the writer of the Second Book of Samuel speak as if the hand and appointment of God had some influence in this decision of Absalom and his council, so fatal to all their undertaking !”

“He does indeed,” said Belial ; “his words are these : ‘For the Lord had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the Lord might bring evil upon Absalom.’” (2 Sam. xvii. 14.)

“Come, come,” said Lucifer, who now raised his voice ; “I dislike exceedingly to hear such quotations of Scripture as that ; no more of it, go on with your history, Belial.”

CHAPTER XIX.

AHIMAAZ AND JONATHAN.

“AND now,” said Belial, “a scene of thrilling interest followed immediately, on which much depended.

“As soon as Hushai could quietly, and without attracting observation, escape from the council chamber, he hurried to the house of Abiathar the priest. There he found Zadok and Abiathar in earnest discourse about the troubles of the times. He hastened to tell them that the designs of Absalom were desperate; that there were no thoughts of compromise, or accommodation; that Ahithophel had made a powerful speech, advising the instant pursuit of David, that he might be overtaken while weary and weak-handed, and slain, before his old friends had time to rally around him. (2 Sam. xvii. 15, 16.)

“‘Slain!’ exclaimed Zadok and Abiathar at the same moment, starting to their feet, in astonishment; ‘Slain! is that their bloody and horrible plan?’ ‘I employed,’ said Hushai, ‘every argument I could invent, to procure some delay. I appealed to their fears, to Absalom’s vanity; his love of power and personal distinction; the prospect of his army being greatly increased in a day or two; and every other motive within the range of my imagination; and they have just

decided to wait till the morning at least, before setting out to pursue David. But Ahithophel was out of the room when the decision was made. I fear he may return, and yet persuade Absalom to let him go to-night, and the good old king may be overtaken and slain before the break of day. Ahithophel's counsels are dark as the grave, and deadly as perdition. Now, therefore, send quickly and tell David, saying, "Lodge not this night in the plains of the wilderness, but speedily pass over Jordan, lest the king be swallowed up, and all the people that are with him."

"'But,' said Zadok, 'if Absalom's designs are so bloody, our lives are in danger. If he sees the least symptoms of our being favorable to David, we shall find no mercy.'

"'Jonathan and Ahimaaz,' said Hushai, 'are now at Enrogel, near the gate of the city: send word to them, and they will take it to David.' (2 Sam. xvii. 17.)

"'But who dares to go?' said Zadok: 'the gates are guarded, and if you, or I, or Abiathar are seen passing out on such an errand, it is certain death.'

"'Alas! alas!' exclaimed Abiathar, 'and our dear sons, Jonathan and Ahimaaz, if they should be discovered where they are now, waiting for tidings to carry to David, their lives will be sacrificed to the vengeance of Absalom.'

"'God of mercy, help us!' exclaimed Zadok. 'Absalom must know that they both left him at Hebron, and have declared for David. He will be transported with rage, and doom them to instant death!'

"'I see,' said Hushai, 'their imminent peril, and the peril of David, and the kingdom; and yet what can we'

do? For one of us to attempt to go is absolute death; and if they and David do not receive warning, they will certainly be slain.'

"Zadok and Abiathar walked the room, wringing their hands, while convulsive sobs, mingled with prayers to Heaven, burst from their agonized bosoms. Hushai sat with eyes fixed on the floor, and seemed perfectly at fault. Counsellor as he was, renowned for astonishing resources, and long skilled in stemming the most formidable tides of adverse influence, he seemed to have met with an overmatch now. Dark shades of desperate intellectual effort rushed over his manly countenance, and his strong frame was agitated as he looked now at the danger of David, now at the ruin of the kingdom, and now at the peculiar hazard of the two interesting and adventurous youths, Ahimaaaz and Jonathan, and saw no possible plan for acting in their behalf. Every moment was precious; and yet, turn which way he would, a gloom was before him like the midnight of despair.

"At this juncture, a low and tremulous female voice was heard at the door of a small room adjoining the apartment where they were in consultation, calling to Abiathar, 'Father! father!' It was the voice of Tamar, the daughter of Abiathar. She had been in her room when Zadok and Abiathar came together. Presently Hushai entered, the door of her little chamber was slightly ajar, and she had overheard all their conversation. Jonathan was her beloved brother, and Ahimaaaz her intimate acquaintance, who had recently declared to her the deep devoted affection he had long cherished in his heart, which, suffice it to say, had met with no

repulse. Modest, bashful, and timid, even beyond her equals in age, — for she was not above seventeen, — yet hearing of the danger of her brother and Ahimaaz, her soul was roused to all the energy that characterizes woman in the hour of danger, and she called her father to the door.

“Abiathar hastily obeyed the summons. ‘Tamar, my daughter, are you here?’

“‘Did you say brother Jonathan is exposed by being at Enrogel?’

“‘Exposed! My dear, his life and the life of Ahimaaz is in peril every moment, till they are warned to fly. Absalom and Ahithophel are resolved to kill King David and all his friends. Alas! what shall we do?’

“‘Father, I can go and tell them to fly.’

“‘But the gates are guarded; we cannot pass.’

“‘But I can pass them, father; the guards know me well; they let me pass as often as I please, going to and from the house of Phinehas the Levite at Bahurim.’

“‘That will do!’ said Hushai, springing to his feet; ‘that will do, bring her in, bring her in. Thanks to the God of Abraham, there is hope yet.’

“Abiathar hastily led her into the apartment. She was delicate and slender, and extremely youthful in appearance: on her cheek the rose had now mounted above the lily, that usually predominated there; but her manner was firm, and her step elastic and light as that of the nimble fawn on the lofty ridges of Carmel. Hushai took her eagerly by the arm: ‘My child, hasten with all your might to Ahimaaz and Jonathan; tell them to escape to David, and warn him to fly to Jordan, and cross the river, if possible, by the break of day; tell

him to speed his way to Mahanaim, in the tribe of Gad; few of them have joined in the rebellion. Tell him Absalom and Ahithophel are intent on his death, and I fear they will pursue and overtake him before the morning light.'

"The door opened, and Tamar left the room. Down the street she glided, like a meteor through the gathering gloom. The guards were in the act of closing the gates, but suffered her to pass after bandying a few playful words; and on she tripped, with a fluttering heart, toward the Fuller's Fountain. (2 Sam. xvii. 17.)

"Our narrative now," said Belial, "returns to Absalom. When the vote, at the close of Hushai's speech, had settled the question that David would not be pursued till more forces were assembled, the council was dissolved, and many of the nobles of Jerusalem left the hall. Their houses were crowded with acquaintances from all quarters, now collected in the city. Absalom, however, still remained. Newly arrived princes had sought the council-chamber: with these he must be familiar, and each put in drafts upon his time, and he still continued to follow up his electioneering arts, so that the number in the council-chamber was yet considerable.

"'The revolution goes bravely on,' said a powerful chief from Mount Ephraim, who had but recently come.

"'Bravely, bravely,' answered Absalom.

"'I understand that the old king,' said the chief, 'has fled without striking a blow; and that all Jerusalem is unanimous for your majesty.'

"'Unanimous,' said Absalom; 'and from the country they are pouring in, thousands on thousands'

“ ‘How do the priests go?’ inquired the chief.

“ ‘O, with me,’ said Absalom, ‘decidedly with me — all of them.’

“ ‘Except Ahimaaz and Jonathan,’ said an old citizen of Jerusalem, who was standing by.

“ ‘Ahimaaz and Jonathan are with me,’ said Absalom, turning on the last speaker, with a look that bordered on a frown; ‘we have been friends from boyhood.’

“ ‘Your majesty is mistaken,’ said the old man firmly; ‘they are certainly with David.’

“ ‘Did I not see them at Hebron?’ said Absalom, rather more sternly. ‘Indeed, I took them with me from Jerusalem in the very beginning of our glorious enterprise.’

“ ‘But they have left you.’

“ ‘How? Ahimaaz and Jonathan! Left me, you say?’

“ ‘Certainly, they have left you. The moment your standard was erected in Hebron, and your purpose proclaimed, Ahimaaz mounted the swiftest horse he could procure, and rode at full speed all the way to this city, and was the first who gave the alarm to David and his friends. Jonathan followed immediately, and, I learn, was the first to inform David that Ahithophel had declared for you.’

“ ‘Base dogs!’ exclaimed Absalom, grinding his teeth in a transport of fury; ‘they shall feel my vengeance, my hottest and heaviest vengeance.’

“ ‘They have left their fathers and you, and gone with David.’

“ ‘No, they have not gone with David,’ said a forward lad of fifteen, who had just entered the room, and now spoke up; one of those prying and inquisitive boys who always share largely in any excitement that is going

on ; try to be every where, to see every thing, to know all that is doing, and are always ready to speak, no matter who the hearers may be. 'They have not gone with David ; they are out here now at the Fuller's Fountain.' (2 Sam. xvii. 18.)

" 'At the Fuller's Fountain?' said Absalom : ' what on earth are they doing there ?'

" 'Why,' said the boy, ' when David left the city, I went along a while, to see what he and his mighty men were going to do ; and when he was more than half way up the Mount of Olives, Jonathan came running to him, his face very pale, and said, 'Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom ;' and David seemed greatly frightened, and prayed a little while, and then called Jonathan to him, and whispered something in his ear ; and then he whispered to Ahimaaz, and they both turned back to the city. I could not think what it could be that David said to them ; but I noticed they did not come into the city gate, but turned off to the old building Enrogel, or the Fuller's Fountain. Directly I heard the men with David say that you would soon be in sight on the Hebron road. So I turned back to see you and your men come to the city. But when I came down the mountain, you were not yet in sight, and I thought I would go and see what Jonathan and Ahimaaz could be about at that old building. I found them standing behind some rubbish in one corner of a waste room. They appeared not to wish me to see them. But I said nothing, and they said nothing ; and presently I heard your trumpets, and then I came away ; but I suppose they are there yet.'

" '*Spies!*' exclaimed a stout Danite officer, who

had had some experience in the arts and stratagems of war ; 'spies, most unquestionably ! They are waiting to find out our plans and intentions, and then they will carry the intelligence to David.'

" 'But how,' said Absalom, 'will they discover our plans?—they out at Enrogel, and afraid, no doubt, to come into the city?'

" 'Poh ! poh !' said the Danite : 'David has friends in the city by the dozen, by the hundred, that will send them word, and they will take it to him ; that is the arrangement, as sure as there is a cedar on Lebanon.'

" 'By the God of Geshur,' said Absalom, 'I will make it dear spying to them, the false villains ! Here, Ben Huppim,' to the Danite, 'take twenty of your best horsemen, and your swiftest horses, and take this boy to show you where they are ; dash off immediately, and surround the building, and hew them to pieces, or take them alive.'

" 'Had we not better go on foot? ' said Ben Huppim.

" 'On foot?' said Absalom : 'no, take your horses, your best horses ; they are as swift as two wild antelopes. I have raced with them often when we were boys together. Ahimaaz particularly, his fame is everywhere, through all this mountain country : give him three paces the start, and there is not a man between Jordan and the great sea that can catch him.' (2 Sam. xviii. 27.)

" 'The Danites were mounted and gone in brief space. And Absalom stood soliloquizing : 'Spies ! ah, indeed, and friends of David in the city sending him intelligence of our affairs ! I will put a stop to that forthwith ! Here, Carmi !' to one of the princes of Judah : 'have the guards at the gate doubled ; proclaim it as the king's

order that neither man nor woman shall go out or in but by my special command.'

"Tamar in the mean time had delivered her message to Ahimaaz and Jonathan, and they had put off at full speed to warn David. Tamar was standing, and by the light of the moon, which had just attained its first quarter, was looking after them as they ran, and offering up prayers to Heaven for their safety, and the safety of David, — when the clatter of the Danite horsemen was heard as they rushed from the gate of the city towards the Fuller's Fountain. As they came nearer and nearer, she dropped among some shrubbery, as the timid partridge when the broad shadow of the eagle is seen.

"The Danites galloped up and surrounded the building. Ten of them sprung from their saddles to search the house, while ten remained on horseback to watch without, reigning up their mettled horses, and ready for pursuit. Their leader entered the house, addressing at the same time the objects of his pursuit, not doubting but that they were present: 'Ha, Jonathan and Ahimaaz, lads, are you here? Rather dark and uncomfortable quarters you have selected in these brisk times; come, we are going to mend your boarding. What! no answer? Look round in that dark corner, Beriah; do you find them? no one there? gone? ah, gone? To horse! to horse! and pursue the spies; we will catch them yet.' The Danites were mounted in the twinkling of an eye, and away they went, shouting, 'Hurrah for the revolution! Down with old David! Hurrah for Absalom! Hurra for Ben Huppim! Absalom and Ben Huppim forever!' Thus they swept like a hurricane

up the sides of the Mount of Olives, and were soon beyond the summit.

“ Ahimaaz and Jonathan were approaching the village of Bahurim, when they heard this tempest of pursuit roaring behind them. Finding that they must be overtaken, they ran into the house of Phinehas the Levite, and said to his wife, ‘ Hide us, hide us! our lives are in danger! instantly! instantly!’ (2 Sam. xvii. 18.)

“ Now,” said Belial, “ it is characteristic of a woman in all ages, that, in an extremity, her mind acts quick — she will think at once of the very best thing that can be done. She will hit in a moment on, perhaps, the very expedient which a man would adopt, if you gave him five minutes to study about it. Phinehas the Levite had in his court a well; there were small circular steps going down, for the family kept milk, and butter, and such articles there as they wished to preserve from the heat of the day. As soon as the woman had heard the hurried request of the two young priests, she pointed to the well. Ahimaaz darted in, followed by Jonathan. The woman hastily put a covering on the well, spread a cloth over the covering, and then spread meal over the cloth, as if for the purpose of drying, or giving it the benefit of the fresh air. This was all done in a moment. The keen eye of Ben Huppim, ever the foremost of his troop, had caught several glimpses of the two young men before they left the main road. But he distinctly saw them when they turned off and ran into the house of Phinehas the Levite. Certain of his victims now, he threw the reins to a soldier, bade a number of his men follow him, and

entered the house with a drawn sword in his hand. Finding nothing there but a woman and some terrified children, he looked around with impatience and disappointment, and demanded, —

“‘Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan? I saw them run into this house.’ (2 Sam. xvii. 20.)

“‘They are gone over the water,’ said the woman, pointing toward a brook that ran beyond the house.

“Ben Huppim fixed his eye sternly on her for a second or two, as if he did not more than half believe what she said; but there was no quailing of the eye, or dropping of the countenance with her. She returned his angry gaze by looking him full and steadily in the face, seeming the meanwhile entirely careless and unmoved in view of his irritation and disappointment. He bade his men to search the house. It was soon done, for the building was not large; but nothing could be found. They saw that meal spread out there to dry, but never dreamed that there might be a well under it, containing the objects of their search.

“Ben Huppim now called out, ‘To horse!’ They remounted, passed over the brook, and galloped up and down for half an hour in the direction the woman had pointed, then gave up the chase, and turned back for Jerusalem. As he was repassing the house of Phinehas the Levite, Ben Huppim reined up his horse, and said, in a voice loud enough to be distinctly heard, ‘Should I yet find that those spies have been concealed here, I will scourge this family for trifling with the majesty of Absalom. I will make this house a monument of his wrath.’ He then resumed his retreat. As soon as he was out of hearing, the woman called

Ahimaaz and Jonathan up out of the well, and away they ran to give the warning to David.

“It was mentioned,” said Belial, “that at the approach of Ben Huppim’s party to Enrogel, Tamar hid among some shrubbery. She remained perfectly still and undiscovered, till they had finished their search of the building at Enrogel, and dashed off in the pursuit, over the top of the mountain. She then arose and hastened back toward the gate, hoping that through her acquaintance with the guard, she would be allowed to pass and return home. On drawing nigh, however, she discovered quite a number of mounted men before the gate, who seemed to be in some confusion. They were Absalom’s friends just arrived from the country. Tamar paused at a little distance, and heard the watchman tell them, ‘No admittance to-night. King Absalom has so commanded. You must remain without till the morning.’ Tamar now saw that her own situation was somewhat awkward. To return home was impossible — to be discovered might be dangerous. But Tamar, though young and delicate, had a firm, courageous heart. Early in life she had read the history of the remarkable preservation of Joseph in Egypt; of Moses in the ark of bulrushes; and of the spies that Joshua sent to Jericho, who were hid by Rahab. Indeed, before she was even able to read, she had a very great fondness for narratives of this kind; and used to importune and almost tease her father to tell her tales of days gone by. Abiathar would take her up on his knee, during the long winter nights, and rehearse how, when he was a youth, Doeg, the Edomite, the wicked armor-bearer of persecuting

Saul, had come to his father's house, and killed his father and all his brothers; that in one day that unmerciful man put to death eighty-five persons that wore the sacred garments, and the city in which they dwelt was by him laid in ruins. He would tell her how, when his father and all his brothers were killed, he escaped and fled to David; and how he was with David when he was pursued and his life sought by jealous and tyrannical Saul. He would tell her how they were chased, sometimes through the fields and sometimes through the forests, and hid themselves, now in caves and now among the mountains; how they prayed to the God of Israel to preserve and deliver them; how he always heard their prayers, and always opened for them a way of escape, until, at last, Saul was overthrown by the hand of the Philistines; and David, by the providence of God, was brought to the throne.

“ These and similar sketches of Israel's history had made a deep and lasting impression on the mind of Tamar; and while there was a cast of romance in her character, a strong and unwavering confidence in God was firmly planted in her heart. This was of great importance to her now. Finding all access to the city cut off for the present, she resolved at once to go to Bahurim, and spend the night at the house of Phinehas the Levite.

“ She had passed the mountain top, and began to descend, when she heard the returning party of Danites, under the command of Ben Huphim. She slipped quietly from the road, behind some olive-trees, and listened eagerly if she could learn the result of their

pursuit. Their horses were now climbing slowly up a steep and rugged part of the ascent.

“ ‘Captain,’ said the rough voice of a soldier, ‘I think now, ten to one, but those two traitor spies that ran before us so tremendously over these rocks and rough places, were hid somewhere about that house we searched, after all.’

“ ‘Pshaw! Beriah!’ said Ben Huppim; ‘be ashamed of yourself. Would you dispute the word now of that handsome woman, so modest, so gentle, so pleasant, notwithstanding we rushed rudely into her house, with drawn swords, and ripped and tore through every room, scaring the children almost to death, and turning every thing in the house upside down. A fine-looking woman, was’nt she?’

“ ‘Ah, captain,’ said Beriah, ‘you are an old soldier. But take my word for it, just let a woman alone for sly, cunning management in a pinch. She was a little too modest, a little too gentle, a little too pleasant and good-humored, to be just as ignorant as she pretended about that whole matter. You know, captain, still water is often deep.’

“ ‘That’s you, Beriah,’ answered the captain, ‘that’s you, always suspicious and surmising evil—think every body as bad yourself. A real Danite, every inch of you. Good old grandfather Jacob’s description of the Danite, fits you as the scabbard fits the blade—“A serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse’s heels, so that his rider shall fall backwards.”’ (Gen. xlix. 17.) Ride on, men! ride on; let’s reach the city.’

“So away went Ben Huppim and his party. But

this rough and brief dialogue took a mighty burden from the mind of Tamar. 'Bless the name of the Lord,' she said in her heart; 'Jonathan and Ahimaaz have escaped them;' and with a light and bounding heart, she glided down the mountain side, and soon entered the house of Phinehas the Levite.

"'Of all sights, Tamar, can this be you? and at this time of night?' exclaimed Phinehas, as she shot into the room, and threw herself into a seat that was farthest from the door.

"'Yes, praise to the God of Israel, I am here safe at last,' answered Tamar.

"'Ay, as *safe* as the spies of Joshua were in Jericho,' rejoined Phinehas, who, having a strong spice of humor in his composition, I might almost say playfulness, though now somewhat apprehensive and uneasy, could not altogether restrain his ruling passion. 'But, Tamar, what new flare-up of old Beelzebub is this you have in Jerusalem? Have princes and people all run crazy?'

"'Why,' said Tamar, 'Absalom and Ahithophel have determined to kill David. Ahithophel has counselled Absalom to pursue after David to-night, that he may be slain, before his friends can have time to gather and defend him.'

"'Shocking!' exclaimed Phinehas. 'Is Absalom so horribly wicked as to wish to kill his old father? I thought there was hope of the whole matter being compromised, and settled without bloodshed.'

"'No hope at all of that now,' answered Tamar. 'Ahithophel told Absalom that he will never be safely seated on the throne while David is alive; that the surest policy is to kill him, and the quicker the better.'

“ ‘Did you say they will pursue after David to-night?’

“ ‘That was Ahithophel’s counsel,’ said Tamar. ‘But Hushai told father, that he made the strongest speech in his power to persuade Absalom to put it off for a day or two till more of his friends could be collected, for that Joab and Abishai would fight like lions for their uncle’s life, and they had a great many mighty men with them, and if he rushed on them before he was ready with a strong army, he might be defeated.’

“ ‘Ah,’ said Phinehas, ‘Hushai wanted to gain time for David. The old fox, how cunning!’

“ Gossips, you know, have a saying in store —

‘He that masters a lawyer has only one more.’”

“ ‘But Hushai did not know whether Absalom would follow his counsel or Ahithophel’s,’ said Tamar.

“ ‘But, Tamar,’ said Phinehas, ‘what set Jonathan and Ahimaaz to racing through the country at such a rate? They ran through here as if they thought all Absalom’s army was after them.’

“ ‘They were concealed at Enrogel,’ said Tamar, ‘to find out Absalom’s plans, and carry the news to David. I went and told them to fly and tell David what Ahithophel had counselled against him. It was well I went when I did, for they were not out of sight, when Absalom’s men galloped up and surrounded the house where they had been. But Ahimaaz said they were just going to start when I came, for that boy, Ira the Kenite had been there looking about, and had seen where they were hid, and they were every moment afraid he would tell it to Absalom, or to some of his friends.’

“‘That gimlet-eyed little Kenite,’ said Phinehas, ‘was he there? Never fear for him: he must see and know all that is going on: he is in his element now, no doubt.’

“‘O, he had told it, I know; for the Danites, when they came to Enrogel, had him along, and he showed them the place where he had seen Ahimaaz and Jonathan; but when they could not be found, the Danites galloped off, and left him there.’

“‘That was fortunate,’ said Phinehas: ‘had they brought him along, we should all have been detected. You would never have got him away from the house, without having a peep into that well. But, Tamar, how came you to be sent to Enrogel? Was there no stouter messenger in so rough a time as this?’

“‘Hushai, and Zadok, and father, all said they dare not go, for it would be instant death if Absalom found any one favoring David; but I —’

“‘Wife! wife! do you hear that?’ ejaculated Phinehas. ‘What do you think of your share in this business?’

“‘Why, husband, do you think they take notice of us?’

“‘Take notice! ah, indeed will they, and be as bitter as vipers. Did you not hear the threat of Ben Huppim on his return? Yes, all we have done will be publicly known before morning. We must fly. Our only hope is to try to reach David’s party, and escape with them beyond Jordan.’

“‘We must now,’ said Belial, “leave this family in the midst of their apprehensions and projects for safety, in order to notice the condition of David.”

CHAPTER XX.

THE RETREAT.

“**AHITHOPHEL**, as usual, had judged with unerring correctness the exact state of David’s mind, and his exposed situation. The storm had burst upon him so suddenly, and wave after wave of calamities, heavy and horrible, had rolled over him, till his spirit was bent to the earth, and he had made no attempt to conceal himself, in case he should be pursued, or to resist in defence of his life. He looked upon himself as under the rebuke of God; and now he prayed for pardoning mercy, and now he thought of Absalom’s ingratitude and guilt. Yet in the midst of these gloomy meditations, he cherished hopes, sometimes stronger and sometimes weaker, but still hopes, that Absalom would relent, and send after him a message of peace, and that all things could be adjusted without the dire necessity of a resort to arms. Joab, however, seeing his uncle in an agony of mental distress, quietly put the men in order at the place where they had halted, stationed a sufficient guard at a proper distance, and himself walked silently back and forth, at a little distance within the line of sentinels, ready in case the worst should come.

“All was now still; and as the dark mantle of night began to cover hill and valley, prince and peasant, the tranquillity of the scene imparted a soothing influence

to the harassed and agonized mind of David. It had long been his habit, at the closing hour of day, to lift up his heart and voice in praise to God. Standing now under a spreading and stately palm, his faithful adherents ranged around, in a low and subdued tone, he chanted the following

HYMN.

I.

‘Cease, cease, my tears, to flow,
Cease, cease, my heart, to moan ;
Look up, my soul, to Zion’s hill,
The great Jehovah’s throne.

II.

‘No earthly storm or flood,
Though fierce it rave and tear,
Can shake the dwelling-place of God,
Or spread confusion there.

III.

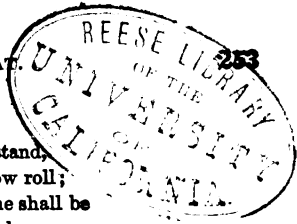
‘Long ere the world began,
Serene he dwelt on high ;
And long his blessed throne shall stand,
When earthly kingdoms die.

IV.

‘The sun himself shall fade,
The starry worlds shall fall ;
Yet, through a vast eternity,
Shall God be all in all.

V.

‘Though now his ways are dark,
Concealed from mortal sight,
His counsels are divinely wise,
And all his judgments right.



VI.

‘In God my trust shall stand,
 While waves of sorrow roll;
 In life or death his name shall be
 The refuge of my soul.

VII.

‘Cease, cease, my tears, to flow,
 Cease, cease, my heart, to moan;
 Betide what may to me, I’ll say,
 His holy will be done.’

“ At the close of this hymn, David addressed Ittai the Gittite, who was standing close by his side.

“ ‘I think, my dear and long-tried friend, that surely Absalom, when he finds the palace, and throne, and kingdom all left to him, and no attempt at resistance, will relent, and send us a message of peace.’

“ ‘You would consent,’ said Ittai, ‘to allow him a share of the throne and kingdom, during your declining days, if that would content him?’

“ ‘Willingly, most willingly,’ answered David: ‘he is the undisputed heir to the kingdom; and so far as is consistent with the public good, I would gladly roll a portion of its burdens on him; for, Ittai, I grow weary of the cares and distractions of public life.’

“ ‘He will certainly be satisfied with such an arrangement as that,’ said Ittai, ‘and I fondly hope all will yet go well.’

“ ‘O, had I but known his wishes sooner, all this disgrace and agony of soul might have been avoided; but Ittai, on that dark cloud we are contemplating, there is one spot so frightfully black, that I shudder while I look upon it.’

“ ‘What is that, my lord,’ said Ittai, with much concern.

“ ‘Ahithophel.’

“ ‘He was long your friend,’ said Ittai.

“ ‘Ah, but it is otherwise now, and he would not have come out so publicly, unless he meant to drive matters to the very worst extremity, and also had the strongest assurance that his counsel would be followed.’

“ ‘But the princes of Judah, my lord, are there in great numbers; they will certainly resist violent measures; many of them have stood well affected towards you.’

“ ‘I have more confidence in Hushai the Archite, ten times over, than in all the princes of Judah; but such are the awful talents of Ahithophel, and such will now be his vindictiveness, that unless God interposes, by some special providence, he will work our ruin.’

“ The tread of footmen was now heard at a distance, which seemed to approach with great rapidity: nearer, and yet nearer, it came, when a sentinel on guard called out, —

“ ‘Who’s there?’

“ ‘Ahimaaz and Jonathan,’ was the reply.

“ ‘Come on,’ said Joab, who was walking near the sentinel: ‘have you tidings for the king?’

“ ‘Where is the king?’ said Ahimaaz.

“ ‘Under that palm-tree,’ said Joab.

“ ‘Fly, my lord, fly for your life!’ cried Ahimaaz. ‘Ahithophel has urged Absalom to pursue you to-night, and kill you before you are ready to defend yourself!’

“ ‘Alas!’ cried David, ‘is that their aim? Ah, Ahith-

ophel! Ahithophel! I knew your designs were deadly. Poor, poor, deluded Absalom!’

“‘Is it your pleasure, my lord,’ said Joab, ‘that I should draw up our men and await their onset? Regard them but as grass at the edge of the mower’s scythe, before the servants of your majesty.’

“‘O,’ exclaimed David, ‘we must not resort to bloodshed now. Deranged as they surely are, desperate and driven on by the devil and Ahithophel, they are still my people. And Absalom, O, my dear, wretched son! You will break my heart. Ahimaaz, did you see Hushai the Archite?’

“‘No, my lord,’ answered Ahimaaz; ‘but he sent you word to escape with all possible speed beyond Jordan, and take refuge in the strong city of Mahanaim. The gathering storm, he says, is tremendous.’

“‘We will take the counsel of Hushai,’ said David. ‘Fly, soldiers, fly!’

“‘Hushai is no warrior,’ said Joab; ‘I would regard them as the rock regards the chaff driven from a summer threshing-floor. But your order, my lord, shall be obeyed at once.’

“This was Joab’s first and only retreat, in the history of a long and brilliant military career. A new chapter in the book of discipline was demanded here, yet a moment proved that he had it perfectly by heart. His loud, commanding voice now roused the little army.

“‘Soldiers, attention! To the Jordan road! Gittites, to the front! Ittai, place the king in the centre of your men. I need not mention the value of the treasure you guard. Abishai, take Jashobeam the Tachmonite, Eleazar the son of Dodo, with the thirty mighty men,

and put yourselves close around the king's person. Life-guards! fall back behind the men from Gath. Cherethites and Pelethites! my good, tried fellow-soldiers, come with me to the rear; and now,' said he, in a lower tone, 'if they attack us, show yourselves *men!*'

"Then lifting his voice to be heard the whole length of the line, he gave the word of command, 'Quick time! forward, *march!*'

"Away swept the column of armed men, like the tide of a river swollen by the rains of heaven, steady, strong, silent, swift — onward, onward; winding with the windings of the road; now curving to the right to shun the rough rock that stood there; now bending to the left, to avoid the yawning ravine; now meandering among the tall forest trees — onward, onward, onward; now rushing down the steep; now stretching across the plain; now shooting up the ascent; now pouring over the comb of the ridge — onward, onward, onward. The hope of Israel was in their flight, the life of the king, the safety of the church — onward, onward, onward. Deep silence reigned along the line; profound stillness was over the valley, lake, and hill, as if nature held her breath in the intense interest of the hour — onward, onward, swept the column. The moon sunk behind the distant mountains. Night threw a darker mantle over their pathway, while the broad, blue heaven, with all its starry eyes, gazed upon them, mute, attentive, and beautiful. Onward, onward, swept the column. For three long hours not a word had been whispered: at length tall, scattering trees were seen, and lights glimmered before them — it was the stars on an extended sheet of water. 'Halt!' cried the voice of their

commander. And the little army stood on the bank of the Jordan.

“ ‘ Ahimaaz and Jonathan ! ’ said Joab ; ‘ man the boat with rowers. Put the king and people over with all possible despatch. Rear guard ! form a line ! To the right about, face ! stand, lest the foe should yet appear. ’

“ Stout rowers manned the boat, and the river being calm at this hour, company after company was placed with great rapidity on the opposite shore.

“ The deep silence which had reigned so long was now broken only by the creaking and groaning of the oars, and the dash of the disturbed waters, as strong fears, mingled with hopes of escape, caused the boat to shoot like an arrow, now to this shore and now to that.

“ The gray of the morning had appeared, or rather the dawn was distinct, when Joab and the last of the Pelethites stepped out of the boat on the Gilead side of the river.

“ The transportation of the party was now complete. The immediate danger was considered as past. And David and the body of the people were taking some scanty refreshments where they had halted, at a little distance from the river. But Jonathan and Ahimaaz, who had superintended the crossing of the company, were still at the brink of the stream, when a loud call was heard on the opposite side at some distance from the bank.

“ ‘ The boat ! the boat ! bring over the boat. ’

“ They looked, and saw a man advancing with huge and hasty strides ; two women mounted, the one with a child in her lap, the other with a little girl behind her, while two small boys, riding a mule, completed the party.

“ ‘ Ah, more refugees, in these squally times,’ said Ahimaaz : ‘ who can they be ? ’

“ ‘ The foremost,’ said Jonathan, ‘ strongly resembles our man Phinehas the Levite, of Bahurim. But where can he have picked up those women and children ? ’

“ ‘ One of them,’ said Ahimaaz, looking very steadily, ‘ is certainly Tamar, your sister, and the other, beyond doubt, is the good wife of Phinehas — the little boys, the babies, and all.’

“ ‘ Success to them ! ’ ejaculated Jonathan : ‘ I will call back the rowers, and bring them over.’

“ ‘ Instantly,’ said Ahimaaz : ‘ they are flying for their lives. Their kindness to us has brought them into danger.’

“ ‘ The boat was over by the time the party had gained the top of the bank. Ahimaaz ran up to help the women to dismount, while Jonathan stood by the rowers as they held the boat to the shore.

“ ‘ Why, Phinehas,’ said Ahimaaz, ‘ what in the world has started you in this style ? ’

“ ‘ Put me on the other side of the river,’ answered Phinehas, ‘ and I will tell you.’

“ ‘ The wife of Phinehas, accustomed to live among the mountains, remote from any large body of water, looked upon the bold and rapid stream with some misgiving and trepidation.

“ ‘ Do you think, Jonathan,’ said she, ‘ that the boat is entirely safe ? Is there no danger of its sinking ? I was always afraid of water.’

“ ‘ Step in, step in,’ said Jonathan ; ‘ perfectly safe. They take over loaded wagons and camels every day.’

“ ‘ The little sons of Phinehas were greatly delighted at

the sight of so large a river, and expressed their wonder as they looked up and down its broad channel, while the care and anxiety of the mother, lest they should fall in and be drowned, was very characteristic. She continued giving hasty admonitions and directions, sometimes to the children, and then to their father, till the boat had gained the eastern bank of the river.

“ ‘Now, Phinehas, for your history,’ said Ahimaaz, when they were all safely landed. ‘What was it that started you in this style, and in the dead hour of the night?’ ”

“Phinehas now experienced that pleasing reaction of mind which ensues when alarming dangers are past and over, and he freely indulged in that humorous and playful style that generally characterized his conversation.

“ ‘Our little town of Bahurim,’ said he, ‘during the afternoon and earlier part of the night, was agitated and tossed with commotions as though we had dwelt on the side of some volcanic mountain. In the first place, our good old king took a singular trip through our principal street, late in the afternoon; and what astonished us the more, he was taking his excursion on foot. In the second place, a great man of our town, Shimei, the son of Gera, by name, moved by the presence of royalty, undertook to give his majesty a specimen of our proficiency in the fine arts, particularly in the department of oratory. He was edifying the king with an eloquent oration, which abounded in certain historical references, when Abishai, the son of Zeruah, became suddenly very anxious to make a display of his skill in another department of the arts, that is, in the department of surgery. All he asked was the royal

sanction, in order to effect what, he maintained, would be a decided improvement in the location of Shimei's head. The good king, however, discouraged the proposed surgical operation, on the ground that his mind was not clear as to its propriety in the case of the polite and eloquent Shimei.

“ ‘While we were admiring these singular events, two young men, who shall be nameless, without the idle ceremony of knocking at the door, very familiarly presented themselves as guests in my parlor. This excellent wife of mine, renowned all through Bahurim and the neighborhood for her tact in killing two birds with one stone, to accommodate her guests, and save herself the trouble of spreading a table for their refreshment, showed them into the apartment where she keeps her cream, milk, and butter, that they might help themselves; but, woman-like, in her attention to the claims of appetite, she did not neglect those of dress and external appearance; and as powdering is all the fashion now among the quality, she used up a fine grist of meal for the benefit of her two visitors. Scarcely were these arrangements completed, when a certain Ben Huppim, and eighteen or twenty Danites, politely called upon us, and appeared as hungry for an interview with the two guests who had entered the house before them, as the seven lean and famished cattle that Pharaoh saw in his dream, were for an acquaintance with the fat and well-favored kine that came up from the river before them. My prudent and judicious wife declined acting as mistress of ceremonies on this occasion, and very plainly intimated to Ben Huppim and his party, that as our house was not large, if they would

go farther they might fare better. The Danites, however, declined leaving the house until they had made an accurate examination of the extent of our accommodations; they overset all of our furniture, leaving scars and marks of violence on almost every article they touched.

“ Yet all this while neither did King David himself, nor Abishai, nor the two young men, nor the Danites, deign to throw any more light on these strange proceedings, than the magicians and astrologers of Egypt did on the dreams of Pharaoh before mentioned. At length, however, an interpreter appeared, as young, as wise, and if some people’s opinion be consulted, ’ glancing his eye toward Ahimaaz, ‘ far more beautiful than the expounder of dreams who stood before Pharaoh. This genuine Joseph, or Josephine, I should say, unridled the whole matter. From her interpretation we learned, like the chief baker in prison, that our heads were in danger. At this moment our good neighbor Zachariah came in and informed us, that the notable orator, Shimei, the son of Gera, had watched our house after the Danites had departed, to see if the two mysterious young men would not be forthcoming. He stated to Zachariah that the Danites were scarcely out of hearing, when he saw two men leaving the house with great rapidity; he was confident they must be the two spies, but that they had changed their raiment for the purpose of disguise, for their robes were dark when they entered the house, and in their retreat, by the moonlight, they appeared remarkably white. He was not apprised of the free use my wife had made of her meal.

“ Zachariah further stated, that he thought we were

in danger, for he was confident Shimei would try to recommend himself to Absalom, by giving him information of what we had done. Now, as Tamar had told us that a famine was coming, and no promise of seven years' plenty preceding it, and as all the meal we had on hand was fairly disposed of, we at once concluded it was expedient to come over and sojourn for a time in this plentiful land of Gilead. I regret, however,' said Phinehas, 'that I cannot honor and reward my interpreter, as liberally as King Pharaoh did his, by bestowing the office of governor over all the land. However, over a part of the population I think,' giving another glance at Ahimaaz, 'the dominion will be as complete, and I trust far more lasting and happy, than that of the great patriarch in Egypt.'

" 'Phinehas,' said Ahimaaz, 'if you talk in riddles at this rate, you should take an interpreter with you wherever you go.'

" 'I would gladly do so,' said Phinehas, 'but I am a peaceable man, and have all my life been careful to avoid lawsuits, and in this case, I am aware of a certain adverse claim, that I am sure will be pressed with great earnestness and perseverance, and I believe I shall not attempt to resist it.'

" 'Enough, enough,' said Ahimaaz; 'that will do for your history. Come along and give your greeting to the king.'

" During this speech of Phinehas, Tamar sometimes blushed, sometimes smiled, and sometimes looked another way, and seemed not to understand; but now she accompanied the family of Phinehas to join the circle which surrounded the king."

CHAPTER XXI.

SCENES AT JERUSALEM.

“WE must now,” said Belial, “return to Jerusalem, and notice the progress of matters there. When Ben Huppim and his party reached the gate, they were told no admittance could be obtained before the morning. Though somewhat disappointed, he was not displeased; for his success in the pursuit of Ahimaaz and Jonathan had been such, that he was not very anxious for the opportunity of giving in his report to the king. The Danites, therefore, eddied about for a few minutes in the confused whirlpool of eager adventurers that now wheeled, and boiled, and tossed its turbulent billows before the gate of the city. They then drew off a little way, dismounted, and prepared to pass the night. The voice of one standing near them, in the dark, now addressed their leader in a familiar style, that seemed to claim acquaintance.

“‘Did you catch them?’ said the voice.

“‘Catch whom?’ replied Ben Huppim.

“‘Ahimaaz and Jonathan,’ said the voice, ‘after whom you ran your horses so rapidly over the Mount of Olives?’

“‘Who are you?’ inquired Ben Huppim.

“‘Ira the Kenite, the boy that was your guide to Enrogel,’ was the reply.

“This inquisitive and curious lad had, in common with others, been intercepted in his return to the city. He had caught a glimpse of Tamar as she returned from Enrogel toward the gate, and also when she started in the direction of Bahurim. He had made no attempt to speak to her, though he shrewdly suspected the errand that had brought her there. But he had found ample and admirable employment for his curiosity among the newly-arrived companies before the gate, after the proclamation of the king's order. There were among them a number of Reubenites from beyond the river. Among these he had picked up the news of the progress and prospects of the revolution in their quarter of the kingdom. In the general, he had learned that only a part of the tribe of Reuben was willing to espouse the cause of Absalom, and that it was thought that almost the whole of Manasseh, and the entire tribe of Gad, would positively refuse to give any countenance to the rising against David. The martial character of the sons of Gad, at this period, stood very high. It was proverbial through the country, that ‘their faces were like the faces of lions, and they were as swift as the roes upon the mountains.’ The busy and inquiring mind of Ira had been theorizing and forming conjectures as to the probable result in case David, who, he knew, had fled in that direction, should reach the land of Gilead, and gather around him the sons of Gad and Manasseh. His speculations were broken off by the arrival of the Danite pursuers, and his curiosity took a new direction, and caused the question to Ben Huppim above mentioned.

“ ‘I was anxious to know,’ said he, ‘whether you had caught them or not.’

“ ‘Caught them?’ said Ben Huppim: ‘no; they ran like the ostrich over the desert.’

“ ‘You got in sight of them, then?’ said the boy.

“ ‘O, yes, we saw them distinctly more than once.’

“ ‘Could not your horses gain on them?’ said the boy.

“ ‘O, yes; but when we were like to overtake them, they ran into a house, and we lost them, and could get a sight of them no more.’

“ ‘What house was that?’ said the boy.

“ ‘In Bahurim,’ said Ben Huppim, ‘at this end of the town.’

“ ‘What, the first house on the right hand side as you enter the town?’

“ ‘Yes, the very house.’

“ ‘Ah, that was the house of Phinehas the Levite,’ said the boy. ‘They are great friends to the families of Zadok and Abiathar, always visiting back and forth. What did Phinehas say of the two young men?’

“ ‘The man of the house was not there,’ said the captain. ‘We only saw the woman and some children.’

“ ‘She is the wisest woman in Bahurim,’ said the boy: ‘they say she is a very good woman too; but she would do all in her power to save Ahimaaz and Jonathan. What did she tell you about them?’

“ ‘She said they ran through the house,’ replied the captain, ‘and she pointed over the brook of water as the direction in which they had fled; but though we pursued them rapidly, we could see them no more.’

“ ‘O, she did not want you to catch them. She would try to fool you by putting you on a false scent.

as the hunters say. I question if she had not hid them somewhere, after all.'

"'No, but we searched the house very carefully,' said the captain. 'I'm too old a soldier to neglect that for the say-so of a woman, and let her out-general me.'

"'You searched the house thoroughly, you say?'

"'Thoroughly,' replied the captain. 'I am sure they were not there.'

"'Now, captain,' said Ira, 'if you had not left me when you galloped off from Enrogel, in such a hurry, I could have found them if they were any where in that house, or about it. But I do not care; they never did me any harm; only I would like to know where they were hid. I had a notion to run after you over the hill just to see what luck you would have in the chase. But you were scarcely started when I saw a strange sight, that turned my attention quite another way.'

"'Ah,' said the captain, 'what strange sight was to be seen at that time and place?'

"'I saw something white as a sheet among the shrubbery near the old building you surrounded and searched. Just as you were out of hearing, it began to move, and went towards the gate of the city. But the loud talk between the guard and the Reubenites just arrived, stopped it, and after pausing for a minute or so, it glided off up the Mount of Olives, in the direction of Bahurim. I could see it when a great way up the mountain. I had a notion to speak to it once or twice, when it was near me. But I was a little afraid, and so I did not speak to it at all. It was just about the size of Tamar, the sister of Jonathan, and it looked like her; so I went

to the gate, and the soldiers were talking with the people at the outside, and I asked if Tamar, the daughter of Abiathar, had come out lately. And they said she had, about the time they were shutting the gate, and that she was out yet. Then I began to think that she might have heard somehow that Ahithophel wanted to pursue after David, and kill him to-night, and she had come to tell Jonathan and Ahimaaz to go and warn him to fly. Perhaps she thought also that the two young men themselves were in danger, for I think, from some things I have noticed, she would be nearly as sorry to have Ahimaaz killed as Jonathan.'

" 'And do you think,' said Ben Huppim, to whom this was all new and strange, 'that she had warned those two spies to fly before we reached the place?'

" 'Exactly so,' said the boy: 'she had told them all, and that is the reason they were gone.'

" 'The little mischief-making witch!' said Ben Huppim: 'if I had caught her, I would have made her smoke for meddling with other people's matters.'

" 'Other people's matters,' answered the boy: 'no such thing. Jonathan is her own brother, and Ahimaaz — But you would not have hurt her, captain; she looks so young and innocent, you could not have found it in your heart to hurt her.'

" Here the conversation was interrupted by a loud, earnest dialogue, at the gate of the city, between the guard and some one without, impatient and vociferous to obtain entrance.

" 'No admittance to-night,' said the officer in command; 'the king has forbidden us to open the gates but by his order.'

“ ‘But I must enter,’ said the importunate applicant
‘I have an important errand to King Absalom.’

“ ‘On what subject?’ demanded the officer.

“ ‘It is for the king’s own ear,’ said the man without.

“ ‘But I must know something of its importance,’
answered the officer, ‘before I will venture to disturb
the king at this hour of the night.’

“ ‘My message must be delivered to King Absalom
in person,’ said the persevering candidate for admis-
sion.

“ ‘Who are you?’ demanded the officer.

“ ‘Shimei, the son of Gera, of Bahurim,’ was the
answer.

“ ‘Well, Shimei, the son of Gera,’ said the guard,
‘you can certainly tell me so much of the nature of
your business with the king, that I can judge whether
it is my duty to have him disturbed at this hour
or not.’

“ ‘It is of the two traitor spies,’ said Shimei, ‘if you
must know, that were here picking up news to carry
to David.’

“ ‘That indeed! that is good,’ said the officer. ‘The
Danites have just reported that they had escaped.
Here, Zimri, hasten to the palace, and let the king
know, that one of his faithful servants, Shimei, the
son of Gera, of Bahurim, has caught the two spies,
Jonathan and Ahimaaz, and has them here, and waits
his majesty’s orders concerning them.’

“ ‘No, that’s not it,’ said the agitated voice of Shimei.
‘I wished to tell the king that I saw them.’

“ ‘Saw them!’ exclaimed the officer; ‘is that all: I
thought you had them safe.’

“‘I saw them,’ said Shimei, ‘as they ran from Bahurim, after the Danites had returned from the search.’

“‘And did you not pursue them?’ asked the officer.

“‘Did I not pursue two wild pigeons on the wing!’ exclaimed Shimei, impatiently: ‘why, you must be crazy. Would you have a man of my age, and loaded with flesh as I now am, to attempt to run after Ahim-aaz, — when it is universally known, that give him a fair field, and there is not a youth within forty miles of Jerusalem that can catch him? and the chance of catching Jonathan is not much better. What I wished to tell King Absalom is this. I know the house where they were hid, and who it was that hid them, and they are no friends to King Absalom; for I saw the two spies running from the house after the Danites returned.’

“‘Pshaw!’ said the officer; ‘that is quite another matter. I will let the king take his nap out. Crazy or not crazy, I shall hardly rouse him at midnight without a weightier reason. And now, good, patriotic Shimei, the son of Gera, of Bahurim, since that is your title, make yourself as comfortable as may be without the gate, till the morning. Had you caught the spies, it would have altered the case. But our fine young king is a firm believer in the old maxim, “A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.” Good night, Shimei.’

“The confused and restless throng, collected before the gate of the city, had maintained a breathless silence during this singular dialogue: many of them had been there for hours, and there was that vacancy of employment and plan, that whets the appetite for the enjoyment of a good jest. The close of this dis-

cussion, therefore, was followed by a general burst of loud, unrestrained laughter, mingled with shouts and huzzas for the sagacious and patriotic Shimei.'

" 'Decidedly the best joke since we crossed Jordan,' shouted a young Reubenite officer.

" 'Honor to whom honor is due,' vociferated a second. 'King Absalom must give that man a captain's commission, at the least.'

" 'A broad belt and a new cockade,' cried a third. 'Why, the poor fellow has lost a whole night's sleep, in order to come and warn the king to lock the stable door after the horse is stolen.'

" 'Set him up for counsellor,' shouted a fourth, 'and Ahithophel may hide his head.'

" Thus a perfect hail-storm of jest, taunt, severe comment, and biting sarcasm, poured its pitiless peltings on the devoted head of the disappointed Shimei, till peppered, riddled, and vexed beyond endurance, he was forced, in absolute self-defence, to retreat from the company of his tormentors.

" Of this Shimei," said Belial, "I must now speak more particularly. He was a genuine specimen of a certain class of men that exist in all ages of the world — a perfect time-server; yet vain, conceited, and ever prone to boasting. His talents and claims to public consideration and respect, had never, he thought, been properly appreciated by others. Nor could he tell, for the life of him, how it was that persons of less merit than he was conscious of possessing, would always stand higher in public esteem and confidence than himself. He had made many desperate efforts to become distinguished and popular, but unfortunately some un-

toward influence always defeated the success of his plans. It seemed to him, moreover, that people took an unreasonable delight in making themselves merry at his expense. Blunders that in others were passed over with little notice, in him seemed to attract universal attention, and become themes of entertainment and sources of amusement, to an extent, as he thought, altogether unaccountable. The mistakes and miscarriages of others could be readily forgotten; but his were remembered with a pertinacity, and rehearsed with a frequency, absolutely provoking.

“Early in life, he had earnestly endeavored to recommend himself to King Saul, by the zeal and constancy with which he labored for the destruction of David. But while valuable services and dangers dared were soon forgotten, any mishaps, or palpable failures, were treasured up in the public mind, and readily called up on all occasions. He was one of the party sent to take David, whom Michal, Saul’s daughter, deceived with the image covered up in bed, and a pillow of goat’s hair for its bolster; there were twenty others in the company, all imposed on as much as he, by the trick of Michal; but somehow the matter went abroad in the land, and became a favorite tale around the evening fire, as a capital joke on Shimei. An image, near the size of a man, on a pillow of goat’s hair, could scarcely be spoken of, but the story must be told how Michal had befooled Shimei; and it seemed he was never to hear the last of it. He was one of Saul’s life-guard on the night that David and Abishai took the spear and cruse of water from Saul’s bolster. Shimei, in his zeal for Saul, had laid him down nearest the king’s head;

but when the matter was over, it seemed that the guard, who were all asleep as well as he, managed to give a turn to the whole story, so as to throw the burden of the censure, or the point of the jest, when it was spoken of lightly, entirely against Shimei.

“ He was with Abner when he challenged Joab to a trial of their skill in arms at the pool of Gibeon. Abner’s party sustained a sore defeat. But yet, when the mourning was past and their spirits somewhat revived, there were not wanting those who could tell laughable stories of Shimei on that day. While Ishbosheth’s kingdom had any respectability, all the credit was given to Abner. But when Abner was dead, and the kingdom became weak and contemptible, you would have thought from the common conversation of the plain people through the country, that Shimei was the principal stockholder in that miserable concern.

“ Since the kingdom of David had been set up over all Israel, Shimei had led the life of a retired soldier, chiefly in the little town of Bahurim. The same difficulty, however, of maintaining his respectability, attended him here. Phinehas the Levite was a source of much trial to him. Phinehas relished a good anecdote exceedingly, but seemed to have special fondness for such as bore hard on Shimei. Phinehas excelled in telling an amusing story. But all Bahurim acknowledged that he told no story so well, as when some blunder, mistake, or peculiarity of Shimei was the theme.

“ Only a few hours past had furnished an example of this. After the little community at Bahurim had sufficiently expressed their wonder and regret at David’s retreat through their town, and their apprehension of

consequences that might follow, Phinehas began to amuse a group of the citizens by maintaining that the profession of a soldier had been chosen by Shimei in sheer mistake; that nature had unquestionably designed him for an orator. In proof of this, he appealed to the success of his recent essay. Tears, he alleged, were seen to stand in the eyes of David, while those pathetic strains were rolling in torrents from the lips of Shimei; and that his marvellous eloquence had wrought up the military enthusiasm of Abishai to the very highest pitch, was evident to all. For the fame of the orator, and the fame of the town he had honored with his residence, he said, it was to be regretted that the king had interfered with the personal attentions Abishai wished to bestow on the orator of the day. Men, ambitious of fame, have ever desired to die when in the zenith of their glory: as the eagle, who vanishes from sight when nearest the sun; or the general who has just decided the fate of some great empire, and falls on the battle-field, with the shout of victory in his ear. As to the operation itself, he assured Shimei that Abishai was a perfect master of his trade; that he kept his implements in the very best order, and, had the king permitted, would have performed the interesting ceremony in the very best style.

“Shimei left this company in deep ire, and saw Jonathan and Ahimaaz run into the house of Phinehas. After the departure of the Danites, on their return to Jerusalem, he watched the house till he saw the retreat of Ahimaaz and Jonathan. Thinking that the public stand he had taken against David would recommend him to Absalom, he now believed that the information

he could give concerning the spies would greatly benefit him, and effectually ruin Phinehas; so off he put for Jerusalem, firmly resolved, in the new world that was coming up with this great revolution, to make one more desperate effort to gain that conspicuous and commanding station in society, which he had long been conscious of deserving, but from the attainment of which he had hitherto been debarred by untoward impediments, which, like rival heirs to a great estate, had stood in his way, at every turn and corner in the journey of life.

“But now his prospects were more flattering than ever before. The public and bitter cursing he had administered to David must be highly pleasing to Absalom, and the important discovery he had made, how the two spies had been concealed in the house of Phinehas, when carried to the king’s ears by himself, must, he was confident, place him forward among the foremost of the favorites of the popular young monarch. The more he coned the matter over in his mind, the more enchanting brilliancy his hopes put on; and they now ran up to a dizzy and topless height. He might become first ruler about Absalom’s person, prime minister of the kingdom, chief commander of the army: conjecture itself was fain to droop its wing when asked to soar to the summit of his prospects. As he hurried down the Mount of Olives towards the city of Jerusalem, short sentences, as from a heart full and overflowing, burst forth in an audible voice — ‘All’s well that ends well. The lane has been long, but the happy turn comes at last. Talent and worth, like the capital of the merchant, will, at length, find the proper invest-

ment.' His repulse by the guard at the gate, and the sportive remarks of the Reubenites assembled there, have already been detailed. These fell on the excited mind of Shimei like a killing frost on the full-blown flowers of May. Balked, insulted, maddened, he disengaged himself from the company, and staggered and reeled off a little way in a perfect wilderness of disappointment. It was now that Ben Huppim came to his relief, who had found something of special interest in Shimei's statement to the guard.

" 'You say,' inquired Ben Huppim, leading Shimei by the arm to the place where his party was quartered, — 'you say that the two spies ran out from that house we searched, after we had left it.'

" 'Yes,' said Shimei; 'but the treatment given to merit and loyalty here, is enough to make a man abjure king and country.'

" 'Did you find out where those spies had been hid?' said Ben Huppim: 'we searched the whole house carefully.'

" 'Respectability and long services are wholly disregarded,' said Shimei. 'It was my right to see the king; my errand is of the first importance.'

" 'But come, come,' said Ben Huppim, 'I want you to tell me about the spies: are you sure it was in the house they were concealed?'

" 'I intended,' said Shimei, 'to give gratuitously to the young king all the benefit of my talents and sage experience. I have witnessed the rise, progress, and downfall of three kingdoms in succession, Saul's, Ishbosheth's, and David's; few have had my opportunities. Absalom is young, and will need experience and educated talent

at the helm of state. But to be made a laughing-stock by beardless boys, and stopped in my important embassy by a proud, petty subaltern, patience ceases to be a virtue. I've a mind to abandon the helm, and let them all go on the rocks and to the bottom together.'

" 'Beriah,' said the captain, 'run to the stream — or stay, three or four of you go, bring your helmets full of water. The man is deranged, absolutely driven to madness, by the foolish jests of those thoughtless fellows: we must bathe his hands, and face, and temples, or we shall get nothing out of him.'

" 'And then,' said Shimei, 'not a man in Bahurim to come out publicly for Absalom, but myself. And to be endangered by that rough fellow, Abishai, and mocked by the teasing Phinehas, and even the boys in the street, at my time of life; and now my important services meet a recompense like this.'

" 'Come, come,' said Ben Huppim, 'don't take it so hard; they are rude young lads; but don't mind them. Wash your hands and face well in this helmet; you'll feel better. Soldiers, have not some you a little wine left? Give him some; it will help to revive him.'

" 'Most absurd,' said Shimei, 'to require that I should catch Ahimaaz in a foot-race! Just as if nature had given me the legs of the antelope, or the wings of the eagle.'

" 'The Danites were not great proficient in either the theory or practice of medicine; yet by the dint of rubbing, bathing, slapping his hands, and pouring down a little wine, they managed so as to somewhat recover Shimei. Little, however, could be learned from him, save that Jonathan and Ahimaaz had been seen leaving

the premises of Phinehas after Ben Huppim's departure, and that they had disguised themselves by putting on something white, particularly about the head and shoulders, as he could distinctly see in the pale moonlight.

“ ‘Where could they have been hid?’ said the captain. ‘We certainly moved all the furniture in every room.’

“ ‘O,’ said Ira the Kenite, who had been listening most attentively to all that could be drawn from Shimei, ‘did you look in the well, captain?’

“ ‘The well! What well?’ said Ben Huppim. ‘I saw no well.’

“ ‘That’s it! that’s it! that’s it!’ shouted the boy, with a jump of joy at each exclamation. ‘Ha! she had hid them in the well: that’s the way she fooled you.’

“ ‘Where is the well?’ said the captain.

“ ‘Why, about the centre of the court,’ said Ira.

“ ‘Why, captain,’ said Beriah, ‘that is about the place where that meal was spread out to dry.’

“ ‘What meal?’ said Ira.

“ ‘Why, just about the centre of the court, as you describe, there was a cloth spread out, covered with meal. I thought strange of her leaving it there in the night, but I suspected nothing.’

“ ‘Better and better! better and better!’ exclaimed Ira, in the highest ecstasy. ‘I love to see a thing well done. You see she has a covering for the well, and steps going down to where she keeps the milk and butter from the heat: she had put them in there, and put the cover on, and spread a cloth over it, and then poured her meal on the top.’

“ ‘Hurrah for old Bahurim!’ exclaimed the boy, hopping round, and tossing his arms, and snapping his

fingers. 'It's the best story yet. Twenty Danites, with swords and spears, beat out fairly by one woman. Hurrah for old Bahurim! And there,' said he, 'is the white, old Shimei saw by the moonlight, about their head and shoulders — a little of the woman's meal, that, in their haste, they had forgotten to brush off.'

"Ben Huppim felt this sorely.

"'I'll go yet and chastise them,' said he.

"'By no means, captain; that woman deserves a reward,' said Ira.

"'But it is a rebellion against King Absalom,' answered the captain.

"'Well, captain,' said Ira, more composedly, 'do as you please. I don't know how the customs are among your Danite people, in your country; but I can tell you that at old Bahurim it is necessary that you should catch a man before you punish him. You can go, if you choose, to Bahurim; but I think you will find that the nest is cold, and that the old bird and young ones are all gone.'

"By this time, Shimei was considerably recovered, and Ira the Kenite, having learned to his satisfaction the particulars of the Danites' adventure at Bahurim, now manifested a strong disposition to pry into some of the particulars of Shimei's life and achievements. He accordingly commenced addressing him in the following style: —

"'Shimei, you must tell me about this day's work at Bahurim, as David passed through. Eleazar, the son of your neighbor Zachariah, was here to-night, and told me that you cursed King David as he went through Bahurim.'

“ ‘I did,’ said Shimei, ‘and I care not who knows it.’

“ ‘He said you cursed him bitterly.’

“ ‘But not so bitterly as he deserves,’ said Shimei.

“ ‘Did you tell him, “Get out, get out from the kingdom”?’

“ ‘Yes, and the nation should have told him so long ago,’ answered Shimei.

“ ‘Did you call him a bloody man?’

“ ‘Yes, he is a bloody man.’

“ ‘Did you charge him with the blood of the house of Saul?’

“ ‘I did, and he deserves the charge.’

“ ‘Mephibosheth, and all?’

“ ‘I say he deserves the charge.’

“ ‘Did you say he was taken in his mischief?’

“ ‘I did, and it is true.’

“ ‘Did you throw stones at him?’

“ ‘I did; and only regret that I had not hit him as fairly and effectually as he hit Goliath, long years ago.’

“ ‘Well, Shimei,’ said Ira, ‘what did you think of Abishai’s proposal?’

“ ‘Abishai is a ruffian,’ said Shimei.

“ ‘But he cuts off heads in style,’ said Ira. ‘You know I am a Kenite; we are strangers and sojourners in Israel. Father says we must not take part in political divisions among you. But he says it’s no harm for me to see and know how things are going on. Now, Shimei, I would like to know one thing. Suppose David comes back, what do you think you will do?’

“ ‘David comes back!’ exclaimed the startled Shimei: ‘what do you mean?’

“‘Just what I say,’ replied Ira: ‘suppose David comes back, and is king again, what will you do?’

“There was something in this question that roused Shimei far more effectually than all the wine of the Danites.

“‘David will never come back,’ said he, ‘that is sure.’

“‘I’m not so sure of it,’ said Ira: ‘I’ve been trying to find out all I can: my father and mother are great believers in Providence, and it looks to me as if Providence is working for David.’

“‘How so?’ said Shimei, with much interest; ‘I see nothing of it.’

“‘But I see it,’ said Ira, ‘and I will tell you what I think, and my reasons. I heard Ahithophel’s speech to the council last evening: you know he has a great deal of wisdom: well, he wanted them to follow David and kill him to-night. He was the most earnest man I ever saw. It seemed as if his soul would burst through his eyes, as he warned Absalom not to lose a moment, but to pursue and come on David while he was weary and weak-handed, and kill him at once. But they have not done it, and it’s past midnight now. David is near Jordan by this time, and will be across before they can overtake him. And I think Ahithophel would not have been so earnest and urgent if he had not thought it would be very dangerous to let David escape. Then I heard the speech of Hushai the Archite too. He did not want them to go after David so soon. He said David was very good at *hiding*, and they might not find him so easily; and then, if they did, he was capital at *fighting*, and would not be so easily killed; and then he said David had a great many powerful men

with him, that were fiercer than lions. But I could not see, if David and his men are so dangerous now, how it is going to be any better, when he has had time to collect more men, and make preparation for battle. Hushai told Absalom how popular he was, and what a great general he would make, and what a large army he would have directly. They all voted that Hushai's speech was best. But I think it was because none of them wanted to go and fight the men that are with David; for it seems to me, if they expect to kill David at all, Ahithophel's plan was best for that. And I know Ahithophel thought so, he was so earnest.'

“ ‘Hushai, you know, is called David's friend, and he may be his friend yet; for though he talked finely for Absalom, yet it seemed to me that his plan was just the plan to give David time to gather his old friends, and prepare to give them battle. So I think it is likely David will get back yet.’

“ Shimei groaned deeply, but continued silent, and Ira went on:—

“ ‘I learned from the Reubenites at the gate, that it is thought most of the sons of Manasseh, and all the sons of Gad, will go for David. Now, if Joab has them for a little while under his training, they will be hard to conquer. Did you ever see Joab mustering his men?’

“ ‘Yes,’ said Shimei, dryly.

“ ‘Well,’ said Ira, ‘it is the prettiest sight ever my eyes beheld: and then, did you ever hear him make a speech?’

“ ‘No,’ said Shimei, ‘and I never wish to hear him.’

“ ‘Well,’ said Ira, ‘he never makes a long speech,

but it seems to me that to listen to him five minutes, is enough to make the greatest coward on earth fight like a hero.

“ ‘ But, Shimei, here is another thing. I heard a great chief from Mount Ephraim talking to one of the princes of Judah just after they all came to the city ; and he seemed angry about something, and said the men of Mount Ephraim were as good as the men of Judah, and that they would not be undervalued or imposed on ; and he said a good deal more in that strain. And I’ve been thinking that Absalom’s men will be apt to fall out among themselves in a few days, if great care is not taken. But I’ll tell you what I think of more than all things else. Father says that Samuel anointed David king by the commandment of the Lord ; that the kingdom is his from the Lord. And then, you know, they can’t take it from him. He is a good man, and Absalom is so wicked ! Every decent man and woman in the city was put to the blush by the very first thing he did when he reached his father’s house, last afternoon ; and when the plain country people hear of it, they will all be ashamed of him too. If he goes on that way, they will soon be sick of having him for their king.’ ”

“ ‘ If you are not a friend of Absalom,’ said Shimei, ‘ I will inform of you, and have you punished.’ ”

“ ‘ Ah,’ said Ira, ‘ you can’t make them hurt the children of Hobab. (Numbers x. 29.) For Moses promised our great father, that if he would come along with you to Canaan, he and his children should be treated well. We don’t meddle with your divisions, we don’t break the laws, but it is no harm for us to look at what is going on, and think for ourselves.’ ”

“Here Shimei arose and walked off in anger and vexation. When alone, he uttered, in a suppressed tone, this soliloquy: ‘David come back! Perdition! Is this going to turn out another of my wretched blunders? I thought I was proceeding prudently. I was told that nine tenths of Judah were for Absalom; that Ephraim, Dan, and Benjamin, were almost unanimous; and that, beyond all question, Absalom would have a triumphant majority of the whole house of Israel. In that case, it was plain that good policy demanded that I should take a public stand at once, and curse David. It was acting *the man*; and then Absalom would hear of it, and promote me to honor. But should David prove triumphant in this struggle, then my choice of sides has been exceedingly *indiscreet*. Sad is the condition of a country,’ he exclaimed, ‘when the wise and worthy patriot can’t for his life discover what course is likely to prove the most popular, and the most profitable to himself!’ Such were the melancholy musings of Shimei. In the meantime, the Danites, fatigued with their exertions, were fast asleep. Ira the Kenite remained wide awake; no sleep for his eyes nor slumber for his eyelids: wakeful and watchful he remained, that he might see and know whatever should transpire.”

CHAPTER XXII.

Carmi and Ahithophel.

"WHILE these various incidents," said Belial, "were transpiring without the gate of the city, a scene of more solemn and tragical character was progressing within the walls of far-famed Jerusalem.

"Carmi, the prince of Judah, who received Absalom's command to double the guard at the gate, was one of the most powerful nobles of his day; he was a man of few words, but of great estimation and weight of character; he lived retired on his estate in the country, and generally shared but moderately in the political agitations of the period. His opinions, however, when expressed, were received with the most profound respect, and his influence was immense, in that large branch of the house of Judah, of which he was now the head. He had been the early and decided friend of David during the persecutions he sustained from the hand of Saul; the wants of David and his men, in the gloomiest period of their history, had often been supplied from the fruitful fields and abundant flocks and herds in the possession of his friend Carmi. When Saul was dead, Carmi was among the foremost who moved in favor of placing David on the throne of Judah. During the seven years that David reigned in Hebron, Carmi was

prominent and powerful among the princes who were regarded as the pillars of his throne. When Ishbosheth was slain, and all the tribes of Israel united under David, the course of policy he adopted cooled the zeal of most of the princes of Judah. It may be that David, anxious to shun the appearance of partiality for his own tribe, leaned to the other extreme; but certain it is, many of his early friends complained bitterly and much. Hard is the lot of a king, surrounded by hosts of powerful and necessary friends, each thinking he has claims to be a special favorite, while, from the very nature of the case, it is impossible to gratify them all. Suffice it to say, that the policy adopted by David alienated many of his earliest and warmest admirers in Judah, and laid the foundations broad and deep for the revolt of that tribe in favor of Absalom.

“The state of the public pulse,” continued Belial, “was accurately understood by Ahithophel. Absalom was instructed by him how to approach the princes of Judah. The objectionable points in David’s policy were pointed out and aggravated, and promises of important changes were freely made, in case Absalom should be clothed with royal authority.

“Such was the astonishing tact and forecast of Ahithophel, that the whole matter was planned and prepared without awakening the slightest suspicion in David or his friends.

“It was not spoken of as a revolt, a rebellion, or even a revolution, but simply as the introduction of Absalom, the unquestioned heir to the crown, to a share in the current administration. Thus the consent and coöpera-

tion of multitudes were obtained, who would have been shocked had the real purpose been known.

“Carmi had sought several close interviews with Ahithophel, before he would consent to embark in the revolution; but the ulterior designs of that wily politician were carefully concealed from Carmi, from the nobles, and even from Absalom himself. The great reputation of Ahithophel, and the pledges given by Absalom that all should be conducted by his counsel, clothed the undertaking with character and feasibility that secured the general confidence. Ahithophel understood Absalom thoroughly, how wicked and unprincipled he was; he knew that the flush of success would prepare him for going much farther than he at first anticipated. He therefore advised the great sacrifice at Hebron, for the purpose of paying Absalom’s pretended vow. Great multitudes could thus be assembled without exciting suspicion.

“He then advised that Absalom should be proclaimed king, without specifying the extent to which he was to be clothed with the royal authority.

“In this unexplained state of affairs, he urged an instant march upon Jerusalem. He saw this would force David either to fly or give battle to Absalom. His fond, parental affection, he knew, would prevent the latter; and he saw that, in his sudden, hurried, and troubled flight, he might be easily overtaken and slain. This was Ahithophel’s great object. He wished to make David feel his vengeance. This was indeed the sum of his aim. On the kingdom of Absalom he had made little calculation, but he was resolved that David should die.

“There was one error in the calculations of Ahithophel, and the Second Book of Samuel ascribes his failure there to the special hand of God. (2 Sam. xvii. 14.)

“No man looks upon himself as in the way. Every one is apt to think that the room taken up by himself is occupied to good purpose, and that power and influence in his hands are very appropriately and properly located. Ahithophel did not foresee Absalom’s jealousy against himself springing up so soon. Yet this was the chord which, touched by the master-hand of Hushai, the Archite, produced the downfall of Ahithophel and the ruin of Absalom.

“The modest, virtuous, and noble mind of Carmi was filled with shame and horror, when Absalom publicly dishonored the young women his father had left to keep the house. Many of the princes of Judah and Israel shared largely in this shame and horror. But when Ahithophel next, in the general council, urged the instant pursuit and slaughter of David, Carmi was almost petrified; matters seemed rushing to a dire extremity, but he was no public speaker to combat the argument. The speech of Hushai the Archite gave him some relief, as it adjourned to another day, at least, the tragical termination of their wretched enterprise. He was carried away by the argument of Hushai on the danger of a night attack on the veteran warriors around David; but when he saw the impression made on Absalom by Hushai’s intimations that Absalom had better be king *himself* — that *he* was the choice of the people — that they did not wish to have a power behind the throne greater than the throne, &c. — his soul was in a tornado of trouble. He dreaded an explosion

between Absalom and Ahithophel as inevitable destruction to all concerned.

“Carmi received and executed Absalom’s orders, as above described; but as he returned from the gate, his mind was as a ship on a stormy sea, in a dark night, when the stars are hid, and the rudder is broken, and the compass has fallen overboard.

“As he drew near to the capital, he encountered Ahithophel in the street. The aged man had buckled on his armor, taken his sword, and made every preparation for his night pursuit of David, not dreaming but that his counsel had been unanimously adopted.

“Carmi’s hair stood up, his teeth chattered, and his frame trembled as he silently paused after the encounter.

“‘Why have you left the council?’ asked Ahithophel, calmly.

“‘The council is dissolved,’ answered Carmi.

“‘Where are the troops ordered out for my expedition?’

“‘They are not ordered out.’

“‘How? what? That is strangely negligent.’

“‘Absalom has changed his plan.’

“‘Changed his plan! Madness! No other plan will do. David’s spirits will rally, if time be allowed him. His old military habits will revive — his old veterans will gather round him — he will soon become formidable — every moment is precious — delay is full of danger. The decisive blow must be struck to-night. Where shall I find Absalom?’

“‘It was thought,’ said Carmi, taking Ahithophel by the arm, ‘that David may be hid in some pit, or place of concealment, and that you would not be able to find

him in the dark. You know how often he eluded Saul.'

“‘But I have the surest intelligence that he is halted in the open plain, beyond Bahurim, weeping and bent to the earth with sorrow, waiting and hoping for a message of reconciliation. The opportunity must not be lost. I must see Absalom instantly.’

“‘But it was thought,’ said Carmi, holding on to his arm, ‘that if rushed on too suddenly, his martial spirit may awake. You know he is tremendous when roused. Remember Goliath.’

“‘Derangement!’ said Ahithophel, stamping on the pavement — ‘absolute derangement. I tell you he is overwhelmed, not with fear, but with trouble — mental anguish. The *father* has overcome the *king*. His distress for Absalom’s conduct has unmanned him. Now is the time to strike.’

“‘But it was thought that your men would go with apprehension and misgiving in this night attack, and that the heart of the boldest would melt, as all know the valor of David and his men.’

“‘I will inspire them with emulation by putting a price on his head — yes, a higher price than he put on storming the tower of the Jebusites.’

“‘But,’ said Carmi, ‘Joab and Abishai are with him, and the thirty-six mighty men, and the life-guards, and the Cherethites and Pelethites, and the men from Gath. It was said they will fight as a bear robbed of her whelps in the field; that they are chafed and bitter in their minds in view of the revolution, and the wrath of each is burning now like a furnace of fire.’

“‘Who said all this?’ asked Ahithophel, hastily.

“ ‘Hushai the Archite.’

“ ‘Hushai! Was he in the council? and did he have the impudence to speak?—the proverbial friend of David, and amongst us, beyond doubt, in disguise. Hushai! the traitor! I’ll have him arrested and punished. But first, David must be pursued and slain; for on that all depends. Come with me instantly to the king. Surprising, that he would listen to Hushai! But come along.’

“ ‘But,’ said Carmi, ‘I must tell you, the men will not go on this expedition to-night. I saw the boldest princes of Judah, Ephraim, and Dan, amazed, turn pale and tremble like a reed in the wind, while Hushai drew a picture of the indomitable strength and bravery of the stern and fierce warriors that are with David. No man who heard that speech will consent to attack them till a large army can be collected, so as to overwhelm them with numbers. It was the unanimous vote of all the nobles.’

“ ‘And Absalom was counselled by Hushai!’ exclaimed Ahithophel! ‘I’ll mark that, but not now. Come, Carmi, you must go with me to the king, this moment, or we are all ruined, utterly. If David escapes to-night, and the public mind has time to react, dire results may follow. Hushai is in David’s interest: of that I am sure. I can show his sophistry to the king and the princes: it must be done forthwith, or the golden moment is gone forever. Come along; wait no longer.’

“ ‘Ahithophel,’ said Carmi, taking hold of his arm strongly with both hands, ‘we are old friends.’

“ ‘Certainly,’ said Ahithophel, ‘but do not delay.’

“‘I would not have engaged in this revolution, but for you.’

“‘I know it,’ said Ahithophel; ‘but let us not consume time.’

“‘Many others, through confidence in you, have done as I have done,’ said Carmi.

“‘I know it,’ said Ahithophel; ‘but why lose precious time by talking of it now?’

“‘You must promise me,’ said Carmi, ‘that you will not abandon us now, that we are brought into this difficulty.’

“‘What do you mean?’ said Ahithophel.

“‘You have had long experience, and know there is much to be borne in this world, even from our friends.’

“‘Certainly,’ said Ahithophel; ‘but why do you tease and tantalize me thus?’

“‘It is best I should tell you all, though it grieves me much; but you have self-command, and must bear it, for the sake of your friends.’

“‘You torment me!’ exclaimed Ahithophel.

“‘Then, to be plain,’ said Carmi, ‘you must not see Absalom to-night.’

“‘If I don’t, I see ruin as plain as ever I saw the sun in the heavens.’

“‘He will not listen to you,’ said Carmi.

“‘To me! not listen to me, say you? He is under the most solemn pledge to do it from the beginning. That was the first point settled.’

“‘Pledges may be broken,’ said Carmi; ‘don’t see him now; it will not do just at present; but you will be able to bring all things right, by taking time.’

“‘Speak out plainly!’ vociferated Ahithophel; ‘this perplexity is insupportable!’

“‘Then,’ said Carmi, ‘Hushai, in the presence of all the elders, called on Absalom to show himself a man; said his warmest admirers were sick of the whisperings that were spreading every where—that the king was in leading-strings—that another governed, and used him only as a tool—and that it was the popularity of the counsellor, and not of the king, that had brought such multitudes around his standard. Absalom arose under the strongest emotions; publicly thanked Hushai for the frank fidelity that had communicated to him the knowledge of these facts, so vitally connected with his honor; and called on all the nobles of all the tribes to witness, that from that hour it should be plain that he was both the king and the counsellor—he would let it be seen whose name and popularity had rolled the successful tide of the revolution over the land; and again, in the most superlatively graceful and elegant manner, thanked Hushai over and over, he said, from his inmost heart, and that the obligation would be lasting as his life for assisting him to discover the true import and design of counsels, which, while they professed to be for the public good, were, with selfish cunning, aimed to put another in command, secure to him all the honor of the victory, and send his name to succeeding generations, as the great actor who had the imperishable renown of striking the main, decisive blow in this memorable revolution.’

“At this, Ahithophel started back, elevated his pale face, fixed on the declining moon those piercing gray eyes that now seemed starting from their sockets,

stretched upward, with spread fingers, his long, skinny arms, and in a sepulchral, unearthly voice, exclaimed, 'Ha! angel of death! art thou there? I know thee! Thou art come at last!'

"'Compose yourself,' said Carmi: 'all may yet go well, only take the needful time for management.'

"'Let me go!' said Ahithophel.

"'No,' said Carmi, 'you must come to my room and spend the night with me.'

"'Let me go!' said Ahithophel, impatiently.

"'If you prefer it,' said Carmi, still holding on, 'I will go to your room, and spend the night with you.'

"'Let go my arm!' raved Ahithophel, drawing his sword from the scabbard with a violence that was fearful.

"'Madman!' exclaimed Carmi, quitting his arm and stepping back, 'what do you mean!'

"Ahithophel turned in silence, and walked down the street; presently he turned a corner, and was out of sight. Carmi gazed after him till he disappeared, and then returned to his lodgings with a heart heavy and filled with troubled forebodings.

"Without the gate of the city all was now silent and still. Sleep had established his dominion over all, save two or three Reubenite sentinels, and the wakeful eyes of Ira the Kenite. Ira was reclining on the ground, his head raised on his hand, and his eyes were roving among the stars, when the gate quietly opened, and a mounted man rode out.

"'Ha!' said the Reubenite sentinel, 'I thought none were to pass the gate before morning.'

“‘It is the king’s counsellor,’ said the guard: ‘I am authorized to let him pass.’”

“The rider moved slowly along near the spot where the Kenite boy was reclining. As the figure passed between him and the clear blue sky, the tallness of his person, the long gray locks, the bending attitude and remarkable mien, identified Ahithophel, the far-famed counsellor. He seemed in a profound reverie, and was muttering short sentences as he rode along.

“‘Said Hushai’s counsel was the best. Would show he is his own man—that no man could use him as a tool—that he will be king and counsellor both. Well, he shall know what my name and counsel are worth to his cause; and where Hushai will land him.’”

“Such broken sentences, falling on the acute ear of Ira, roused his curiosity to know what this could mean. To spring to his feet, and follow the aged counsellor, was with him the work of a moment; yet he made no attempt to come up close to him; for there was an awfulness in Ahithophel’s manner, and something so peculiar in the tone of his voice, that, forward and fearless as Ira was, kept him at a respectful distance. The old man went muttering along; but even the sharp ear of Ira could not gather many of the words that he uttered. Yet when he remembered his earnestness in the council, and that his advice had not been followed, this, together with the broken sentences he had heard, led his active mind to conclude that he now despaired of Absalom’s success, and was either flying for his life, or in the agony of disappointment was resolved to seek a reconciliation with David.

“When Ahithophel reached his house, he entered,

and waked his family, and gave them a hasty though comprehensive charge about the proper adjustment of his worldly affairs. He then secured a rope, and came to the side of the great road leading to Jerusalem. The only sentence Ira could distinctly hear was this: 'I wish it were in the great street of the city, that Absalom might find, at once, all its effects on his cause and prospects.' A bending tree was standing there. He threw the rope over a large limb, and in another moment swung himself by the rope, and died.

"Ira looked on till the horrible struggle was over, then turned and hurried with great speed, and reached and roused the Danites just at the break of day. He said not a word of what he had seen, but entered the city at the first opening of the gate, and went directly to the council chamber, where Absalom and many of the nobles were already assembled. At length, looking round, with some indications of anxiety, Absalom inquired, —

" 'Is Ahithophel in the room?'

" 'He is not,' said an officer near the door.

" 'Send for him immediately,' said Absalom.

" 'He has left the city, as I learn,' said Carmi, standing near the king.

" 'Left the city!' said Absalom: 'why, that is strange: he is not gone far, I should think, at a time like this.'

" 'Ahithophel is dead!' said Ira, who never hesitated to speak in any company.

" 'Ahithophel dead!' exclaimed Absalom. 'It is not possible.'

" 'He is dead, my lord,' said Ira; 'I saw him hang

himself beside the road, near his own house, about two hours before day.'

" 'Why, what can have ailed him?' said Absalom.

" 'He despaired of our cause,' answered Carmi.

" 'Our cause is prospering,' answered Absalom; 'the people are increasing every hour.'

" 'By the delay in pursuing David,' said Carmi, 'he said that the golden moment was irretrievably lost; that his old friends would have time to assemble, and he would become too strong for us in battle.'

" 'Then we will pursue after him immediately,' said Absalom. 'There has not been much time lost yet, and it is best to do it before this case of Ahithophel has time to spread far. Say as little about it as possible, all of you; speak not of it at all.'

" 'Had we not better,' said Carmi, 'send after David and desire conditions of peace?'

" 'Speak not of it,' replied Absalom, earnestly; 'things have gone too far. Amasa, make your preparations as speedily as you can; we must pursue the refugees with all possible despatch.'

" 'The whole city of Jerusalem was presently in that state of hurry, hubbub, and mingled confusion, attendant on the preparations of a great multitude to depart on an important expedition. But we must now leave them to take notice of the progress of things on the other side of the river.'

CHAPTER XXIII.

BARZILLAI THE GILEADITE.

"THE rising sun," said Belial, "had just begun to tinge the top of the mountains of Gilead, when a venerable man, of fine personal appearance, walked forth from his dwelling to take his morning ride through his cultivated fields. He yet retained much bodily vigor, though his age bordered on fourscore. A little grandson, of nine years old, and two granddaughters, the one perhaps seven years of age and the other five, were playing around him, lively as morning larks, and courting his caresses before he mounted his horse.

"Two visitors were about to accompany him. The one appeared an Israelitish prince of the first grade, and the other, though on terms of great intimacy, evidently belonged to some other nation. The mansion-house was large and commodious, though free from any aping of extravagant grandeur. The enclosure around it contained lofty shade trees, interspersed with every variety of shrubbery: delightful walks, laid out in the very best taste, added to its interest and its loveliness.

"Before the party rose to their saddles, the eye of the stranger was caught by an extensive apiary, or range of bee-houses, at the one side of the enclosure. He drew near to view it; and already the little, lively,

busy insects were plying their labors, building their cells, carrying in their comb, and preparing their honey with all the nimble industry, hilarity, and briskness inspired by a beautiful summer morning. They hurried, buzzed, and dashed about as if the mightiest interests depended on the speedy accomplishment of the little enterprises in which they were so earnestly engaged.

“The stranger inquired what was the annual produce of this establishment in honey and wax, and what its average value.”

“The patriarch replied by giving details and specifications, which showed how closely his personal attention was given to the diversified interest of his large establishment.

“On the other side of the enclosure, a gushing spring poured forth its cool, transparent waters, and a little below was a large dairy, where cream, butter, cheese, and articles in that line, were found in rich abundance. Milkmaids, assisted by a number of boys, were bearing vessels of milk, brimming full and covered with snow-white foam, from the buildings where the cattle were kept, to the dairy. A question was asked by the nobleman of Israel—‘How is the best method to secure the greatest quantity of milk from a given number of cows?’

“The stranger said, that large pasture fields, with frequent changes, would produce the best result.

“The old patriarch said, ‘Where land is valuable, there is a fine profit in cutting the grass with scythes, and feeding it to the cattle in their stalls. It is more trouble,’ said he, ‘but the advantage is more than a compensation. The grass in that case is not injured

by the treading of the cattle, and you save all the litter and manure—an important consideration with the farmer. 'The same quantity of land,' he said, 'will sustain more than double the quantity of stock. Try it, friends, try it,' said he. 'It is a maxim with me, that "what is worth doing at all, is worth doing well."'

"They now passed on to where barns of mammoth dimensions and large granaries arose; immense quantities of wheat, barley, rye, and the various grains for bread, together with beans, peas, and such like articles, were here stored in vast profusion.

"They then rode through extensive orchards and vineyards, and the conversation turned on the culture of fruit-trees and the vine; the best methods of grafting, budding, pruning, and improving the size, quantity, and flavor of the fruit. On these topics the prince of Israel appeared to be entirely in his element, and expatiated with great fluency.

"Next came the wide wheat field, bordered on the one side by the barley, and on the other by the rye. The patriarch now discoursed of grain, particularly the wheat; the red chaff variety, the white chaff, the blue chaff, the golden chaff, and the adaptation of the wheat from Egypt, rather than the seed brought from Armenia, to the soil and climate of the country where they resided.

"The party next entered the broad meadows; and the variety of grasses was their theme, the manner and time of manuring the land, so as to produce the heaviest swath; also the period best for mowing, so as to secure the first quality of hay.

"They now entered large pastures, where the land

was richly set with grass. Here camels, horses, mules, asses, and such like animals were around them in great numbers and variety. Something was said of the characteristic distinction between the camel and the dromedary; but the principal discourse was engrossed by the qualities and value of the noble horse, which had recently become an object of more attention than formerly. A difference of opinion arose between the prince of Israel and the stranger respecting the comparative merits of the Arabian horse, and the great chariot horse of Egypt, each being mounted on a horse of the kind he preferred, and each maintaining his opinion with pertinacity and some animation; when the patriarch observed, that for the saddle the horse of Arabia was certainly admirable, and the Egyptian horse for the harness had great reputation. 'But,' said he, patting the shoulder of the noble animal which he rode, 'here is a specimen of the horse, lately introduced from the country on the Tigris, that in a very high degree unites the good qualities of both the races you have mentioned.'

"The party now rode leisurely along, and entered extensive fields, where vast herds of cattle were feeding. They were thrifty and in fine condition. Much was said of the various breeds of cattle, and the state of the market for beef, hides, and tallow; when the patriarch directed the attention of his guests to some large bulls of Bashan. 'These,' said he, 'are some of my four-year-olds, but they are full-blooded, and excellent samples of that kind of stock.'

"The stranger here turned to the old man, and observed, 'The survey we have taken of your possessions,

this morning, induces me to conclude that you have not devoted much of your life to politics, nor consumed much time in office-seeking or office-holding.' 'Politics!' exclaimed the prince of Israel, starting as if a train of affecting recollections had suddenly been recalled to his mind — 'politics! office-hunting! I rarely hear the subject broached, but I think of that good old maxim which our ancestors have handed down from a remote period — "Blessed is the man that won't run crazy." Absolutely, were it not that I have great confidence in the patriarch Joseph as an interpreter of dreams, I should be of opinion that that lot of meagre, famished, miserable creatures, which Pharaoh saw, in his dream, coming up from the river, "poor, and very ill-favored, and lean-fleshed, such," said the old king, "as I never saw in all the land of Egypt for badness," must have been a company of disappointed office-hunters.'

"'My ancestors,' said the stranger with a good-humored glance toward the patriarch, 'have also handed down a maxim of which I have been reminded this morning. It is this: "Blessed is the man that has a comfortable home, and sense enough to stay at it."'

"The patriarch smiled, and said, 'The giver of all good has certainly bestowed on me many tokens of his unmerited bounty. He has also given me cheerfulness of spirit to taste his gifts with joy, and I trust, moreover, has inspired my heart with thankfulness for his goodness, and a readiness to impart of his bounty to others, as I see they have need. But come, let us go up on the rising grounds, and view the flocks of sheep and goats.' They followed him accordingly, and saw,

spread over many a fertile hill, the fleecy multitudes under the care of the shepherds—sheep of various tribes—the skipping and bounding lambs, and with his long-descending beard, the patriarchal goat.

“The venerable old man, who was particularly enthusiastic in this branch of husbandry, was in the midst of a dissertation, in which he maintained the decided superiority of the rams of the breed of Bashan over every other specimen and variety, he said, ‘between the great Euphrates and the river of Egypt,’ when the attention of the company was suddenly arrested by the appearance of two persons approaching them at a rapid pace. The travellers had a youthful aspect, but there was something in their manner and bearing that effectually arrested the discussion that had been in progress.

“‘The blessings of the morning be upon you, my sons,’ said the patriarch, when they were near enough to be addressed: ‘you seem anxious and in haste.’

“‘We are seeking,’ said the foremost, ‘Barzillai the Gileadite.’

“‘That is my name and title,’ said the patriarch.

“‘Allow me then,’ said the young man, ‘to introduce to your acquaintance Jonathan, the son of Abiathar, the high priest of Jerusalem.’

“‘And my friend, here,’ said Jonathan, ‘is Ahimaaz, the son of Zadok.’

“‘Happy to see you, my sons, happy to see you: let me make you acquainted with Machir, the prince of Lodebar. And this,’ turning to the stranger, ‘is Shobi, the son of Nahash, the ruler of the children of Ammon. Can I be of service to you, this morning, my young friends?’ (2 Sam. xvii. 27.)

“‘We have come in behalf of King David,’ said Ahimaaz. ‘You have heard doubtless of Absalom’s rebellion.’

“‘Rebellion!’ exclaimed Barzillai: ‘is it then so serious? Some vague rumors came last night of troubles existing or expected at Jerusalem. But I hoped it was either a fabrication, or some small matter exaggerated.’

“‘It is a painful reality,’ said Ahimaaz. ‘The king fled from Jerusalem late in the afternoon, crossed Jordan in the night, and is now near the city of Mahanaim with some fifteen hundred followers.’

“‘Then he is in need of provision,’ said Barzillai: ‘I must see to sending him supplies instantly.’

“‘I will share that duty with you,’ said Machir, and at once put his horse in motion towards Lodebar.

“‘David was my father’s friend,’ said the Ammonite: ‘he shall not lack my friendship now.’ And he bowed low to the company, with appropriate expressions of his best wishes, till the tall plume that streamed from his head-dress swept the arching neck of the beautiful animal which he rode. He then resumed an erect position, fixed himself firmly in the saddle, and wheeling his fine Arabian horse, shot, like an arrow, over hill and valley, in the direction of his home, till lost from their view in the distant forest.

“In the mean time, the noble Assyrian charger of Barzillai was bearing his master with swiftness and ease towards the large mansion-house, while Ahimaaz and Jonathan, rejoicing in their welcome reception, followed him on foot.

“As soon as they were within call of the house, ‘Daniel,’ said the old chief to one of the principal

servants, 'take four or five of the young men with you, and hurry down to the lower pasture; turn out three-score and ten of the best beeves, the largest and the most thrifty, Daniel, and drive them, as fast as you can without injury to the cattle, to Mahanaim. King David is there, in want of provisions. And, Daniel, see here: take two hundred of the best sheep; they will be wanted too; put them in the same drove, and take them along.'

"'Benjamin,' to another servant, 'harness up, as quick as possible, all the beasts of burden and all the wagons and carts on the place; we must send them with supplies to King David.'

"All was now hurry and bustle about the large establishment of Barzillai. Beds and bedding, household, kitchen and table furniture in all variety and abundance, were packed into the wagons and on the beasts of burden. And then sacks of fine flour, and wheat and barley, and parched corn, beans and peas, large jars of honey, kegs of butter, and casks of cheese, with all the variety of vegetables that the fruitful fields of the venerable old chief could furnish, loaded wagon after wagon and cart after cart; also a number of camels and asses.

"The preparations were now complete, and the drivers had already mounted to their stations, when a fine-looking, motherly old lady put her head out at the door: 'Benjamin! don't start yet a minute.' Presently out she came, followed by two stout serving women carrying a large basket between them. 'Just a few things for the king himself,' she said to her husband.

"The basket was then hoisted and fixed in a secure

place on the wagon. 'Now, Benjamin,' said the old lady, 'be careful of the basket, and mind it is just for the king himself.'

"Away swept the train of carts, and wagons, and beasts of burden, Barzillai, on his superb Assyrian charger, leading the way; and soon the towers of Mahanaim rose in view.

"The supplies sent by the generous Machir, from Lodebar, arrived not long afterwards. And nobly and in prince-like style did the Ammonite redeem his pledge. Sheep, and oxen, and fine flour, and other rich provisions, furnished, in the very best order, and in astonishing profusion, bore witness of the productiveness and the wealth of the land which God in his providence had bestowed on the children of Lot.

"The proper officers had made a liberal distribution, and the wants of all had been abundantly supplied, and the day was far advanced, when Ahimaaz, who was conversing with the family of Phinehas the Levite, was approached by a lad whose face appeared flushed with rapid travelling, and addressed him in a very familiar manner—'Well, you escaped from the Danites, safe enough, I see.'

"'Why, Ira, you unaccountable boy, can this be you?'

"'Certainly,' said Ira.

"'Why, what in the world brought you here?'

"'I might ask the same question,' said Ira, 'only that I happen to know the style in which you left Jerusalem. I was not honored with so respectable a train of followers.'

"'I suppose not,' said Ahimaaz; 'and what do you

think you deserve, for telling Absalom that Jonathan and I were concealed at Enrogel ?'

" 'They were disputing whether you had gone with David or not. And I told them you had not gone with David, but that you were at Enrogel. How could I know that they would take you for spies, and send to have you arrested ?'

" 'But,' said Ahimaaz, 'you came as guide to the Danites, to show them where we were.'

" 'O, yes,' said Ira, 'when I found they were going to try to catch you, then I was willing to come along. I did not wish you any harm, but I wanted to see the chase. I knew that, if you got a good start, their chance was bad. But, Ahimaaz, do you think there will be a battle ?'

" 'A battle ?' said Ahimaaz : 'what put that in your head ?'

" 'Why,' said Ira, 'some of the people think that David will keep flying before Absalom, till he will go into the land of Moab, or Ammon, or Syria ; and some say that his old officers and soldiers will turn and fight when Absalom comes.'

" 'When Absalom comes !' said Ahimaaz : 'does Absalom intend coming ?'

" 'He is on his march now,' said Ira ; 'he will be near Jordan to-night. He gave orders to pursue after David, as soon as he heard that Ahithophel was dead.'

" 'Ahithophel dead !' ejaculated Ahimaaz : 'is Ahithophel dead ?'

" 'Yes,' said the Kenite, 'he hung himself last night, a little before day.'

“‘Is it possible?’ said Ahimaaz: ‘why, what was the matter?’

“‘Well,’ said Ira, ‘some said it was because he was displeased that Absalom took the counsel of Hushai the Archite, rather than his own; and some said it was because he thought the best time for killing David had been let slip, and that David would gather friends, and conquer, and be king again, and Ahithophel could not bear to live to see it. But others said that Absalom had been talking that he was king, and he would show the people that Ahithophel could not lead him about as he pleased; and Ahithophel had found it out, and hung himself, to spite Absalom, and discourage Absalom’s friends. It may be they were all right, for Ahithophel was a great man, and must have had some terrible motive for such a deed. It may be that it was because God had forsaken him.’

“‘But are you sure that Absalom is coming?’

“‘I heard his orders,’ said Ira: ‘I saw Amasa mustering the men. They were to start immediately. And so I came over. I thought, if there is going to be a battle, I would like to see it.’

“‘Is Amasa,’ said Ahimaaz, ‘the commander-in-chief?’

“‘Yes, next to Absalom, you know,’ answered Ira.

“‘Come with me,’ said Ahimaaz: ‘this information must be given to Joab, Abishai, and Ittai the Gittite.’

“They were soon together, and Ahimaaz stated briefly what he had learned from Ira the Kenite. Ittai the Gittite alone showed surprise and apprehension at the news of Absalom’s intended pursuit. But at the mention that Amasa was chief captain of Absalom’s army, a glance was exchanged between Joab and Abishai.

Something bordering on a smile appeared on the face of Abishai, but the visage of Joab remained unmoved.

“‘Can you rely on the statements of this Kenite?’ said Joab to Ahimaaz.

“‘I know him well,’ said Ahimaaz: ‘he is a meddling, inquisitive kind of creature, that must pry into every thing, and know all that is transpiring; but his character for truth is unimpeachable, and moreover the accuracy and extent of his information is marvellous. You may rely with full confidence on his statements.’

“‘Then,’ said Ittai, ‘what shall we do?’

“‘Appeal to the God of battles,’ said Joab.

“‘But the king,’ said Abishai, ‘will not consent to fight Absalom. He would rather fly beyond the land of Israel, and die in exile.’

“‘I respect the sympathies of a father,’ said Joab, ‘but the country must not be sacrificed. Ittai, take Eleazar, the son of Dodo, and go to the king; you are an old friend that he values highly. Tell him that Absalom is coming, and that he must give him battle. Tell him that his old soldiers will not retreat another hair’s breadth: be firm, and speak plainly. Abishai, take the Tachmonite, follow Ittai at a little distance, then enter and confirm his words. I will come presently with Ahimaaz and Jonathan; we must be immovable as the cliffs of Carmel, and the king must hear — he will hear.’”

CHAPTER XXIV.

PREPARATIONS FOR BATTLE.

“DAVID was now, to a great extent, rested and refreshed after the fatigues of his journey. He was calmly reposing on a couch, furnished by Barzillai the Gileadite, and in a low tone was chanting one of his favorite psalms, when Ittai came in.

“I have mentioned,” said Belial, “that Ittai was regarded as a superior man, of great delicacy and refinement of feeling, and he had long been the intimate friend of David. Ittai thought it no violation of the orders of his superior, to give the king the most welcome intelligence first.

“‘News from Jerusalem, my lord, O king.’

“David started from his couch, and Ittai went on.

“‘Ahithophel, disappointed and in despair at some derangement of his plans, has hanged himself.’

“‘The Lord reigneth ; let the earth rejoice,’ exclaimed David, raising his hands and eyes in an attitude of devotion ; ‘let the multitudes of the isles be glad.’

“‘Our further advices,’ said Ittai, ‘are of a more gloomy character. The insurgents are pursuing us, and will be near Jordan to-night.’

“‘Clouds and darkness are round about him,’ continued David ; then adding in a submissive tone, ‘right-

eousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. Ittai, we must prepare for further flight, if it be even beyond the limits of the land of Israel.'

" 'Your faithful servants, my lord,' said Ittai, 'are of one mind — that further flight must not be thought of.'

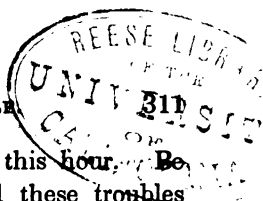
" 'What then?' said David; 'shall we enter the city and stand a siege? But you see we are not prepared: our only hope is in flight.'

" 'Give them battle,' said Abishai, who now entered with the Tachmonite. 'We left them the throne, the capital, and all the country beyond Jordan; but if they follow us here, they shall find the horrid front of war, for we will retreat no farther.'

" 'We are not able to meet them,' said David: 'they will cross Jordan with one hundred twoscore and ten thousand men that draw the sword; we cannot muster the fifteenth part of that number.'

" 'In addition to the fifteen hundred that came from Jerusalem,' said Abishai, 'we have now been joined by two thousand five hundred veteran warriors, the soldiers of my lord the king in other wars. And the sons of Gad and Manasseh will strengthen our army with five thousand more. We have valor and discipline, and experienced commanders, which will avail much against a confused and disorganized multitude, such as follows Absalom.'

" 'We have duty, and right, and the sanction of God,' said Joab, who had now entered. 'My lord, hear one word from your servant. You have been divinely called by the great Jehovah to rule over his people. The honor of his name, the prosperity of his church, and the welfare of his chosen people, for a long while



to come, depend on the decision of this hour. Be yourself again, and trust in God, and these troubles will be scattered as the mists of the morning when the sun shines forth.'

"At this, David, for a moment, turned deadly pale, and exclaimed, 'Alas! deluded Absalom!' then manned himself by a strong effort. 'I will do as seemeth good to you.'

"'Then,' said Joab, 'we will enter the city, and place the king's person in safety till the crisis is past.'

"The gates of Mahanaim were accordingly opened wide, and David and all his followers marched in, and took possession of such accommodations as were freely offered by the citizens.

"This was a city given by the tribe of Gad to the Levites, and Tamar, being the daughter of Abiathar, the high priest at Jerusalem, found a ready and hearty welcome in the house of a wealthy Levite, near the gate of the city. The splendid mansion rose much higher than the city walls, so that the window of the elegant suit of rooms assigned to Tamar not only commanded a view of the extensive plain before the city, but also gave opportunity of witnessing whatever might be transacting immediately before the gate. At her special request, the family of Phinehas the Levite were admitted into the same apartments; Jonathan and Ahimaaz also became inmates with the family to whom the house belonged. The name of this Levite was Merari.

"During the night and the following morning, the intelligence of Absalom's approach was confirmed by messenger after messenger. But as large bodies cannot

move with great rapidity, the second day was closed before he had reached the neighborhood of Mahanaim.

“In the mean time,” said Belial, “the leading officers of the army had held consultation. It was known that the king designed to lead the army to battle himself, or at least to be present with them. This they determined to resist, for two reasons: first, it would be a needless and unwise exposure of his person, his life being the great object sought by his enemy; and secondly, his affection for Absalom was such that, in the very crisis of battle, he might make efforts to save him, that would be followed by disastrous results. It was resolved, that Ittai the Gittite, in the name and behalf of all, should resolutely oppose the king’s wish in this matter, and that he need only assign the first reason, as that was amply sufficient.

“David, in the mean time, shut up in his chamber, was also revolving in his mind plans for the coming battle day. He doubted not the success of his army against the insurgents. Though their numbers were so far inferior, yet they were choice men, and in such perfect training, that he considered the victory as next to certain. But his anxiety was to save Absalom. He dreaded Joab. Joab had formerly interested himself much in Absalom’s favor, and was the moving cause of his being recalled, after he had fled to Geshur, on account of having killed his brother Amnon; but soon after Absalom’s return to Jerusalem, Joab discovered unquestionable indications of that restless ambition which afterwards convulsed the whole kingdom. For this reason Joab was unwilling to have any agency in putting Absalom forward in the king’s court. Absalom

sent for him again and again; but he quietly declined lending him his influence. And it was not until Absalom became importunate, and, indeed, almost frantic, that Joab consented to procure for him an interview with the king. (2 Sam. xiv. 29—33.) When the first news of the insurrection reached Jerusalem, Joab alone showed no surprise. He promptly proposed to check the conflagration by firing against it. He wished to marshal the troops that were at hand, rush to meet the insurgents, surprise and disperse them. He then believed that this could be done. The blow aimed at the kingdom of David warded off, his throne would scarcely feel the shock; and even Absalom might be saved, though on the brink of ruin. But this counsel, through parental tenderness, was rejected by the king. The order was to fly before the storm, and let the rebels take the city. When David and his servant were told how Absalom had insulted and outraged his father's family, which he had left at Jerusalem, Joab became perfectly silent in relation to Absalom. He no more mentioned his name in the presence of his father, and this silence struck David as ominous. He therefore labored to form such a plan that Absalom, if captured on the defeat of his army, might fall into the hands of some other officer than Joab. Joab was commander-in-chief of the army. For this high office he had paid a high consideration, by storming the strong castle of the Jebusites. But Joab, brave and magnanimous, was not at all tenacious of punctilios, in his intercourse with his uncle, the king; and David thought that for the one day, he could manage that Joab should command but one third of the army. So he resolved

to divide the forces collected around him into three parts, and put Ittai the Gittite at the head of one division, Abishai at the head of another, and Joab with the third. Thus the likelihood would be, two to one, that Absalom, if taken, would not fall into Joab's hands; and to guard that point, David resolved to go with Joab's division himself, and should Absalom be taken there, he hoped, by his personal influence, to be able to save him. The plan looked plausible and promising, and, relieved in some measure from the agony of painful apprehensions, he sunk into a deep sleep, until waked by the military trumpets at the dawn of day.

“The morning light of the third day disclosed to the view of the watchman, on the towers of Mahanaim, the extended and formidable array of Absalom's army. They had halted in the skirts of the wood of Ephraim, and though the intervening plain was wide, yet from the top of the walls, their long martial lines could be distinctly seen. Their numbers appeared immense, stretching to the north and south farther than the eye could reach. At regular distances along the line were seen the standards of the several tribes, each with the ensign of the house of their father. Full in view, and directly in front of the city gate, appeared ‘The Lion of the Tribe of Judah,’ now distinct, and now obscure, as the banner rose and sunk on the morning breeze; and there also appeared the sons of Issachar and Zebulun, each under their appropriate standard: on the north was unfurled the broad banner of Ephraim, with all the pomp and haughty pretensions so characteristic of that tribe; the sons of Benjamin were near, many a chief of renown and brilliant prospects while the house

of Saul was in power ; but the hopes of Benjamin had experienced a dark eclipse in the downfall of that administration. A small body also of the sons of Manasseh, from the west side of the river, were in this division of the army.

“ On the south of Judah arose the standard of Dan, and Asher and Naphtali were there ; and yet farther on was seen the standard of Reuben, and Simeon was near ; but the sons of Gad, who, in the arrangement of the tribes by Moses, were classed in this division, had with one heart refused to join in the rebellion, and no banner of theirs appeared in Absalom’s army.

“ Just as the sun had risen, Joab ascended the loftiest tower in Mahanaim, and standing motionless as a pillar, with his experienced military eye, reconnoitred this vast multitude for the space of three quarters of an hour. He then descended, and, in company with his brother and Ittai, went to the king, and said, —

“ ‘ We wait your commands, my lord.’

“ ‘ I will put our forces,’ said David, ‘ into three divisions. Ittai shall command one, Abishai another, and you, Joab, shall command the third ; and with you I will go myself.’

“ Each expressed his cordial approbation of the arrangement. ‘ But,’ said Ittai, promptly and earnestly, ‘ from the last proposition, my lord, in the name of all your majesty’s friends, I must beg leave strongly to dissent. Your life, my lord, is the object of all this insurgent army. The destruction of your life is their chief and only aim. Your life must not be placed within their reach, by going to the battle-field. You must remain in the city ; we will try the fortune of

war. If we are vanquished, they have accomplished but little. If the half of us die on the field, they have accomplished but little. While your life is safe, the hope of the church, the hope of the kingdom, is safe. To these great interests you are worth more than ten thousand of us. Remain, therefore, in the city, and let your servants go to the battle-field.'

"It was evident," said Belial, "that David yielded this point with great reluctance; but the princes and commanders were unanimous, decided, and firm. After a little hesitation he said, —

"My tried and faithful friends, I will do whatever seems best to you.'

"Be pleased, then,' said Joab, 'to take your stand at the gate, and speak an encouraging word to the soldiers as they pass.'

"David now stood in the gate. It was the expectation of all, that he would remind the soldiers of his wrongs, and urge them to be valiant, and regain his crown, his palace, his kingdom; but, to the astonishment of all, now on the very eve of a battle which must be decisive, the king was wholly lost in the father. His only and oft-repeated charge was, 'Deal gently, for my sake, with the young man, even with Absalom.'

"When the first column came up, with the chief commander at its head, 'Joab,' said he, 'for my sake, deal gently with Absalom. He is young; he is rash, and has done wrong; but when you meet him, think of me, and for my sake deal gently with him.' Then, as the columns swept by, 'Soldiers, for my sake, deal gently with Absalom.' And he kept repeating the charge till every soldier in Joab's division had heard.

Then the powerful figure of Abishai approached at the head of his men: 'Abishai, my firm and long-trying friend, for my sake, deal gently with Absalom.' And again he repeated the charge, naming now and then a subaltern personally known to him, till all the men in that division had heard. Then came the warriors led by Ittai the Gittite. 'Ittai,' said the king, 'deal gently with Absalom, for my sake. Soldiers, for my sake, deal gently with Absalom.' Tears sprung to many an eye, and rippled over many a weather-beaten face, as officers and soldiers passed along; for they were fathers, and brothers, and sons, and forcibly were they reminded of the strong affections that encircled their own firesides at home.

"'Wonderful!' exclaimed Ittai the Gittite, addressing Jonathan, as he wiped his eyes and cheeks, — 'wonderful the affection of a father for his son!'

"'And wonderful,' said Jonathan, pointing to the array of Absalom's army, 'the rebellion of a son against his father!'

"'How they contrast with each other!' said Ittai. 'Here is David anxious, above all things, to save the life of Absalom.'

"'And there is Absalom,' said Jonathan, 'anxious, above all things, to destroy the life of David.'

"'It shows us,' said Ittai, 'how kind a father can be to the worst of children.'

"'Yes,' said Jonathan, 'and how base a child can be to the best of fathers.'

"'I know not where to find a parallel,' said Ittai, 'unless it be in God's unmerited kindness to man.'

"'And,' said Jonathan, 'in man's unprovoked rebellion against God.'

“‘For *my* sake! for *my* sake!’ repeated Ittai, dwelling on the clause. ‘Did you notice how he emphasized those words? Strange, when it is his crown, his kingdom, his life, against which the rebel has risen up. “Deal gently, for *my* sake, with the young man, even with Absalom.”’

“‘It is the argument of mercy,’ answered Jonathan, ‘the great argument of mercy. In the rebel himself there is no merit, no claim to favor. It must be found elsewhere. God shows compassion to sinners for his *great name sake.*’

“The army was now drawn up before the gate of the city, and some necessary arrangements were in progress preparatory to their march.

“‘Mother! mother! come here!’ cried the eldest son of Phinehas the Levite as he looked from the window of the house of Merari; ‘here is a man whose face and hands are perfectly black.’

“‘Who is he?’ said the mother to Ahimaaz, who was now in the room.

“‘That is Joab’s man, Cush, the Ethiopian,’ answered Ahimaaz. ‘He was made captive some years ago, when a roving band of his people broke into the country; but he has since behaved himself very well, and Joab treats him with some attention.’

“‘But who are these?’ asked the woman, still looking from the window — ‘these with the bright armor, whose uniform is so exact, and their height so nearly equal?’

“‘They are the Cherethites and Pelethites,’ said Ahimaaz. ‘You have often heard them spoken of as Joab’s men; they are beyond doubt the best soldiers of the age.’

“ ‘There is another company,’ said the woman, ‘though not so large, but equally well armed. Who are they?’

“ ‘Those are the life-guards,’ said Ahimaaz, ‘who are usually about the king’s person. They are generally led by Abishai.’

“ ‘There is a larger company beyond, but they seem older men: many of them are gray-headed, and their armor is not so bright: who are they?’

“ ‘Those are the volunteers. They were formerly in David’s army; but for some years had retired to private life. Yet now, hearing of this rebellion, they have taken up arms again, to assist King David to regain his throne.’

“ ‘Noble-hearted and generous men!’ said the woman; ‘may the Lord bless them! I hope they will be successful. But, Ahimaaz, what company is that, armed with bows and arrows? They appear, from their dress, like country people, who are not soldiers by profession; and yet their countenances are very bold and courageous.’

“ ‘They are the sons of Gad,’ said Ahimaaz: ‘ah, their faces are like the faces of lions, and they are swift as the roes upon the mountains.’

“ ‘I see beyond them still another company that look like men from the country, though they are all equipped for war.’

“ ‘Yes,’ said Ahimaaz, ‘they are the sons of Manasseh, from the country east of Jordan. But I must not detain — I have just come to bid you all farewell, before going into the battle.’

“ ‘Ahimaaz,’ said Tamar, coming from the door of

an adjoining room, 'King David stays in the city, does he not?'

" 'That is the plan adopted,' answered Ahimaaz.

" 'Well, should not some of you stay, and guard the king? Would it not be best for you and brother Jonathan to stay and take care of the king?'

" 'Don't speak of it,' said Ahimaaz: all depends on the success of this battle. I must be at my post to sound the silver trumpet for the onset. Think of us, Tamar, in your prayers.'

" 'Ahimaaz,' said Tamar, 'if duty to your king and country, and the cause of Zion, call you, I will not say stay; but I will stand at that window and watch.' Her voice trembled. 'I will watch at that window; don't let me be long in suspense.'

" 'The Lord bless you and keep you,' said Ahimaaz, and left the room as if forcing himself away.

"The trumpets sounded, and the army moved from the gate in the most perfect order, and halted again near the centre of the plain. The multitudes who had taken up arms for Absalom were now full in view. Not only could the banners, spread on the breeze, be distinguished, but the person of each renowned chief of Judah, Ephraim, Reuben, and Dan, as, mounted on their mettled and fiery war-horses, they rode along the line, putting the men in the best order for the expected action, and animating them by every motive to deeds of valor, for the establishment of Absalom's throne. It was now ascertained that they outnumbered the army of David in proportion of twenty to one; and many nobles were there, anxious to distinguish themselves in this memorable field, and thus become the favorites of the young king.

“Some men are ‘born to command,’ and, notwithstanding David’s precautions, no sooner was the enemy near, than all felt that Joab was commander-in-chief.

“At this juncture, a prince of Manasseh, somewhat vain, and puffed up with a conceit of his capacity for war, pushed forward, and spoke to the commander. This was his third attempt to interfere. ‘I learn,’ said he, ‘that the enemy design to outflank us; would it not be better, instead of attacking their main body, to change your plan, and attack one extremity of their line? Thus we should be certain to succeed.’

“‘Captain,’ said Joab, ‘I shall be much obliged to you, if you will give me more of your service, and less of your advice.’ The officer bowed low, in deep silence, and fell back to his place.

“‘Outflank!’ whispered Ahimaz to Jonathan; ‘Joab intends to make flanks in the centre of their army.’

“A brief council of war was now called. When they met, Ittai the Gittite, in a voice that almost faltered, hurried forth two questions in one breath.

“‘Will they stand obstinately? Have we any prospect of success?’

“Joab fixed his piercing eyes steadily on Ittai. ‘Ask me if they will stand obstinately before a stream of fiery lava, poured from the summit of a burning mountain? Success! Has the lightning any prospect of success when its livid stream has touched the topmost bough of the oak on Bashan? Absalom’s chief reliance is on the princes of Judah. They are valiant men, but their discipline is nothing.

“‘Ittai, take the Tachmonite with your division, and front the standard of Dan.’

“ ‘ Abishai, take Eleazar, the son of Dodo, with your division, and front the standard of Ephraim ; each approach within one hundred paces of the foe ; then stand. They will not advance on you. Keep the standard of Judah in your eye, while I lead my division against the centre of their line. When you see the standard of Judah driven back, then shout, “ Judah flies ! ” and charge for country, and king, and the Zion of our God. And Jehovah’s will be done.’ ”

“ ‘ But,’ said Joab, in a lower tone, ‘ what of Absalom ? ’ ”

“ ‘ How ? ’ said Ittai and Abishai at the same moment. ‘ What shall we do with Absalom ? ’ ”

“ ‘ O,’ said Ittai, ‘ you know the king’s charge. If we can defeat his army, we must let him escape.’ ”

“ ‘ That will not do,’ said Abishai ; ‘ the rebellion is too general. The revolted princes will not return to their allegiance, if Absalom is at liberty to head them again. We must secure his person. Take him captive, if possible, but do him no injury.’ ”

“ ‘ You err,’ said Joab ; ‘ you both err. Absalom must die. I take the responsibility.’ ”

“ ‘ Herald ! ’ said he, calling a young officer ; ‘ go, make known through the army, that Joab will give ten shekels of silver and a girdle to the soldier who will smite Absalom.’ ”

“ Joab now gave the word of command, and instantly the army was thrown into a hollow square. In the centre was a little eminence. Towards this he moved, in company with Abishai and Ittai the Gittite. His dress was plain, but exceedingly neat, exhibiting his fine figure, his strong and active person, to the best

advantage ; his step was firm and confident ; his eye serene and bright ; his manner calm, collected, and resolute. Many veteran soldiers had now joined the army, whom he had led in former wars to victory and conquest. At the sight of their old favorite general so near, their ardor was uncontrollable. Cheers, shouts, and bursts of military devotion, arose on all sides, as Joab ascended the little eminence to make a brief address.

“ ‘Soldiers!’ said he ; and the loud tones of his melodious voice hushed every whisper, and brought to him every eye — ‘soldiers! the cause in which you are armed to-day, is the cause of your God, your country, and your king. This is the land which Jehovah promised to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. Here he hath planted his covenant people ; here he hath said they shall flourish and grow like the cedars of Lebanon. Or, shall I change the figure, and say that, while surrounding nations are covered with the blight and mildew of heathenism, here he hath planted that beautiful vine, which he brought out of Egypt ? Here he hath said it shall take deep root, and spread, till it hath covered Tabor, and Hermon, and Gilead, and Carmel, with the valleys between ; yes, till it hath fringed with living green the borders of every stream, from the river of Egypt to the great Euphrates, and hung its rich clusters on rock, and hill, and mountain-peak, from the Sea of Arabia to the Great Sea westward. The wild boar from the wood hath sought to waste and destroy this vine. Jehovah hath appointed his servant, David, to dress and to keep it. By the anointing oil of the prophet Samuel, he was consecrated to

this sacred charge. His kingdom is from God, and it cannot be moved.

“ ‘Are any appalled at the magnitude of the host that is risen up against you? I ask you to call to mind what our fathers have told of the works of Israel’s God in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and at the first entrance of the tribes into Canaan. I ask you to call to mind the unfailing help of God in dark and trying days, within the period of your own remembrance. I see around me those who remember the scenes of Keilah and of Ziklag — men who can tell the tale of the strong hold of Adullam, and the cave of En-gedi; men who have traversed the deserts of Paran, the forests of Ziph, and the wilderness of Maon. Yes, I see around me the men who drew the sword at the pool of Gibeon. Soldiers! have you forgotten the brave, the generous, the unparalleled Asahel?’ His voice trembled a moment; then, raising his eyes, and his clasped hands, he exclaimed, ‘Departed brother, thou art not forgotten! Thy memory is embalmed forever in the soldier’s heart!’ Many a strong warrior bowed his head and let fall the big tear to the memory of the valiant Asahel.

“ After a moment’s pause, he went on: ‘Call to mind the fields on which you have vanquished the stubborn sons of Moab, the wild and warlike Edomite, the countless hosts of Syria, and the fierce and gigantic Philistines: each is an Ebenezer of assurance that the God of your fathers will be with you now.

“ ‘Yon rebel host, with a rebel and profligate prince at their head, are now pale with fear, and trembling at the heart. At your attack, they will be scattered like chaff before the whirlwind. The shrewd and crafty

Ahithophel foresaw their doom, and hanged himself, rather than share in their overthrow.' Then, pointing upward his long, glittering sword, and holding it steady at the full length of his extended arm, he exclaimed, 'Trust in that God who divided the Red Sea, rolled back the overflowing tide of Jordan, and stopped the sun and the moon in heaven, that the cause of his covenant people might prevail. King David will yet lead you back in triumph to Jerusalem. You will again see him on the throne, with the sceptre in his hand, and the crown upon his head. His kingdom shall endure ; Israel shall be a blessing ; Messiah shall come, and the whole earth shall be filled with the name and the glory of Israel's God.'

"Bright weapons, that flashed back the rays of the sun, now waved over all the host, while the soldiers rent the air with reiterated shouts of enthusiasm, that startled the multitude in Absalom's army.

"Joab now looked around. 'Abiathar,' said he, 'is not here ; Jonathan, give to the army the charge which Moses commanded.' Jonathan drew near to the commander, and lifting up his voice, repeated the address enjoined in the twentieth chapter of Deuteronomy : 'Hear, O Israel ! Ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies : let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them ; for the Lord your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.'"

CHAPTER XXV.

THE BATTLE.

“AT the close of the address of Jonathan,” said Belial, “a few moments passed in profound silence; then, at a signal from the commander, Abishai and Ittai filed off with their troops to the right and left, and took their appointed stations in front of the standards of Ephraim and of Dan. Joab remained marshalling his men till the other two divisions of the army had halted. He put the Cherethites and Pelethites with the mighty men, in front; next these he placed one thousand veteran warriors, proved and tried in former battles; in the rear of all he put a large body of archers of the tribe of Gad, renowned for strength and skill in handling the bow; each archer was also girded with a sword. His division numbered about twenty-five hundred men. He gave the proper directions, and they moved with quick, but regular and orderly step, towards the foe. When within thirty paces of the centre of Judah’s line, the swordsmen and spearsmen dropped on their knees, bending forward, and covering their heads and bodies with their shields: the archers of Gad now brought the bowstring to their ear, and a shower of death was driven over the heads of their comrades right on Judah’s thick array. The shriek, moan, and dying cry arose,

mingled with the shrill clangor of the trumpet of Ahimaaz, sounding the onset. The warriors sprung to their feet with the quickness of thought, and charged on Judah with the speed of lightning. It was the descent of the avalanche, rent by an earthquake from the awful brow of a frozen mountain, that uproots the rocks in its course, bends and crushes the tall, strong forest, and overwhelms all before it in undistinguished ruin.

“The standard of Judah was driven back, but not far. Ahimelech, the standard-bearer, was cut down by the sword of Elhanan, one of the mighty men, who seized the standard and dashed it to the earth; while prince and peasant, officer and soldier, fell on every hand, like ripe corn, in the harvest field, before the reapers.

“Abishai, in like manner, carried all before him, at the first onset. Ephraim and Benjamin fled, after a very feeble resistance. But the sons of Dan, Asher, and Naphtali, animated by the presence of Absalom, fought more obstinately. The watchful eye of Absalom had marked the arrangement of David’s army. A deserter had told him of his father’s charge, that none should do him injury. He knew this charge would be regarded by the Gittites, but he doubted Joab and Abishai. He was anxious to avoid, in the battle-field, an encounter with either of the sons of Zeruah. On seeing the Gittites planting themselves before the sons of Dan, he resolved to give his personal influence there. He was eloquent, brave, and not unskilled in war. Cheered by his presence, and encouraged by his eloquence, the Danites were fighting hand to hand with the men from Gath. Though greatly inferior in dis-

cipline, they were equal in courage, and far superior in numbers. Absalom was in the foremost rank, exhorting, commanding, and promising rewards. Yet none of the Gittites would do him harm, such was their veneration for David.

“The perfect discipline of the Gittites carried all before them at each charge; but at the call of Absalom, the sons of Dan would rally and return to the fight. The solid body, headed by Ittai, had ploughed through their thick array again and again; and again and again, exhorted by Absalom, they had returned and renewed the attack. When Absalom, seeing at a distance a powerful Danite chief, with a fresh body of troops, called him by name, ‘Zuri! advance with your men, and turn the fortune of the day.’ He came like the fierce panther, raving and furious, and sprang upon the foe. Absalom threw himself by his side, hoping much from this assault; but the spear of Jashobeam, the Tachmonite, met Zuri as he rushed on, and ran through shield, breastplate, and body, and came out half a cubit’s length behind his shoulders. With one frightful scream, he leaped high from the earth, then fell in the struggles of death at the feet of Absalom’s mule. Frightened at this, or from some unknown cause, it dashed off with uncontrollable fury, through the confused multitude, towards the point from which the hosts of Judah had fled. A huge oak was there, with horizontal branches, that ran out some distance from the trunk. Under this the mule rushed at full speed: Absalom’s neck was driven in between two limbs up to the fork. He was hung by the head, and the mule, careless of its rider, left him, and continued its flight.

“One of the soldiers saw it, and ran, and told Joab, ‘Behold, I saw Absalom, hanged in an oak!’

“‘Did you smite him there to the ground?’ said Joab.

“‘No,’ answered the soldier, ‘for it would have been certain ruin to myself.’

“‘I would have given thee ten shekels of silver and a girdle,’ said Joab.

“‘Excuse me from sacrificing my life,’ answered the soldier: ‘a thousand shekels of silver would be no inducement, for the king would soon be told who it was that killed his son, and from the charge he gave to you and all the army, I know that the man who smites Absalom must fall under the king’s hot displeasure, and most likely lose his life.’

“‘It is essential to the safety of the country,’ said Joab. ‘The patriot should look at that first, and abide the consequences. Where is he?’

“The soldier pointed to the tree. And Joab took three darts in his hand, and went and drove them through the heart of Absalom, as he hanged in the oak.

“The moment Joab was satisfied that Absalom was dead, he considered the great question as now settled; and to stop the needless effusion of blood, he took the trumpet, and gave a blast, which his soldiers well understood, announcing that, now the victory was complete, they must stop from further slaughter, for Absalom’s army had fled through the wood of Ephraim, and the servants of David were upon them in all directions, and there were more slain in their flight through the wood, than were slain in the battle, while they attempted to fight with the sword.

“As soon as the trumpet blast and the loud echoes

that followed had died away, the young men that attended Joab, took Absalom down from the tree, and cast him into a great pit in the wood, and then the soldiers threw a very great heap of stones upon him. It was the monument of a rebellious son. This heap of stones is still to be seen. It was long a custom in that country for the traveller who passed by that place, to take up a stone and throw it on that heap, and say, 'Thus shall it be done to the rebellious son.'

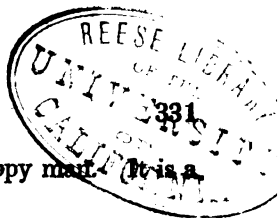
Beelzebub, who had been attentive and silent all this while, now spoke up : —

"Is there not an impression among men that violations of the fifth commandment, 'Honor thy father and thy mother,' are punished sooner than other sins?"

"There is such an impression," said Belial, "and it is the result of long experience and observation. If you wish to bring destruction upon a youth speedily, tempt him to rebel against his parents. There are some sins, the punishment of which divine justice seems to delay long, perhaps until the man has reached the eternal world by the tide of years. But disobedience to parents is a sin, which, it appears, the vengeance of Heaven will not endure, and the offender is often struck down before he is half way along the journey of life."

"Does not Solomon," said Beelzebub, "use some strong language on this subject?"

"He does," answered Belial. "His words are these : 'The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.' I have long," said Belial, "been an observer of the affairs of men, but I have never yet seen a notoriously disobedient son



live to be a useful, respectable, or happy man. It is a sin that God punishes speedily."

"Just so," answered Beelzebub; "but I would not break in upon your narrative. Go on."

"As soon as Absalom was buried in the deep pit," resumed Belial, "a very lively scene occurred. Ahimaaz was remarkable not only for his resolute patriotism, but also for his highly cultivated mind, great delicacy and refinement of feeling, and warm attachment to King David. He thought that the victory would be joyful to David, though he knew that the death of Absalom would almost break his heart. He was anxious, therefore, that the good news should get to David first, and let the other come when it must. Yet such was the perfect discipline of the army, that even Ahimaaz must not go on such an errand without the authority of the commander-in-chief.

"He therefore said to Joab, 'Let me now go and bear the king tidings how the Lord hath avenged him of his enemies.'

"'No, Ahimaaz,' said Joab, 'the news will be unwelcome to the king; even the messenger who brings it will be lessened in his esteem. Thou shalt bear tidings another day, but this day thou shalt bear no tidings, because the king's son is dead.'

"'Cushi,' said Joab to the Ethiopian, 'Go tell the king what thou hast seen.' And Cushi bowed himself to Joab, and ran. 'A heavy message,' said Joab, following Cushi with his eye for some distance, 'but it must be borne.'

"Ahimaaz looked for a moment at Cushi's running, which was not remarkably swift; and knowing he could

start yet, and reach David first, he said again to Joab, 'But, howsoever, let me, I pray thee, run after Cush. I can be with King David first, and tell him the good news, and let him have a little gleam of gladness before Cush comes with the heavy tidings.'

"'My son,' said Joab, kindly, 'you have no good news to tell David. He is not thinking of his crown, his palace, his kingdom; all his anxieties are for Absalom. He will ask you for Absalom first, for Absalom last, for Absalom all the time. You have no good news to tell the king, for Absalom is dead.'

"'But howsoever,' said Ahimaaz, 'let me run.'

"'Well,' said Joab, 'with the whole case before you, if you prefer it, run.'

"Ahimaaz shot like a dove on the wing, and overtook, and was soon ahead of Cush.

"David, in the mean time, stood before the gate of Mahanaim, straining his dim eye across that wide plain, to catch the first glimpse of a messenger from the army; a restless sea of anxieties, fears, and gloomy apprehensions rolled and tossed unceasingly in his troubled breast. The watchman, who had younger eyes than the king, went up to the roof over the gate, and looking attentively in the direction the army had gone, discerned the foremost messenger. He called aloud to the king, 'Behold, a man running alone!'

"'If he be alone,' answered the king, 'there are tidings in his mouth.'

"Presently the watchman called again, 'Behold, another man running alone!'

"'He also bringeth tidings,' said the king. 'It is not the fragments of a routed army you see, or there would be more than two.'

“They were yet so distant that their forms were but indistinctly seen; yet, from the window of the house of Merari the Levite, there was one pair of eyes, looking out on that plain, brighter and clearer even than those of the watchman. By these eyes, the foremost messenger was at once identified. A snow white handkerchief, thrust from the window the full length of the arm, now waved with a rapidity that told of the lively emotions within. At the sight of this token, the speed of Ahimaaz was astonishingly accelerated. Cushie now fell back in a style that was perfectly new. To every one who beheld this scene, the reason was perfectly plain why the fame of Ahimaaz for unequalled swiftness in the race should have overspread all the mountain districts west of Jordan, and indeed filled the entire land of Gilead. As has been said of Asahel, the brother of Joab, he was ‘as light of foot as the wild roe.’

“The watchman at Mahanaim looked with amazement, rubbed his eyes, and looked again. ‘Between Dan and Beersheba,’ exclaimed he, ‘there cannot be two men that can run at that rate;’ and calling again to the king, he said, ‘Methinketh the running of the foremost is like the running of Ahimaaz, the son of Zadok.’

“And the king said, ‘He is a good man, and cometh with good tidings.’

“Every window in Mahanaim, that rose above the city wall, was now crowded with heads. The wall itself was literally lined with women and children of every various age and size. For sons and husbands, fathers and brothers had gone to that battle-field, and thrilling interest was felt to learn the result.

“With palpitating heart, and in an attitude of the

most anxious expectation, David stood before the gate ; his aged form bending forward, his long gray hair streaming on the wind, his waning eyes shaded by his hand placed across the forehead, as he gazed on the approaching messenger.

“When Ahimaaz was near enough to speak, he called out, ‘All is well!’ and he fell down to the earth, on his face before the king, and said, ‘Blessed be the Lord thy God, who hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my lord the king.’

“‘Is the young man, Absalom, safe?’ asked the king hastily.

“To this Ahimaaz answered doubtfully. ‘When Joab sent me, I saw a great tumult, as if something very serious had been done ; but particulars I cannot give. But your foes are routed. The crown and kingdom are yours.’

“‘Stand aside,’ said David ; ‘I can hear of nothing else till I know that Absalom is safe.’

“Ahimaaz now turned aside, and stood in silence. The stillness was awful. Not a whisper at the gate or on the wall. It seemed as if the people almost feared to breathe, while Cushie, bending across the plain, drew nearer and nearer to the gate. At length he called out, ‘Tidings, my lord the king ; for the Lord hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee.’

“‘Is the young man, Absalom, safe?’ said David, with a tone and manner that defy all description.

“Cushi raised his visage right in front of the king, planted one foot firmly before, lifted his huge arm to its utmost height, and replied, ‘The enemies of my

lord the king, and all they that rise up against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is. I wish no heavier doom on your worst foes, than has fallen upon him.'

“ ‘And the king was much moved, and hurried as age loaded with trouble can hurry, to the chamber over the gate, and wept ; and as he went thus, he said, ‘ O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom ! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son ! ’

“ ‘It is wonderful,’ said Belial, “among the sons of men, how, when a friend dies, his faults are all forgotten. His excellences and amiableness only are remembered by the survivors. Who ever saw a father or a mother that could censure, blame, or find fault with a son or daughter that had gone to the grave ? No. The living complain only of themselves. Every harsh word, every pang, thoughtlessly or carelessly inflicted, every neglect of kindness that occurs to the mind, goes like a cold dagger to the heart. It was so with David now. He thought of Absalom when a lovely little boy, on his knees ; — when a blooming and sprightly youth ; — when a fine, promising, beautiful young man, that had not his like in all Israel. And now, to keep the crown a few years longer on his aged head, that was trembling over the grave, Absalom must die. ‘Ah, dearly recovered crown, how worthless now ! my poor beloved Absalom, has it cost your life ! Has it cost your life ! ’

“The people were stunned and astounded with the loud and excessive bursts of anguish from the bosom of the king. For a time they seemed to forget their personal interests in the events of the day. But soon

after David had shut himself up in his chamber, Ahim-
aaz and Cushie were surrounded by those who eagerly
inquired for husbands, sons, fathers and brothers, who
had gone to that bloody field. To many of these they
could give, of course, no satisfactory answer. It was
not long, however, till martial music was heard, float-
ing over the plain, and the front ranks were seen of the
returning army. As was the custom in Israel, the
women and children went out to meet their friends,
but not with songs, dances, and instruments of music.
Awed, shocked, overwhelmed with the king's lamenta-
tions for his son, they appeared rather like a funeral
procession, than those celebrating a victory. 'And the
victory that day was turned into mourning unto all the
people.' The death of Absalom occasioned sorrow
that far exceeded all the joy of success. The victory
appeared valueless, and matter of regret. It was a
meteor at midnight, whose feeble flash is swallowed
up and lost in the superabounding darkness. It was a
dim candle lighted up at noonday, when the sun in
heaven has undergone a total eclipse.

"The officers and soldiers who had fought against
such desperate odds, and by their extraordinary valor
had achieved a victory so decided, and saved the life of
the king, his throne and his kingdom, had anticipated
the warmest greeting and the most enthusiastic welcome
on their return to the city. They were proud of what
they had accomplished; lifted up with enlarged expecta-
tions of royal approbation and favor. Services had
been rendered at the imminent risk of their lives, which
they had fondly calculated could never be forgotten.
They expected to find the people all in raptures, and that

the king himself would meet them with gratitude, honor, and admiration, for their matchless deeds.

“ When, instead of this, they found that all was gloom, melancholy, and mourning, when the king refused to see them, and hid himself from their view, and they could hear his loud and bitter cry, ‘ O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!’ there was a deep and general feeling of disappointment and chagrin. They felt as if they were blamed and censured for the most invaluable services. Symptoms of indignation and resentment began to appear, and spread through the army like the contagion of a plague. The Cherethites, Pelethites, and life-guards frowned and hung their heads. Even the faithful Gittites showed a mortification that verged towards madness. While among the volunteer soldiers, and the sons of Gad and Manasseh, broken sentences were heard of ‘ merit neglected, loyalty set at nought, fidelity dishonored and scorned.’

“ The eagle eye of Joab marked the gathering cloud, saw its blackness, and the glitter of the lightning there, while his ear caught the roll of the distant thunder. He felt the heaving and rocking of a convulsed mountain, portending a most terrific eruption. It was plain that nothing but a competent leader was wanting to produce a general and irreparable revolt. And who could tell the moment when that leader might appear?

“ Joab wheeled the army from the gate, and halted at a little distance on the plain; told them that he designed for the weary and exhausted soldier some needful refreshments before they proceeded farther. He then despatched from each division a competent number of men to bring an ample supply from the abundant stores

furnished by Barzillai the Gileadite, Machir of Lodebar, and their generous friend the Ammonite prince.

“As soon as the provisions began to be distributed, Joab went in person to the chamber of the king.

“David was prostrate on a couch, with his face covered, venting the deep sorrows of his heart, when Joab entered the room. At the sound of footsteps, the king uncovered his face, saw the commander, then instantly threw the covering over his eyes again, exclaiming, ‘Begone from my presence ! I cannot bear the sight of you. Leave me ! Leave me instantly ! Instantly, I say.’

“‘When I have done my duty,’ said Joab.

“‘Your duty ! your duty !’ said David : ‘your duty is to obey the commands of your king.’

“‘When my king is himself,’ said Joab, ‘and not deranged by excessive fondness for a rebellious, abandoned son, who rose up to destroy his father’s life.’

“‘Deranged !’ exclaimed David ; ‘did you say deranged ?’

“‘Yes, my lord, deranged, till he has forgotten the cause of God, the interests of his kingdom, the claims of his long-tried friends, and even what is essential to the preservation of his own life.’

“‘I commanded you to spare Absalom.’

“‘You did, my lord ; but it was the command of the fond, misguided father, and not of the wise ruler of the Israel of God.’

“‘You put a price upon his head,’ said David.

“‘I did, my lord, for I saw that his death or your ruin was unavoidable. I resolved that he should die. And I preferred that it should be by another hand than mine.’

“‘But you slew him with your own hand,’ said David.

“‘I did, my lord; for though many saw the necessity of his death as clearly as I, yet the dread of your displeasure was such, that the most valiant were appalled. No man could be found in all Israel that was willing to save your crown by doing a deed that must bring certain destruction upon himself. Who, then, but your own sister’s son, was to step forward, and save your life and your kingdom? Though he clearly saw that, for doing this, he must be blighted with the lightning of your vengeance, and go degraded and dishonored to the grave.’

“‘Leave the house!’ vociferated David; ‘leave the house instantly! I cannot bear you in my sight.’

“‘If I leave you,’ said Joab, ‘your days are numbered, and your kingdom at an end.’

“‘Let my days be numbered,’ cried David; ‘I am weary and sick of life. O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! would God that I had died for thee! O Absalom, my son, my son!’

“‘My lord,’ said Joab, ‘this is midsummer madness now. I might be offended and leave you. But I can sympathize with the bleeding heart of a bereaved father; and while I remember that you are my king, anointed of God, and remember, moreover, that you are the beloved and favorite brother of my dear departed mother, I must not, I will not leave you thus. My lord, have you forgotten your sister Zeruiah? that noble woman, whose name will shine as a precious and beautiful gem in the annals of the people of God, till the end of time? She had for you — for I know no stronger term — the affection of an *elder* sister for a *younger* brother. In

her anxiety for your honor, your usefulness and your respectability, she seemed often wholly to forget herself. And O, when she saw you anointed by good old Samuel, and heard him promise, in Jehovah's name, that you should have the kingdom over God's chosen people, she wept for joy and gladness of heart. And when the old prophet left the room, she ran and threw her arms around your neck, in a transport of enthusiasm, and blessed and glorified the name of God, and invoked blessings on you and on your kingdom. That sister, with all her worth and sisterly devotion, was forbidden by her sex to be a counsellor in your cabinet, or a soldier in your army; yet she would do what she could. She was the mother of three little sons, and from the day she saw you anointed king, she devoted those three sons, in the awful name of Israel's God, to be the helpers and supporters of your kingdom. She made it the business and delight of her life to train those sons to be useful and faithful to you. She read to them, from the book of God, the history of Joshua and Gideon, and Jephthah and Barak, and the champions of Israel in other days. These lessons were illuminated and enforced by her enlightened and powerful comments, till military ardor in the cause of Israel, and of Israel's God, flowed, like the blood of life, through the veins and through the hearts of her sons. "Keep your eye," said she, "on these noble examples, and be *such men* around your uncle's throne." As soon as her sons were able to handle the sword and the shield, she sent them away from her beloved presence, to be with you. Shall I mention their names, my lord? They were Asahel, Abishai, and Joab. You were then pursued and

persecuted by the bitter jealousy of the unrelenting and powerful Saul. These sons of your sister shared your privations and your sufferings, when you were flying through fields and forests ; when you were secreting yourself among the rocks of the wilderness, and hiding in the dens and caves of the earth. And they never made a stolen and hasty visit to their mother, but with the liveliest emotion she asked for your welfare and your prospects, and urged them not to be discouraged at the multitudes that were arrayed against you, but to cleave to you through all dangers, and defend you with their lives. That sister lived to see you on the throne of Judah ; and then on the throne of Israel. She lived to see you become prosperous, and rich, and great.

“ And shall I say, she lived to hear the princes of Judah, the powerful associates and friends of our family, complain and censure you much and harshly, that to conciliate enemies, and win over the doubtful, you would be harsh and severe with tried and faithful friends, and bear hard on those who had long been firm and unwavering in your service. That sister always had an apology, a palliation, a favorable construction, for every complaint alleged against you ; and when at last she was summoned to go the way of all the earth, she called for her two surviving sons, she stretched out to each one of her withered hands, and while they wept upon it, and kissed it, now growing cold in death, she charged them to be faithful to their God, true to their country, and to love and cherish her brother, to the end of life. “ If perplexed and distracted with public cares,” said she, “ your uncle is sometimes harsh, sometimes

unreasonable, and sometimes does you wrong, think of me; be patient, be true and faithful; and stand as pillars of his throne, till you are called to the grave. Never hesitate to encounter any danger to yourselves; never shrink from any risk on your own part, that is necessary to sustain his kingdom." Such, my lord, was her dying charge, and she breathed out her soul in a prayer to God, that your kingdom might be a blessing, and that your name might go with everlasting honors to succeeding generations. The lessons of that mother have been the law of my life. They have been written in my heart as with the point of a diamond. I will not ask you, my lord, where, when, and how, the valiant Asahel laid down his life. I will not ask, what have been the value to you of the services of Abishai. I ask you to look on this head, now covered with gray hairs. It is the head of one who entered your service before there was down upon his chin. Your honor and the interest of your kingdom have been the guiding star of my life, next, I mean, to the duty I owe to my Creator.

"As for Absalom, I loved him. You know I loved him. When he had fled from the land of Israel, because of your wrath, for slaying his brother Amnon, and all were afraid to speak a word in his favor, I interceded for him until you were graciously pleased to grant my petition, and permit his return. I went myself to Geshur after him, and brought him to Jerusalem. You refused to see his face for two full years. Absalom was in distress: he sent for me to intercede for him, and I went to you again, and besought you to receive him into favor, and again you were graciously pleased to grant my request. I loved Absalom, and was willing

to do for him all that I could, consistently with your honor and the interest of your kingdom.

“ ‘ When Ahimaaz first came with the news of his rebellion at Hebron, I asked leave of you to march and disperse his followers at once. It might then have been done, and Absalom might have been spared. But when he came to Jerusalem, and in his first public act insulted and dishonored your name and house in the most outrageous and unpardonable manner, — when he publicly polluted and debauched your family in the sight of all Israel, — I then saw that he must die, or your throne must go down forever. When, not contented with the throne, palace, and kingdom, he pursued you to take your life, I considered him doomed to death by the law of God, which ordains that the rebellious son shall die. My lord, all thought, all hope, that Absalom could have lived after the crimes he had committed, is an empty, vain delusion, imposed on your fine understanding by parental fondness. I knew Absalom too well. His spirit was too high. After the insults, injuries, and outrages he had perpetrated toward you, your presence would have been a hell to him: had he been constrained to live, and you on the throne, he would have suffered the agony of a thousand deaths. Again, this rebellion was too general to be quelled by any thing short of the death of their leader; nine tenths of the princes of Judah had gone with Absalom; four fifths of all the tribes west of Jordan were involved. These princes were too proud, and too powerful, and their followers too numerous, to return to their allegiance if their leader had survived, because of the loss of a single battle. They would have rallied and fought again. Twenty

thousand men have died to-day, and twenty thousand must have died another day ; and still Absalom, his own circumstances being desperate, would have rallied them again ; the country would have been exhausted by a protracted and ruinous civil war, until the glory of Israel would have fallen an easy prey into the hands of some heathen foe. The necessity was imperative ; Absalom must die. For his death, my lord, I alone am responsible. Ittai advised to defeat his army, and let him escape. Abishai advised to take him captive, and deliver him to you. But I knew your parental fondness would set him at liberty in one hour, and all the sad results I have mentioned would ensue. I offered ten shekels of silver and a girdle to the man who would smite him, and save your throne ; but a thousand shekels of silver would have been no inducement ; for while every sane man in Israel saw that if your throne was saved, Absalom must die, yet as all knew it would bring your displeasure and certain destruction on the man who did the deed, all stood aghast. The battle in the right wing of the army was well nigh lost, for the Gittites feared your wrath, and spared Absalom, while he rallied the Danites, and charged on the faithful Ittai, and rallied and charged again, till God's providence interposed. His mule took fright, and fled and hanged him in an oak. But I say nothing of the injury he sustained when hung in the oak. I say nothing of the probability that he could not have lived. I say that I saw he must die, to save your kingdom ; and when all others shrunk from the deed, I thought of my mother's dying charge, that " I must risk every thing for your good " — and I slew him with my own hand ; though I saw that it would

bring on me the wrath of the king I honored, and the uncle I loved, and would most likely cost me my life.

“ ‘Now, my lord,’ said Joab, ‘dishonor me, banish me; do what seemeth good to you with me: but be yourself once more; arouse! and save the kingdom over which God has made you overseer.

“ ‘Call up your religion to help you in this hour of trial. You have often led in our devotions while we have sung that beautiful psalm, with the chorus — “His mercy endureth forever.” In that sublime psalm, we sing that it was *mercy* to Israel that smote the first-born in Egypt; *mercy* to Israel that overthrew Pharaoh and his host at the Red Sea; *mercy* to Israel that slew Sihon, king of the Ammonites, and Og, the king of Bashan. Think of the overthrow of those who rose up in this rebellion against you in the same light, for it was equally necessary to the prosperity and salvation of Israel. Call up your religion to help you, and be once more the king of that people Jehovah hath called by his own name.

“ ‘The army at the gate is now on the verge of mutiny. After fighting with desperate bravery against twenty to one, and saving your kingdom and your life, and the lives of your family, it appears to them as if you have no regard for either princes or servants, who are laboring to vindicate your own crown. You act as if you loved your enemies and hated your friends. Your servants, so faithful and true, are mortified and ashamed, that they meet with blame and censure, where they have merited praise and the highest commendation. It looks to them as if, had Absalom lived, and all your own servants been slain, you had been

well pleased. Now, therefore, arise, go forth, and speak comfortably unto thy servants; for I swear by the Lord, if thou go not forth, there will not tarry one with thee this night, and that will be worse unto thee than all the evil that befell thee from thy youth until now.'

"This powerful address bowed the spirit of David, as the strong breath of heaven bows the stately cedar on the brow of Lebanon. By the touching references to his departed sister, the amiable, the talented, the enthusiastic Zeruah, early associations were called up, and his tears turned into a new channel. The convincing argument, in reference to Absalom, showed that his death was expedient, necessary, unavoidable; while the danger of instant mutiny and revolt in the army rung upon his soul, like a sudden peal of thunder. He sprung to his feet. 'Joab, I will go.'

"'To the gate, then, my lord, without a moment's delay.'

"Joab hastened to the army, and found it in a tempest of wild confusion. Stung with disappointment, blamed and censured after having jeopardized their lives for the king, insubordination, noise, tumult, and loud threats were breaking out in all quarters. Ahimaaz, Jonathan, and Ittai had tried to gain their attention to some soothing and tranquillizing address; but they were impatient, insulted, outraged, and refused to hear; while Abishai stood aloof, leaning on his sword, surveying this turbulent sea of boisterous indignation, with an eye of courageous despair.

"The voice of their old commander came like oil over these tumultuous waves.

“ ‘Soldiers! you must allow the wounded heart to bleed. The king has been crushed with sorrow for the death of his son. Many of you have sons; most of you have brothers; and you have all had fathers. You must allow the wounded heart to bleed. But you are wanted now. Fall into ranks. The king is at the gate, anxious to welcome, and thank, and bless the men, who this day, by their fidelity and valor, have saved his life and his kingdom.

“ ‘Ittai! with your brave Gittites, lead the way.

“ ‘Abishai! take the command of the Cherethites and Pelethites, and life-guards!

“ ‘Volunteers! Sons of Manasseh! Sons of Gad! follow in your order.’

“ ‘The power of discipline prevailed; the soldiers are again in their ranks, and the army again in motion. David stood in the gate, and the head of the column of the Gittites drew near.

“ ‘Ittai,’ said the king, ‘Jehovah bless thee, in thy fidelity and truth! and Jehovah bless thy brethren with thee! We became acquainted first in a land of strangers. You came from that land for the great name of the God of Israel. The God of Israel be with you, and keep you, and be to you an everlasting blessing.’ The Gittites bowed their heads, melted into tears, and passed on.

“ ‘Next came Abishai, at the head of his company.

“ ‘Son of my dear, departed sister,’ said the king, ‘true and unconquered ever! Well did the matchless Zeruah train and prepare you to be the pillar and defender of Israel’s throne.

“ ‘Cherethites! Pelethites! long tried and faithful

friends; always at hand in the trying hour, and always victorious in the contested field.

“‘Life-guards! the Lord bless you and smile upon you. We have gone to the house of God in company, and taken sweet counsel together.’

“When the men of Manasseh drew near, — ‘Sons of the illustrious Joseph,’ said the king: ‘his bow abode in strength, and his arms were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob. The blessing of the God of thy father be upon thee, unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. They shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separated from his brethren.

“‘Valiant sons of Gad! strong as lions, and swift as the roes upon the mountains, well might the great patriarch Jacob say of your father, Gad, a troop shall overcome him, but he shall overcome at the last.’

“‘Twelve cheers to the king!’ shouted the powerful voice of Joab, when the last of the rear-guard had entered the city. ‘From the twelve tribes of Israel, twelve cheers to King David!’ ‘For Reuben!’ cried Ahimaaz, standing at the head of the army, with the silver trumpet in his hand. And prince and stripling, priest and warrior, swelled the animated shout, —

“‘Long live King David!’

“‘For Simeon!’ cried Ahimaaz.

“And another shout made wall and pavement ring.

“‘For Levi!’ ‘For Judah!’ ‘For Issachar!’ ‘For Zebulon!’ ‘For Dan!’ ‘For Naphtali!’ ‘For Gad!’ ‘For Asher!’ ‘For Joseph!’ ‘For Benjamin!’

“For each tribe, as called by Ahimaaz, ten thousand voices, like the waves of the rolling ocean, sent up the

loud acclamation, 'Long live King David!' while banners waved, trumpets sounded, and from window, door, house-top, and city wall, white scarfs and flags were thrown upon the breeze. Hands clapped, harps, tabrets, and timbrels played, and all the people shouted for joy.

"All now in the city was tranquillity and gladness. The soldiers were not only satisfied, but delighted, and flattered with the attentions and commendations of the king. They were dismissed for the evening, to visit and interchange salutations with their friends. Sons, brothers, fathers, and husbands, returned to the families to which they belonged. Those, I mean, who resided in the neighborhood, and those, of whom there were many, whose families had followed them to Mahanaim.

"The loss in David's army had been so small that few causes of grief remained. There was that reaction of the mind, that buoyancy of spirit, that springing up of all the cheerful and glad emotions of the heart, that ensue when some dreaded and dreadful calamity is past and gone. The night had been dark, the clouds black, and the storm loud; flash succeeded flash, peal answered peal, and the crash of contending elements was frightful. But now the darkness had vanished. The clouds were fled, and the storm was over. The morning light was abroad. The sun had risen, and blessed the earth with clear shining after rain. The guardian angel of the season had passed over the face of nature, and had left her 'robe on the trees, and her breath on the gale.' Age leaned upon its staff, and blessed the Lord. Children clapped their little hands, and sung hosannas."

CHAPTER XXVI.

SCENES AT MAHANAIM.

“IN the apartment assigned to Phinehas the Levite,” continued Belial, “Jonathan, Ahimaaz, Tamar, and a few other friends were seated at a table, well covered with excellent food. They were in the midst of a lively conversation, when a servant at the door announced a stranger, who wished to speak to Ahimaaz.

“ ‘Tell him to come in,’ said Phinehas.

“ ‘He declines,’ said the servant, ‘and wishes to see Ahimaaz alone.’

“ ‘Who can he be?’ said Ahimaaz, rising and going to the door; when, behold, his old acquaintance, the Kenite, stood before him.

“ ‘What, Ira, is it you?’

“ ‘Yes, I wanted to ask you a question.’

“ ‘What is it?’ said Ahimaaz.

“ ‘Would you hurt Ben Huppim now, if it were in your power?’ asked Ira.

“ ‘Why, you foolish boy,’ said Ahimaaz, ‘did you call me up from my dinner to ask me such a question as that?’

“ ‘But I want you to answer me: would you hurt him now, if he were in your power?’

“ ‘Why, no, certainly no,’ said Ahimaaz; ‘the war is over now; we would not hurt any one.’

“‘But you know,’ said Ira, ‘it was he that pursued you the other night from Enrogel to Bahurim, and would have killed you if he could.’

“‘That was in war time,’ said Ahimaaz; ‘but now we must forget and forgive.’

“‘I am glad of that,’ said the Kenite, ‘for he is now lying wounded on the battle-field.’

“‘Are you sure of that?’ asked Ahimaaz.

“‘O, yes,’ said the lad; ‘for as soon as you started for the city, I thought I would go over the field where they had been fighting, and see if I should know any that were killed. I went to the place where Absalom commanded, and where they fought so long. There were many dead and many wounded. And there was Ben Huppim, leaning against a log, severely injured. He wanted water very much. So I took his helmet and brought him some; and I told him I thought you would befriend him if you knew his condition. And he requested me to come and ask you.’

“‘Come, Jonathan,’ said Ahimaaz, entering the room, ‘we must go to the assistance of an old friend.’

“‘Who?’ said Jonathan.

“‘Ben Huppim, the Danite captain, who escorted us in such style to Bahurim, the other night. He is out on the battle-field, wounded.’

“‘Badly?’ asked Jonathan.

“‘He is crippled,’ said Ahimaaz, ‘and he wants our help.’

“‘He shall have it,’ said Jonathan, ‘without delay. Phinehas, will not you go along?’

“‘Willingly,’ said Phinehas: ‘to assist the distressed is one of the great duties of life.’

“ A skilful physician was called, and a suitable litter provided, and the party set out under the guidance of Ira the Kenite, who, greatly pleased with the success of his mission, edified them with his observations and opinions, most of the way across the plain. ‘ I asked Ben Huppim,’ said he, ‘ how he had the mishap to get crippled. He told me that he was in the thickest of the battle, fighting hand to hand with the strong and valiant Gittites. Absalom was with the Danites, encouraging them with all his might. Three times, he said, the Gittites in solid column had charged, and broken through the ranks of Dan ; and three times, at the call of Absalom, they had rallied and renewed the fight. Then Absalom’s mule began to rear and plunge, and throw down its head, and he was afraid the young king would be thrown to the ground. So he, with many others, ran to render him what assistance they could ; when, in the struggle and confusion, he received a blow, he knows not from whom, by which he was disabled. And then the mule dashed off with uncontrolled fury, bearing Absalom along. Finding that he was badly disabled, the captain threw himself under the large trunk of a fallen tree that was there in the wood, and both armies, pursuers and pursued, passed by him and over him, but he received no further injury. But,’ said Ira, ‘ Ben Huppim did not know that Absalom was dead, till I told him. He knew only that the battle was lost. But when I told him how Absalom was hanged in the oak, and run through with the darts of Joab, and was dead, he seemed much distressed, and sighed and moaned deeply.’

“ The narrative of the Kenite had run on thus far

without interruption. But now the party had reached the fatal field, and before them were the sad memorials of the ravages of war. They first came to the point where Joab had routed the hosts of Judah. The ground was literally covered with shields and helmets cleft in twain, pierced breastplates, broken swords, spears shivered, or cut asunder, mingled with arms, legs, heads, and headless bodies, and other mangled remains of those who had fallen ; while all the ground was red and slippery with blood and gore.

“ Further on were seen the daughters of Judah, who had followed their friends to this dreadful field. There was seen the tender mother, holding up the head of her expiring son, and giving her last benediction. There was heard the wail of the desolate wife, by the cold body that was once her husband. Here was the dutiful daughter, bestirring herself to minister to the wants and soothe the sorrows of a wounded father. And there was the affectionate sister, searching and examining among the carved and bloody faces of the dead, laboring to identify the features of a brother, who had gone to the battle, but had not returned. The plaints, shrieks, and loud laments of these were mingled with the agonizing groan of the neglected stranger, in whose behalf no friend appeared, and the startling howl of the lone dog, whose master had been lost in the confusion of that frightful day, while wolves and vultures were seen gathering round.

“ ‘ What a desolating scourge is war, and how manifold are its horrors ! ’ exclaimed Jonathan, surveying the mournful scenes around him.

“ ‘There is Ben Huppim !’ said Ira the Kenite, pointing to the object of their search.

“ ‘Captain !’ said Ahimaaz, ‘we sympathize with you in your affliction, and are come to administer what assistance and comfort we can.’

“ ‘This is Ahimaaz,’ said Ira, ‘and this is Jonathan, and that man is Phinehas the Levite, of Bahurim.’

“ ‘I’m sorry,’ said the captain, dropping his eyes to the ground, ‘to give trouble to persons I have used so ill.’

“ ‘Not a word of that,’ said Ahimaaz ; ‘you thought you were in your duty, and we know how to respect fidelity and worth, even in a mistaken cause. Is your wound severe ?’

“ ‘Very painful,’ said the captain, ‘though I think if it were carefully dressed, I may hope for a speedy recovery.’

“ ‘We have brought a skilful physician, who will dress and bandage the wound,’ said Ahimaaz ; ‘but first, here is a little fresh water, and a little light food. When your wound is properly attended to, we will bear you to a friend’s house in the city.’

“ ‘You are very kind,’ said the captain, his utterance much affected by strong emotions of gratitude ; ‘may you ever have kind friends in the time of trouble, and far distant be the day when that time shall come.’

“The wound was speedily and skilfully dressed, and the captain was borne to the city. On their way they were delighted to meet company after company going out to the battle-ground to administer relief to the sufferers.

“After reaching the house, the captain experienced much abatement of his pain, and much of the cheerfulness and good humor of the soldier began to appear.

“The wife of Phinehas was all attention and kindness; but there was something in her manner, and a propensity to smile in her countenance, which made it evident that her thoughts were with the scenes of former days. Ben Huppim saw it, and feeling now perfectly at home, entered fully into the spirit of the occasion.

“Phinehas, also, could not resist the temptation to broach the subject of their former acquaintance, and yet he was anxious to do it with all possible delicacy and propriety.

“‘Captain,’ said he, ‘we leave this place for Bahurim, in a day or two.’

“‘I am sorry for that,’ said Ben Huppim; ‘I am so much at home already in your family.’

“‘Merari, the owner of this house,’ said Phinehas, ‘is an excellent man, and will take pleasure in giving you all proper attention.’

“‘Yet I regret to change my nurses,’ said the captain.

“‘Why so?’ asked Phinehas.

“‘Because,’ said the captain, ‘you improve greatly on acquaintance.’

“‘How will you make that appear?’ asked Phinehas.

“‘My first reception at your house,’ said the captain, ‘was considerably on the north side of welcome.’

“‘Our accommodations,’ said Phinehas, ‘were partly taken up, before your arrival, by other visitors.’

“‘I suspected as much,’ said Ben Huppim.

“ ‘You must come to see us again,’ said Phinehas ; ‘I hope we shall be prepared to treat you better.’

“ ‘I shall be happy to accept your invitation,’ said the captain. ‘There is something in your style of housekeeping that I wish to understand.’

“ ‘Ah,’ said Phinehas, ‘what can that be?’

“ ‘I wish to learn whether you have a well about your house, for I saw none.’

“ ‘An excellent well,’ said Phinehas, ‘that answers many valuable purposes.’

“ ‘You are very careful strangers shall not see it.’

“ ‘Only on particular occasions,’ said Phinehas.

“ ‘And then,’ said the captain, ‘I wish to learn why it is that your good wife suns her meal after sundown.’ Then, fixing his eyes on the wife, said he, ‘Just to think, what a face a woman can put on!’

“ ‘Why, captain,’ said the woman, coloring and laughing, ‘I would have done the same thing for you, if your life had been in danger.’

“ ‘I believe it,’ said the captain ; ‘and I like those who are true to their friends. But it caps the climax of all the tricks that ever were played off on Captain Ben Huppim!’

“ We must now leave this company to improve their acquaintance, in order to notice three respectable-looking persons, who had just entered the city, and were making their way to the apartments of King David.

“ These were no other than Barzillai the Gileadite, Machir of Lodebar, and the young Ammonite prince. David received them with the warmest cordiality, and the strongest expressions of gratitude and lasting obligations. ‘You have fully illustrated,’ said the king,

‘the good old maxim, “A friend in need, is a friend indeed.”’

“They, on their part, congratulated the king on the overthrow of the insurgents, and the vindication of his right to the crown and kingdom; averring that what they had done, in supplying the wants of his army, was only their duty, and had been to them a source of the highest gratification.

“‘My servants,’ said Barzillai, ‘have just arrived with another herd of beeves. Some choice sheep, also, have been brought along — sheep of the breed of Bashan, with other supplies. And the good mother at home has sent to yourself a few baskets of her own preparing. Women, you know, have their own notions about cookery.’

“The Ammonite also informed the king, that his hunters had brought in a good supply of venison, ‘which,’ said he, ‘may now be growing scarce in the highly cultivated country round about Jerusalem; a supply also of other articles, which I hope may be acceptable to the least of the servants of my lord.’ For with great delicacy and respect, he would politely intimate, that nothing which he could furnish was worthy of the acceptance of the king himself.

“Machir, of Lodebar, also sustained his part nobly, and was not a whit behind his two friends in the munificence of his contributions.

“During the time that Barzillai and the Ammonite were making their communications to David, Machir, of Lodebar, had kept somewhat back, and seemed rather to conceal his countenance from the king. But as soon as they came to a pause, he stepped forward

and stood erect right in front of King David. He was a man of fine figure and stupendous frame ; and there was that in his manner and movements which at once made it plain, that a portion of his life, at least, had been spent in the tented field, and in the society of military men.

“ ‘ You have forgotten me, my lord,’ said he, evidently under the influence of strong feeling.

“ ‘ I should know that voice,’ said David, fixing his eyes with much earnestness on the chief ; ‘ and that face, too, was certainly once familiar. But time and trouble have impaired my memory, that I cannot call names as formerly.’

“ ‘ Do you remember,’ said the chief, ‘ on the morning you went forth against Goliath, who it was that walked with you as far as the brook, from which you took the five smooth stones, and then only turned back at your earnest request ? ’

“ David sprung to his feet, in ecstasy, exclaiming, ‘ Machir ! the valiant armor-bearer of my early friend Jonathan ! ’ and he threw himself forward on the neck of the chief with strongly excited feeling. Machir, Barzillai, and even the Ammonite, shared deeply in the sympathies of the occasion.

“ ‘ I could not have thought,’ said David, after his emotions began to subside, ‘ that I should ever have had any difficulty in naming you at first sight.’

“ ‘ My lord,’ said Machir, ‘ great changes have come over me, as well as yourself, since our last meeting.’

“ ‘ But I knew you so well,’ said the king ; ‘ I was so often with you at the house of Jonathan, as well as in the army, and then you were with him when he

came to me in the wilderness of Ziph, in the darkest period of my persecutions. But why have you abandoned public life ?’

“ ‘My lord,’ said Machir, ‘you know how I was honored by the confidence and friendship of that noble and wonderful man, who was once the favorite of all Israel. When I saw him fall, and saw his family broken and desolate, the impression on my mind was so deep, of the vanity of earthly fame and earthly prospects, that I resolved to seek a better and more enduring portion. I retired to private life, and set my heart on that hope that is beyond the grave.’

“ ‘A wise decision !’ exclaimed David. ‘Then fixing his eyes on Machir, he proceeded, ‘How strongly you remind me of Jonathan, my early friend !’

“ ‘His attachment to you, my lord, was marvellous,’ said Machir. ‘After you had fled to the court of Achish, king of Gath, he often expressed his great anxiety for your welfare. Reports were circulated, that you had turned away from the worship of Jehovah, and adopted the religion of Dagon. Jonathan promptly pronounced them base falsehoods. But when he knew that you were made commander of the life-guards of Achish, and that he was marching against Israel, he expressed his fears lest you should be brought into a snare. I remember he spoke with much feeling on this subject the morning before the battle of Mount Gilboa.’

“ ‘Gilboa !’ echoed David. ‘So then you were with Jonathan on that memorable day.’

“ ‘Yes,’ said Machir; ‘on Mount Gilboa I was with Jonathan, in his last battle-field. And sad is the remembrance of that field to this day.’

“ ‘I was long anxious,’ said David, ‘to know the particulars of Jonathan’s death, but none could tell me. I should be glad to hear a statement from you.’

“ ‘At the approach of the battle,’ said Machir, ‘King Saul was much dejected. His usual bravery and confident patriotism appeared to have forsaken him. The dejection of the king seemed to affect the whole army; but yet many brave and renowned warriors were in arms for the defence of their country. The arrangement of the army was this. The right wing was commanded by King Saul in person. The left wing was led by Abner, and the centre was commanded by Jonathan. His reputation was so great, and the hold he had on the affections of the people so strong, that a vast number of veteran warriors had identified themselves with this division of the army. The Philistine host came on in three columns towards the lines of Israel. In front of Saul appeared the giant Ishbi-benob, the son of Goliath of Gath, and by his side was the giant Saph, almost his equal in stature and strength. In front of Abner appeared the giant Lahmi, the brother of Goliath, and another son of the giant equally formidable. Both wings of our army gave back, and fled at the first assault. As soon as this was known to Jonathan, he made a brief and burning address to the warriors around him, then charged with desperate bravery on the centre of the Philistine host; he carried all before him, and for a time, it seemed as if victory might yet declare for Israel; but in the midst of his exertions and wonderful deeds of valor, his armor became somewhat deranged; an arrow from the foe smote him on the temple, and he dropped dead on the

battle-field. The hope of Israel fell with him, and instantly all our forces turned and fled.'

" 'How mysterious and wonderful are the ways of God!' said David. 'His counsels are past finding out.'

" 'I have long wished an opportunity, my lord,' said Machir, 'to express to you my gratitude for your kind treatment of my adopted son, as I may call him, Mephibosheth.'

" 'Ah, yes,' said David, 'I remember now, it was in your house that Mephibosheth was found when I sent to have him brought to Jerusalem, that I might show him kindness for his father Jonathan's sake.'

" 'Yes,' said Machir; 'after the fatal battle of Mount Gilboa, the wife of Jonathan, with her son and nurse, in terror of the Philistines, fled to the country east of Jordan, and came to my dwelling, a forlorn, broken-hearted widow. In the hurry and confusion of their flight over the rocks, the nurse suffered the child to fall; he was sorely crippled, and has ever since been lame on both his feet.'

" 'I am happy to know,' said David, 'that the desolate and bereaved mother and child found a home, so warm and welcome, in your house. Having been Jonathan's armor-bearer so long, when his name was the pride and the joy of Israel, you would know how to be kind to the afflicted family of so rare and excellent a man.'

" 'Ah,' said Machir, 'if kindness could have availed to soothe her sorrows—but the death of her noble husband inflicted a wound upon her heart that was absolutely incurable.'

" 'Sad change,' said David; 'many a happy hour have I spent under their roof; when no family in Israel-

had prospects so promising and so brilliant. O Jonathan we shall not look upon thy like again !’

“ ‘I thought,’ said Machir, ‘that the sorrow of her widowed heart had reached its utmost height, when she learned of a surety that her husband was dead ; but when, shortly afterwards, tidings came that the Philistines had hung up the bodies of Saul and Jonathan by the wall of Bethshan, that they might be publicly disgraced, and devoured by birds of prey, the tumult of her grief was such that it seemed she could not live. I resolved to venture my life, in order to alleviate her anguish. I went to Jabesh-gilead. I reminded them of what Saul and Jonathan had done for them in the day of their distress. Fifty of their valiant men volunteered to go with me. We crossed Jordan in the night, went to Bethshan, and took down the bodies. The good providence of Jehovah favored us in our hazardous undertaking, for none of the enemy interrupted us. It seemed as if a deep sleep from God had fallen upon them. We brought the bodies of Saul and Jonathan over Jordan to Jabesh, and burned incense over them, and then buried them under a tree at Jabesh, and fasted and mourned seven days.’

“ ‘I hope your kind attentions to the dead afforded some comfort to the distressed widow.’

“ ‘So far, my lord,’ answered Machir, ‘as a broken, and desolate heart can receive comfort or consolation ; but she was sinking under a load of sorrows too heavy to be borne. It was soon evident that the foundations of life were giving way ; that her tears could not be dried, and that she would not long remain behind her beloved Jonathan. She spoke of him almost continually, when

she spoke at all. Earth seemed to have lost all its interest to her, and her thoughts and hopes were entirely directed to that future world, where the righteous shall live again, where friends shall meet, and the troubles and woes that surround us here shall be forever unknown.'

" 'Ah, Machir, Machir,' exclaimed David, warmly grasping his hand, 'that is a glorious hope; we shall awake in the likeness of our God, and then these hearts will ache no more. Ah, yes, then we shall be satisfied, perfectly and forever satisfied.'

" 'Of that glorious hope,' said Machir, 'her soul was full, until the hour when she breathed out her life; and then I had her body conveyed and buried by the grave of Jonathan, to slumber there till the resurrection of the just.'

" 'They shall be had in everlasting remembrance,' said David, wiping away the tears that flowed freely from his eyes.

" 'There is one circumstance,' said Machir, 'that I must not omit, for I know it will interest you. You have not forgotten the fondness of Jonathan's wife for poetry and music. Often, while I was his armor-bearer, have I witnessed the delight and animation with which she would sing those beautiful psalms you had composed to the praise of God.'

" 'O, I shall remember it while I live,' said David. 'She herself composed a number of sweet odes on the same subject, in the days of their prosperity.'

" 'You will also remember,' said Machir, 'that all their children, except Mephibosheth, died when young.'

" 'Ah, yes,' said David, 'I have before my vision

now the cave and that little range of white pillars, that Jonathan set up near their peaceful and lovely home in the plain of Gibeah.'

" 'Well,' said Machir, 'I was going to mention that a few weeks before she died, she composed a sweet little dirge on the theme of her family bereavements; for the death of her husband seemed to open again the wounds given by all her earlier afflictions, and cause them to bleed afresh. She would sing it at early dawn, and at the close of day.'

" 'At the dawn?' asked David.

" 'Yes,' said Machir; 'the freshness and music of the morning seemed but to give a new impulse to the tide of her sorrows.'

" 'I should be greatly gratified,' said David, 'to hear those lines. Can you repeat them?'

" 'Repeat them!' said Machir. 'They are engraven, as with the point of a diamond, on the tablets of my memory. They ran thus:—

SONG OF THE WIFE OF JONATHAN.

*

"How earthly flowers will fade!
 How earthly hopes prove vain!
 And, O, that promise, how divine,
 'That friends shall meet again'!

IL

"My ruined house and home,
 It thrills my heart with pain;
 Ah, broken, scattered family!
 Shall we not meet again?

III.

"On sad Gilboa's height
 Brave Jonathan was slain ; —
 Break not, my heart ; O trust in God ;
 We'll surely meet again.

IV.

"My sweet and lovely babes,
 Low buried in the plain,
 Though lonesome now and desolate,
 I'll meet you all again.

V.

"In that blest world above,
 Redeemed from every stain,
 We'll be a family with God :
 O, yes, we'll meet again."

" ' Sweet and mournful,' said Barzillai the Gileadite, turning to the king. ' That is, indeed, a blessed hope, "that friends shall meet again."'

" ' A blessed hope,' said David, ' and we realize it the more, the farther we advance in the journey of life.'

" ' True,' answered Barzillai ; ' I find, as I grow older, that those passages in the sacred books become exceedingly precious, which declare that the ancient saints, at death, "were gathered to their people." Of Abraham, it is said, "he was gathered to his people." Of Isaac, of Jacob, and others, they "were gathered to their people." Now, at the age of fourscore, my early friends almost entirely gone, I stand like the lone tree, where the whirlwind has prostrated all around it. But I cherish that blessed hope, "that friends shall meet again," and I shall be gathered to my people.'

" ' My lord,' said Machir of Lodebar, addressing the king, ' there is yet one subject I should like to mention to you, though I have been on the point of waiving it.'

“‘I shall be much pleased to hear you,’ answered David.

“‘You know,’ continued Machir, ‘that the church believes that many of the patriarchs and ancient saints were types or figures of One that is to come. When we read the inspired history of Adam, of Abraham, of Joseph, we have the impression on our mind, a greater than Adam, a greater than Abraham, a greater than Joseph, is here. Moses said the Messiah should be “a prophet like unto him.”’

“‘True, most true,’ rejoined David, with kindling animation in view of this subject, ‘they were types and figures of Him on whom all our hopes are centred.’

“‘Is not the providence of God, now,’ said Machir, ‘as wise and as rich with instruction as it was in the day when Abraham, Joseph, and Moses lived?’

“‘Beyond all doubt,’ answered David. ‘But to what does your question tend?’

“‘There are a number of facts in the life and character of Jonathan,’ said Machir, ‘on which I have meditated for many years, and I think I have been taught by the Spirit of God, that they are full of typical meaning and instruction.’*

“‘I shall rejoice exceedingly to hear you give specifications,’ said David. ‘I have long regarded Jonathan,

* The author is fully aware that some of the expressions in this conversation belong rather to the times of New Testament saints, than to those under the old dispensation. But the friendship of Jonathan and David affords a beautiful illustration of the affection existing between the great Son of David and his spiritual brethren. The train of thought has interested the author, and may interest others; while it is not for us to determine how clearly the Messiah was seen by the Old Testament saints.

in the amiableness of his character, as having had few equals in the history of Adam's race.'

" 'First, then,' said Machir, 'his wonderful love to you: so strong, so disinterested, so unwavering, and lasting as his life. Is he not in this a type of One who has loved us with a love "strong as death," — a love unchanging, a self-sacrificing love, a love that shall endure while divinity itself endures?'

" 'There is in the thought,' said David, 'much force, beauty, and sweetness. Go on.'

" 'Again,' said Machir, 'Jonathan confessed his friendship for you before the king, his father, and the assembled armies of Israel. Was he not in this the figure of One who will confess our names before the Great King and the armies of heaven?'

" 'Blessed, blessed hope!' ejaculated David. 'Go on.'

" 'Jonathan,' said Machir, 'arrayed you in that beautiful garment that he wore as heir to the crown. Was he not a type of One who is heir of all things, and who clothes us in a spotless robe — One who is "the Lord our righteousness"?''

" 'A truth sublime and glorious!' exclaimed David. 'What more?'

" 'Jonathan,' said Machir, 'armed you with his armor, gave you his sword, his girdle, and his bow. Should it not remind us of One who, in the spiritual warfare, teaches our hands to war and our fingers to fight?'

" David sprang to his feet, and, with lifted hands and eyes, exclaimed, 'Blessed be the Lord, my strength, who so richly instructs us by his spirit, his word, and his providence.' Then turning to Machir, 'Proceed, my friend, proceed.'

“‘You will remember,’ said Machir, ‘that Jonathan, in order to clothe and arm you, stripped himself. There is a greater than Jonathan, whose “form and comeliness is marred” for our sakes; for us he became “a man of sorrows,” stripped of his heavenly robe.’

“At this the king was much agitated; but he remained silent, and Machir continued.

“‘Jonathan interceded before the king, his father, in your behalf. A greater than Jonathan maketh intercession for us before the Great King.

“‘Jonathan took you into covenant union with himself; a covenant most solemnly ratified, and confirmed with an oath; a covenant that never was violated. A greater than Jonathan takes us into an everlasting covenant with himself, a covenant well ordered in all things and sure.

“‘Once more, my lord,’ said Machir: ‘Jonathan, in the darkest period of your trials, when dangers thickened around, visited you in the wilderness of Ziph, and spake words of encouragement and consolation. It should remind us of that Friend who sticketh closer than a brother, who comforts us even in the darkest hour, and even walks with us through the valley of the shadow of death. And, finally,

“‘Jonathan promised you a kingdom, — a kingdom over all the tribes of Israel. Was he not a type of Him who will make us kings and priests unto God, and who will bestow on us a kingdom, — a kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world?’

“The king had continued standing until Machir closed his remarks, engrossed by the interest of the subject. He then, with much solemnity, observed, —

“‘My obligations to him who hath redeemed my soul,

grow clearer and stronger the more I learn of his ways. I was long anxious to discharge the debt of gratitude which I owed to Jonathan: what shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?’

“‘I confessed my obligations to Jonathan publicly, before my whole kingdom. Yes, and I will confess and honor my Redeemer before the world. I will speak of his testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.

“‘I composed and sung beautiful stanzas in honor of Jonathan, and I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live, I will praise my God while I have any being.

“‘I showed kindness to Mephibosheth for his father Jonathan’s sake, and I will show kindness to the children of my Redeemer, for the love I owe to him.’

“The conversation of David and his three friends now turned on other topics, and assumed a more lively character. The king now took particular notice of the Ammonite prince, and mentioned the kind attentions he had received from Nahash, his father, during the time he was hunted and pursued by the jealousy of Saul. The Ammonite, in return, with much politeness and propriety, rehearsed the deep and abiding interest his father had taken in David’s welfare. ‘I was a small lad at the time,’ said he; ‘yet well do I remember how often the severity and unreasonableness of my lord’s persecutions were the theme of conversation in my father’s house, and also the joy that inspired the whole family circle, when we learned that those persecutions were ended, and that my lord had come to the throne.’

“The afternoon passed away in agreeable and varied conversation; but we must leave them, to notice another class of persons who demand our attention.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE RETURN TO JERUSALEM.

“IN a few days after the overthrow of Absalom, Phinehas the Levite departed from Mahanaim on his return to Bahurim. Tamar returned with the family, and they were accompanied by Ahimaaz and Jonathan, whom King David had sent with some important message to their fathers, Zadok and Abiathar.

“They had crossed Jordan in safety, and were rejoicing in the prospect of reaching their beloved home, when Phinehas remarked to Jonathan, ‘Our neighbor Shimei is now, no doubt, in great perplexity.’

“‘Very likely,’ answered Jonathan.

“‘I learn,’ said Phinehas, ‘that he went to Absalom, and told him how he had cursed David, and how he had discovered where you and Ahimaaz were hid at Bahurim, and urged Absalom to promote him to some important office.’

“‘And how did he succeed?’ asked Jonathan.

“‘But indifferently,’ said Phinehas. ‘Absalom knew something of his history, and spoke of Michal deceiving him with the image, and Saul losing the skirt of his robe, while Shimei was guarding him, and some other mishaps in his early life; and presently the news was brought that Ahithophel had despaired of their cause,

and had hanged himself. This alarmed Shimei, and he drew off. He thought, no doubt, that if there was any danger of Absalom's failure, he had gone too far already. Shimei would gladly know whether summer or winter is coming, before he decides what coat he will put on. But he must be in great perplexity now.'

"With such conversation the party hied along till the buildings of Bahurim rose in view.

"Frightful rumors of the vengeance which the king, now restored, would inflict on the authors of the disgrace and the calamity which had befallen the country, had been spreading and increasing from day to day. Never did Fame show off her diversified talents on a larger scale than now. Appalling reports of the hot treasures of royal wrath, that were reserved and ready for the leading actors in this wide-spread mischief, had come on the wings of every breeze. And they multiplied and magnified, and gathered gloominess in their progress. The fears of Shimei told him that this black tempest must discharge its principal fury on his devoted head. He was of the family of Saul; and busy fame had not omitted to circulate that the storm of the rebellion, that burst so suddenly on the land, had originated in a secret influence exerted from that quarter. Shimei himself had publicly declared more bitterness against David than any man alive. And worse still, he was right on the road along which the king would return. So he must fall into the lion's mouth in the first moments of his devouring fury. Could he have been kept out of sight till public vengeance was glutted and gorged with the blood of others, there might be more hope. But this was im-

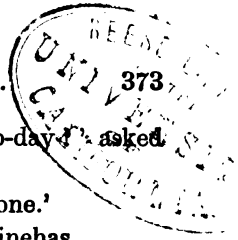
possible. He thought of flight. But it would not do; for the whole country was full of persons anxious to recommend themselves to the king on his return. And Shimei saw, that should he attempt to fly, he would certainly be pursued and brought back by those who were anxious to make their own peace with the king.

“To follow Ahithophel’s example seemed the only resort. But the idea of hanging had always been horrible to him. He thought of running himself through with a sword, throwing himself from a precipice, and other forms of self-destruction. But his heart failed and recoiled at the prospect of each.

“Just in the height of his perplexity, he cast his eye on the Jordan road, and discovered Phinehas the Levite and his company returning home. Here, he saw, was an opportunity of learning accurately the real state of things around David, and what must be anticipated.

“He had aimed, it is true, to injure Phinehas, and also Jonathan and Ahimaaz, in his report to Absalom. But this was no time to stand upon trifles. He hastened, therefore, and met his old acquaintances with a most rueful countenance — the very picture of extreme terror and despair.

“Cruelty had no place in the heart of Phinehas. And though in Shimei’s days of vamping, and putting on airs of consequence, Phinehas had indulged his humor freely at the expense of the man of the house of Saul, yet now, when Shimei stood before him, haggard and trembling in every limb, and evidently tortured with horrible anticipations, the sympathies of Phinehas were strongly moved; for the object before him was most pitiable.



“Neighbor Shimei, how are you to-day?” asked Phinehas.

“Ruined,” said Shimei, “utterly undone.”

“Not so bad as that, I hope,” said Phinehas.

“But David is coming back triumphant,” said Shimei.

“Certainly he is, and as he was a good king before, no doubt he will be a good king again,” answered Phinehas.

“Ah, but what of those that rose up against him? What can they do?”

“They are defeated,” said Phinehas, “and many of them dead, and the rest have fled, every man to his tent.”

“O, had I known the matter would turn out thus,” said Shimei, “I should have acted very differently.”

“No doubt of that,” answered Phinehas; “but mortals are blind to the future.”

“O, I have been so imprudent!” said Shimei: “there was no necessity for my coming out so publicly, and saying so much that was provoking to King David at that time. I might just as well have been quiet, till I could have seen how things would go. I am vexed with myself.”

“It is too late to correct that now,” said Phinehas.

“I have heard that the king has slain all that joined in the rebellion,” said Shimei, “who have fallen into his hands since the overthrow of Absalom.”

“Few have been taken as yet,” said Phinehas: “I think they have mostly fled; but certain it is, none have been slain since the battle.”

“But has he not said, that all who took part in the rebellion shall be put to death?”

“Not that I have heard,” said Phinehas; “and I have no idea he will adopt such a course.”

“‘But the ringleaders will certainly be sorely punished,’ said Shimei.

“‘That depends, I should think,’ answered Phinehas, ‘on whether they promptly return to their duty as loyal subjects.’

“‘Did you hear the king say any thing about my cursing him, as he went through Bahurim?’

“‘Not a word,’ answered Phinehas.

“‘Do you think he looks upon me as one of the ringleaders in this rebellion?’

“‘I should think not,’ said Phinehas, scarcely resisting the temptation to smile.

“‘I’m in a most horrible situation,’ said Shimei: ‘Ahithophel’s plan appears all that is left to me.’

“‘Be not so rash,’ said Phinehas: ‘you have certainly done not only foolishly, but wickedly; but don’t make your case worse by acting more wickedly still. I would gladly help you if I could. I am just returning home: come to see me after an hour, and I will give you the best counsel I can.’

“‘If you can help me, or advise me for the best,’ said Shimei, ‘you will lay me under everlasting obligations. If I were only out of this difficulty, I am resolved kingdoms may rise and fall as they please; my political career shall be closed. No kingdom has fallen in Israel since I was born, but I have been involved in serious injury; but Saul and Ishbosheth together brought me into no such jeopardy as this failure of Absalom. If I were fairly rid of it, I say again, my political career is ended.’

“‘Come to me after an hour,’ said Phinehas, ‘and you shall have my best counsel.’

“So saying, the company went on to the house of Phinehas.

“ ‘What will you attempt in behalf of that poor, distracted fellow?’ said Jonathan to Phinehas, after they had entered the house.

“ ‘You see,’ answered Phinehas, ‘that he is trembling in an agony of terrible apprehension. He has done badly, but I suppose that since he has heard of Absalom’s downfall, he has suffered tenfold more than a brave man endures in being actually put to death. I learn that a large company of young Benjamites are preparing to go as far as Jordan, to meet the king on his return. Now, I have thought of advising Shimei to join the company, and go to meet the king, make a full confession of his fault, and implore forgiveness. I think the king, in that case, would overlook his offence, and let him live ; and moreover several of the young men that are going, are very fond of amusement. I shall suggest to them — and I think it will take — to give Shimei a kind of temporary commission : let him march at their head, and come before the king with the honor of having brought a large company to meet him and welcome him back. If it strikes the young men favorably, it will be a capital thing. It will be an old soldier in the last of his fields. Should the arrangement take, and the king restore him to favor, it will be a fine winding up of his political career, as he calls it. And I think he has been sufficiently frightened, to behave quietly the remainder of his life.’

“ Ahimaaz and Jonathan were highly pleased with the proposed plan, and soon departed on the mission to Jerusalem, intrusted to them from the king. Zadok and Abiathar joyfully received their two sons, who had acted so wisely, and been so serviceable to David, and

to Israel, at this critical and trying period. After the greeting and congratulations were over, —

“ ‘Have you any charge from the king?’ said Zadok.

“ ‘We have,’ answered Ahimaaz; ‘many requests have been sent to the king, that he would return to Jerusalem, and take charge of the government again; but these requests, as yet, have all come from other tribes, and Judah has kept silent.

“ ‘The princes of Judah,’ said Zadok, ‘have so generally and decidedly taken part with Absalom, that they are ashamed to make any public move for David’s return.’

“ ‘The king thought,’ answered Ahimaaz, ‘that it would be proper for you and Abiathar to speak to the elders of Judah, and urge them not to be the last to invite the king to return to his palace and kingdom, as he is now disposed to overlook and forget the part that each has taken in the recent rebellion.’

“ ‘We will do so with pleasure,’ replied Zadok; ‘and there is no doubt that the assurance of forgiveness will greatly influence them to act promptly.’

“ ‘Our further commission,’ said Ahimaaz, ‘touches a more delicate and critical matter.’

“ ‘How so?’ asked Zadok and Abiathar at once.

“ ‘It relates to Amasa,’ said Ahimaaz.

“ ‘I understand,’ said Abiathar, ‘that Amasa looks on his case as desperate, as he was commander-in-chief under Absalom, and headed the rebels in the battle.’

“ ‘What does the king say of him?’ asked Zadok: ‘is there any hope of pardon for him, if he submits to David?’

“ ‘Yes, pardon and promotion to the highest honors,’ answered Ahimaaz.

“ ‘Promotion! How?’

“ ‘The king says Amasa shall be commander-in-chief instead of Joab.’

“ ‘Instead of Joab!’ exclaimed Zadok. ‘I fear that will be a new source of trouble.’

“ ‘Surely,’ said Abiathar, ‘Amasa will have more decency and sense of propriety, than to be willing to supplant the man who was the great instrument in saving the kingdom and the throne of David.’

“ ‘I am not sure of that,’ said Zadok. ‘Amasa loves office, and if the king makes him this offer, I think he will be glad to accept it.’

“ ‘It is much to be regretted,’ said Ahimaaz, ‘that David resents the death of Absalom so deeply, when it is plain that nothing short of it could have quelled the rebellion. Joab will endure any thing from his uncle, but Amasa had better beware how he crosses the lion’s path.’

“ ‘The attempt to put Amasa in Joab’s place,’ said Abiathar, ‘would be most unpopular with the army, and indeed with the whole country that favors David. And I fear it will increase the complaints often made against the king, that he wrongs tried and faithful friends, in order to win over and conciliate the doubtful and the disaffected.’

“ ‘There was now much bustle and preparation in reference to the king’s return to his palace and throne.

“ ‘Barzillai the Gileadite, and many friends beyond the river, accompanied the king as far as Jordan on his return. The king, with a heart full of gratitude, urged Barzillai to come with him to Jerusalem, and give him an opportunity of showing his high sense of his generous and timely assistance. But the worthy old chief

said he had done only his duty, and wished no compensation. After seeing the king safe over Jordan, he said 'he wished to return to his home, that he might die there, and be buried by the grave of his father and his mother.' King David was much affected by the sincere and warm-hearted friendship of this venerable man. He dismissed him kindly, that he might return home according to his wish. But the king took Chimham, the son of Barzillai, with him to Jerusalem, and bestowed on him many tokens of his favor.

"Before concluding this narrative," said Belial, "I would observe, that the period David remained in exile at Mahanaim became a memorable era in the annals of that city. The incidents that took place there were long the favorite themes of conversation among the plain people in that sequestered part of the country; and many years afterward, when Abijam, the grandson of Solomon, visited that section of the kingdom, there were still living those who could rehearse interesting traditions, and point out the house where the king was lodged while he sojourned there, and the couch on which he reposed; the position he occupied when giving charge to the officers and the soldiers to deal gently with Absalom; the field where the battle was fought; the tree on which Absalom was hanged; the great heap of stones that were piled over him; also the place where the king stood while Ahimaaz and Cushi were seen running over the plain, bringing news of the result of the battle; and the chamber into which he retreated and wept, when told that Absalom was dead. From parent to child, these traditions were handed down for many generations."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SCENES AFTER THE RESTORATION.

Two demons now arose at the same moment, with strong expressions of interest, and each addressed the speaker — “A question.”

“Speak one at a time,” said Belial.

1st Demon. I wished to ask if the princes of Judah came to meet the king at Jordan, and welcome him home.

“Most of them did,” answered Belial. “They now saw that Absalom’s attempt was rash, foolish, and wicked; and now that he was dead, they were glad to have David return to the throne again. They were conscious they had done wrong in favoring Absalom. They were David’s old friends, and received him with much cordiality. David, on his part, met them with kindness and reconciliation.”

2d Demon. I wished to ask, if the princes of Israel now generally returned to their allegiance.

“Many of them did,” said Belial; “but a disagreement arose between the princes of Judah and those of Israel, respecting their claims to the king’s favor. And I tempted an ambitious man, Sheba, the son of Bichri, by name, to make an effort to lead off in a new rebel-

lion, though I had but little hope of success. Some of the princes of Israel, however, took part with him."

"Who was Sheba, the son of Bichri?" inquired one.

"He was a Benjamite, of some distinction, who had been an officer in the army of Absalom, and, hearing that Amasa was to be promoted in David's favor, came to meet the king at Jordan, calculating that he too would receive some office or mark of special regard. Being disappointed, he blew a trumpet, and said, 'We have no part in David, neither inheritance in the son of Jesse; every man to his tent, O Israel.' Quite a number of princes and people followed him."

"I was anxious to inquire what became of Shimei," said another.

Belial smiled; indeed there was a general disposition to laugh manifested through the assembly, and voices were heard, "Good, good; let us hear of Shimei."

"Shimei," said Belial, "according to the plan of Phinehas the Levite, had thrown himself into the company of the young Benjamites who came down to Jordan to meet the king. They allowed him to march at the head of their column, which greatly delighted Shimei, and caused his old military habits to revive, and flourish in fine style. But at the sight of the king, with Abishai at his side, the heart of Shimei was like to fail. However, he crossed the river, threw himself at the feet of the king, confessed his fault, and implored forgiveness. David was now disposed to be reconciled to all who had injured him. He spoke kindly to Shimei, and promised him forgiveness. Thus Shimei escaped the vengeance he had dreaded, and determined to meddle with political revolutions no more.

“It was not long till his resolution on this subject was put to the test, for when Sheba, the son of Bichri, had resolved to head a new rebellion, among the men he spoke to, soliciting aid in his intended enterprise, was Shimei, who had now resumed his station at the head of the company of Benjamites.

“‘Excuse me,’ said Shimei, ‘excuse me; a burnt child dreads the fire. I have just made a narrow escape from the bitter consequences of one sad mistake. My head is positively turned gray with agony. I am resolved to meddle with revolutions no more; at least, while their success is doubtful.’

“Soon after the king reached Jerusalem, tidings came that a large multitude was still following after Sheba, the son of Bichri. So he commanded Amasa, to whom he was still resolved to transfer the chief command of the army, to assemble the men of Judah,* within three days, to pursue and disperse the rebels. Amasa, highly gratified and flattered, set out on his mission.

“The state of public sentiment in reference to Amasa’s new position,” said Belial, “may be illustrated by relating what took place at Bahurim, where he made an attempt to recruit soldiers.

“Fame soon proclaimed, through the entire community of Bahurim, the arrival of Amasa, and the object for which he had come. The consequence was, that from one end of the town to the other, the men disappeared with astonishing celerity. Amasa went along the principal street, till near the centre of the popula-

* It appears from the sacred history, that from this period Benjamin is always included with Judah, when a distinction is made between Judah and Israel. The men of Israel claimed “ten parts” in the king; that is, ten out of twelve.

tion. There he blew a trumpet, and proclaimed that the citizens were called on to embody and join the army of the king, in order to follow Sheba, the son of Bichri. But none responded to the call; not a man capable of bearing arms appeared, and the streets looked deserted, and even the houses seemed but sparsely inhabited; here and there a lone woman, or a small boy, might be seen, taking a momentary peep from a door or window; but plainly, from some cause, there was small likelihood of recruiting an army here.

“‘What can be the meaning of this!’ exclaimed Amasa, in a tone of fierce displeasure. ‘Has the spirit of rebellion become universal here?’

“‘Who talks of the spirit of rebellion? And who are you, disturbing our quiet and peaceable town?’

“These words were spoken loud by a shrill, firm, female voice, that seemed to challenge debate.

“Amasa turned to see the speaker, and beheld, in the door of one of the nearest buildings, a tall, slender woman, of narrow visage, and remarkably small, piercing eyes. Her nimble tongue, which showed itself repeatedly between a pair of uncommonly thin lips, seemed keeping time with the penetrating twinkle of those keen, courageous eyes. Her age might be that of a grandmother; but her form was erect and her manner firm and undaunted. Indeed, there was that in her whole attitude and demeanor, which showed that she stood forth as the advocate of the town of Bahurim, and that she felt herself fully competent to the task.

“‘Who talks of the spirit of rebellion?’ she repeated, looking Amasa full in the face; ‘and who are you, disturbing our quiet and peaceable town?’

“‘I am commander-in-chief of the king’s army,’ answered Amasa, ‘and I have come to raise soldiers for his service.’

“‘You commander-in-chief of the king’s army!’ said the grandmother, in accents of displeasure mingled with scorn; ‘you are not Joab.’

“‘No, I am Amasa, who have succeeded Joab in the command.’

“‘Amasa!’ exclaimed the old woman; ‘Amasa! what, not that man who was the leader of Absalom’s army in the rebellion!’

“‘Yes, the same,’ said Amasa, though with evident shame and mortification.

“‘What,’ said the old woman, ‘can it be possible that you are that Amasa who led Absalom’s large army through our town, five or six days ago, pursuing King David over Jordan, in order to slay him. You were calling for soldiers then, were you not?’

“‘Yes,’ replied Amasa; ‘I think we were beating up for volunteers, as we passed through Bahurim.’

“‘Your army was very large. I was told you had one hundred and fifty thousand men by the time you reached Jordan.’

“‘We had a very large army,’ answered Amasa.

“‘And where is that army now?’ asked the woman, bitterly.

“‘I suppose,’ answered Amasa, ‘you know we were defeated.’

“‘And why did not you stand by your men, and by your young king? You left him hanging in an oak; and left them to be slaughtered by the servants of David, while you fled to secure inglorious safety to

yourself—and now you come here calling for more soldiers. I tell you, Bahurim has furnished you with too many soldiers already. There is Rachel, my next door neighbor, poor woman! three of her sons were beguiled to follow you when you came through here, pursuing after David, and only one of them has returned. Two of them died on the field of battle, while you were flying to save your worthless life. Go on! go on!’ she exclaimed, shaking her long, skinny finger at Amasa, while her whole frame quivered with violent emotion. ‘Go on! go on! you’ll find no more soldiers here. No mother is going to send her sons with such a commander as you.’

“ ‘Deliver us!’ exclaimed Phinehas the Levite, looking cautiously from the window, for his house was near by—‘deliver us! if Amasa has not run upon a set of edged tools this morning. Here is old aunt Deborah, in the open street, pouring upon him the full tide of one of her most eloquent orations. Retreat, man! retreat!’ he continued, apostrophizing Amasa; ‘you’ll find her lips and tongue keener and sharper than the weapons from which you fled at the field of Mahanaim.’

“ ‘I think,’ said the wife of Phinehas, leaning on the shoulder of her husband, and looking out through the window. ‘I think he will find the tide of her eloquence not only strong, but scalding hot. See, she begins again!’

“ ‘You said you had the orders of the king,’ cried the shrill voice of old Deborah, again addressing Amasa. ‘And how comes it that you, who a few days ago were pursuing King David to take his life, are now

carrying his orders through the country to recruit soldiers for his army ?’

“ ‘The king has made me his chief commander, and I have his authority,’ said Amasa.

“ ‘Well, if an old woman may speak her mind freely, he must have been scant of material for manufacturing commanders, when he took the ringleader of the rebels and put him at the head of his own army. But where are his old faithful commanders that have led his armies, and fought his battles, and gained his victories, for more than twenty-five years past? Where are the two sons of Zeruah? In short, where is Joab?’

“ ‘Joab,’ said Amasa, ‘is put out of office for killing Absalom.’

“ ‘Yes, and he did it to save his uncle’s throne and kingdom, when he saw that the rebellion was so general, that nothing but the loss of their leader could quell it, and make the princes return to their duty; and he knew, at the same time, that he was risking himself, not only his office, but his life. And to speak the truth, I think it the most exalted deed of patriotism that I ever heard of in all my days; and what is more, the whole country think so too. Few men, Amasa, will risk themselves for the support of another in a case like this. But we know the king. He is a good, tender-hearted father, and if he was even unreasonable while grieved for the death of his son, we can make allowance for him. But for you, Amasa, what shall we say of you? Were not you ashamed, during the king’s paroxysm of grief and displeasure, to allow yourself to be made a tool for dishonoring the most brave and faithful officer that ever stood by the side of

a throne? You should have showed yourself a man, Amasa—you should have spurned the suggestion. You should have told his majesty, “No, I can’t think of it; I, who have been so deep in the guilt of rebellion, I can’t think of supplanting the brave and faithful commander who saved your throne and kingdom.” That would have been acting like a man. I’m sorry for you, Amasa, I’m truly sorry that you have degraded yourself by showing such a total want of a generous and honorable spirit.’

“Amasa looked abashed, confused, mortified, and after one or two unsuccessful attempts to frame a reply, remained silent, with eyes fixed on the ground.

“‘One thing more, Amasa,’ continued the seemingly inexhaustible Deborah; ‘one thing more. You said you wanted soldiers to pursue after Sheba, the son of Bichri. And who is Sheba, the son of Bichri?’

“Amasa was silent.

“‘Ah, you need not try to disguise or deny it, for the whole country knows it. This Sheba, the son of Bichri, was one of the officers in Absalom’s army, under you, Amasa, one of your fellow-soldiers. Yes, he was flourishing and flaunting by your side, as you went through Bahurim, a few days ago, in pursuit of David, with a hundred and fifty thousand men at your heels, shouting, “Down with old David! Hurrah for the revolution! Hurrah for Absalom!”’

“‘And now,’ said Deborah, with another eloquent shake of her long finger, at Amasa, ‘you want mothers to send their sons and grandsons with you after your fellow-officer, that was cheek by jole with you in Absalom’s rebellion. Away with you! away with you!’

I'm ashamed to look upon such a thing in the shape of a man.' And turning suddenly, she entered the house, and closed the door with a violence that started Amasa as from a dream, while it brought the welcome consciousness that he was now delivered from those irksome visitations, that so strongly illustrated the perfect discipline and training of her tongue."

Here one of the assembly inquired, "How did Amasa succeed in his new station?"

"But indifferently," said Belial: "old Deborah's statement of public opinion was correct. Many, indeed the vast majority of the people, were reluctant to follow him. Some alleged that his total defeat, when acting as Absalom's commander, was evidence of incompetency; and others thought that his willingness to supplant Joab was a proof of a low and dishonorable spirit. These and other difficulties created so much tardiness in Amasa's movements, that David became alarmed lest Sheba, the son of Bichri, should be able to mature and strengthen his plans of insurrection. David, therefore, despatched Abishai, with such troops as were at hand in Jerusalem, to pursue the rebels. When they had gone as far as Gibeon, Amasa appeared and claimed the command.

"Joab had borne in silence the frowns of the king; for though he considered David's anger unreasonable, yet he made great allowance for the bereaved father while agonizing under the loss of his son. As to his office, he considered it belonged to him by purchase. It was not the king's gift. It had been offered as the stipulated reward of the conqueror of the Jebusites, at Jerusalem. He had rendered the service, and claimed

the office as his right. Yet from his uncle, the king, he would submit to any thing. So he made no complaint. But when he saw Amasa, the late leader of the rebel host, come up at the great stone in Gibeon, and claim the command of the Cherethites and Pelethites, and attempt to push himself into the most conspicuous station in David's army, his indignation was roused. He smote Amasa with the sword, a single blow. It was decisive. Amasa died — and Joab at once resumed the command. He then pursued after Sheba, the son of Bichri.”

“And did the insurgents give him battle?” asked one of the audience.

“Not exactly,” said Belial: “many of the followers of Sheba as soon as it was known that Joab was in pursuit, deserted, and made the best of their way home. Sheba himself, however, was resolute and determined, and went through all the tribes of Israel, exciting them to rebellion. At length, he made a stand at the city of Abel, in the extreme north part of the kingdom. Joab overtook him there, and concluding that the city which had received Sheba had joined with him in the rebellion, he began to make preparations to batter down the wall. The men of the city were terrified, and sought concealment behind their ramparts; and even Sheba and the troops which he led, showed no disposition to meet the besiegers in battle. The engines of war had already begun to play, and the wall to totter, when the venerable form of an aged woman appeared, standing erect and undaunted on the trembling wall.

“‘Hear! hear!’ she cried, in a voice that betokened courage mingled with care for the public good: ‘where is Joab?’”

“ ‘At the head of the army,’ was the reply.

“ ‘Tell him to come near hither, that I may speak to him.’

“ When the commander appeared,

“ ‘Art thou Joab?’ said the woman.

“ ‘I am he,’ was the answer.

“ ‘What is the meaning of all this?’ said the woman.

‘I thought you were the friend and defender of Israel. This is a peaceable city, and a peacemaker among the surrounding towns and villages. When disputes arise among the people, they come and ask counsel at Abel. Our arbitrations and advice end and settle matters of strife through all the region round. I am among the peaceable and faithful in Israel. Thou seekest to destroy a city and a mother in Israel. Why wilt thou swallow up the inheritance of the Lord?’

“ Joab answered, ‘Far be it, far be it from me, that I should swallow up or destroy. The matter is not so; but a man has found shelter here, Sheba, the son of Bichri, by name, who has lifted up his hand against the king, even against David. Deliver him only, and I will depart from the city.’

“ ‘Behold,’ said the woman, ‘his head shall be thrown to you over the wall.’

“ ‘That will do,’ said Joab.

“ Then the woman went unto all the people in her wisdom, and they cut off the head of Sheba, the son of Bichri, and cast it over the wall to Joab, and he blew a trumpet, and they retired from the city, and Joab returned to the king at Jerusalem. And such was the power of public sentiment in the army, and indeed throughout all the country, that the king quietly

acquiesced, and Joab remained commander-in-chief of the army during the life of David.

“Near the close of David’s reign,” said Belial, “an occurrence took place that strongly illustrates the sound judgment, the enlightened patriotism, and fidelity to the king, that so eminently distinguished this great commander. I had tempted David with motives of ambition, and new plans of conquest, to say to his captains, ‘Go now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan even to Beersheba, and number ye the people, that I may know the number of the people.’ Joab saw that the king was in an error, and that wrath might be brought upon Israel. He, therefore, in the most earnest and eloquent style, remonstrated with the king — ‘Now the Lord thy God add unto thee people, how many soever there be, a hundred-fold, and that the eyes of my lord the king may see it. But why doth my lord the king delight in this thing? Why will he be a cause of trespass to Israel?’ (2 Sam. xxiv. 1—4.)

“This affectionate and earnest remonstrance, however, was unavailing. The king persisted, and the people were numbered. But soon afterwards the king saw his error; a dreadful plague scourged the land, and the king deeply lamented that he had not hearkened to the counsel of his sister’s son.” (1 Chron. xxi.)

A prince of the assembly now arose and spoke. “I was anxious to inquire,” said he, “what became of Abishai.”

“Abishai,” answered Belial, “continued to sustain his great military reputation to a good old age. Indeed, I may say, one of the most notable exploits in his long

and brilliant career, was performed about four years after the period of Absalom's rebellion."

At mention of this, there was a rousing up in the assembly of rebel angels, giving proof of awakened attention and interest. "Rehearse it, rehearse it," was repeated by a number of voices.

"The Philistines," said Belial, "had declared another war against Israel. David determined to lead his armies in this campaign in person.

"The Philistine host was headed by the giant Ishbi-benob. He was the son of Goliath of Gath, whom David had slain. Ishbi-benob was famous as a warrior. He had led the attack on Saul at Mount Gilboa. He had often boasted of his success at Gilboa, when Saul was slain; and learning now that David commanded his army in person, he resolved to avenge the death of his father, and secure new laurels for himself by the slaughter of the king. He arrayed himself in a new suit of superior armor. It was considered absolutely impenetrable, and the plates of brass and steel, of which it was composed, were burnished and bright, and flashed back the rays of the sun, and made his appearance terrible. The head of the spear which he brandished weighed three hundred shekels of brass.

"David was conspicuous by the ensign of the tribe of Judah, which he always had by him in the martial field. The battle had been in progress for some time, and was most obstinately contested. David, overcome with the exertions of the day, was now exhausted and faint. He had fallen back somewhat from the leader of the life-guards, and was incapable of either flight or resistance.

“Ishbi-benob now reared his gigantic form in the front rank of the Philistine army, and stood like a blazing pillar of fire, till he had marked definitely the place where David was. Then, confident in his armor of proof, he rushed through the ranks of war, right upon the king. The life-guards gave back as the huge giant came on. He now raised his tremendous spear, poised it deliberately, aiming at the king a blow that must have proved fatal.

“Ahimaaz saw the danger, and called aloud, ‘Abishai, save King David.’

“The son of Zeruiah sprung like a roused lion past three files of retreating soldiers, and wielded his keen sword twice, with the speed of the lightning’s wing. First, the enormous head of the spear, severed from the long wooden shaft, dropped harmless to the earth. Next, the head of Ishbi-benob flew off, and rolled to a distance, at the feet of the armed men. The body of the giant remained for a moment standing, still aiming the pointless weapon, then pitched forward prostrate, flooding the earth and staining all his armor with the gushing tide of blood.

“‘Abishai forever!’ shouted the life-guards, with an enthusiasm that rent the air. The shout was caught up and pealed again and again, by the extended ranks of the army. The Philistines, astounded at the annihilation of their champion, fled in wild confusion, while the men of Israel and Judah pursued them up to the gates of Gath.”

One of the audience now arose, in whose visage was a large development of curiosity. “I would ask,” said he, “what is the conclusion of the history of the Danite captain?”

“Our story,” said Belial, “left the captain at Mahanaim, in the house of Merari the Levite, disabled by a wound. The mortal career of Sheba, the son of Bichri, and Amasa too, had been brought to a close, and peace and public tranquillity had now established their reign through the length and breadth of the land, for several weeks, when, at the close of a beautiful day, Phinehas the Levite, with his wife and two little sons, had been taking a pleasant evening walk. The weather was so fine, and the summer scenery so lovely, that they had extended their walk considerably beyond the limits of Bahurim, on the Jordan road. They had paused, and were in the act of turning towards home, when a solitary traveller was seen coming from towards the land of Gilead. In those plain and primitive times, men of wealth and worth often travelled on foot. The daylight was fading, and the traveller, though not distant, was but indistinctly seen.

“‘Has not that man a slight halt in his gait?’ said the woman to her husband.

“‘I did not observe it,’ said Phinehas.

“‘Yes, he has,’ said little Joseph. ‘I see plainly that he walks lame.’

“‘Why,’ said Phinehas, looking earnestly for a moment, ‘it is our old friend, Captain Ben Huppim.’ And the whole party rushed to meet him.

“‘Why, captain, the blessings of the evening upon you. How do you do?’

“‘Very much recovered since I saw you, and I am now trying to get home; important business has brought me this way.’

“‘Well, you must come and spend the night with

us,' said Phinehas, 'and should it suit your convenience, we should be delighted to have you remain with us a number of days.'

" 'I shall be happy to accept your invitation for the night,' said the captain; 'but I have been long from home, and sad changes have passed over me, and over many of my friends, in the time, and I am anxious to get back as soon as practicable.'

" 'No doubt, no doubt,' answered Phinehas; 'but you know the good old maxim, "One thing at a time." You shall rest with us to-night, and the other proposition we will discuss more at our leisure.'

"The company went on till they entered the house of Phinehas, where a plentiful supper was soon served up, and they partook of their evening meal, intermingled with familiar and cheerful conversation.

" 'Do you find travelling fatigues you much, captain?' said Phinehas, when supper was concluded.

" 'I have to proceed cautiously and slowly, as my strength is not yet entirely restored.'

" 'You had better remain with us a few days; it will recruit your strength, and we shall be very glad of the opportunity of further acquaintance.'

" 'The heat of the weather had made me prefer the early hours of morning for travelling. However,' said he, with the good-humored smile of an old soldier, and a glance at the mother, 'I learn that you have one very cool apartment about your establishment, where the good wife sometimes shelters her visitors.'

" 'Ah, when the heat without is too vehement,' said Phinehas, smiling. 'I see, captain, you cannot forget your first visit to our poor house.'

“ ‘ I think you, too, will have cause to remember it,’ rejoined the captain. ‘ I see,’ said he, pointing to the scaled and scarred places on the furniture, which had been overturned in the hasty search for Ahimaaz and Jonathan, — ‘ I see that my rough Danites have left specimens of their handwriting with you. — They have made their “ forget me not ” a little more conspicuous than I could wish.’

“ ‘ Not at all, not at all,’ said Phinehas : ‘ we shall preserve and exhibit these memorials with all the pleasure and pride with which an old soldier displays the wounds and scars he has received in the battles of his country.’

“ ‘ And this furniture,’ said the wife, ‘ with all these marks upon it, I intend shall be handed down to our children and our children’s children. They will relate the story in years to come.’

“ ‘ Captain,’ said Phinehas, ‘ to be frank with you, I tell you we value your acquaintance very highly, notwithstanding the singular and somewhat unceremonious manner of your first introduction. And I shall insist on your being our guest, until you are recruited and in better condition for travelling.’

“ ‘ I think,’ said the captain, in the same humorous vein, ‘ that it would be a little ungenerous for me to be long a consumer of bread in your house, considering the waste of good provisions which my first visit occasioned.’

“ ‘ Poh ! poh ! ’ said Phinehas ; ‘ the *meal* ! I tell you, captain, there never was a grist of meal better appropriated in Israel, since the day that good old father Jacob packed his corn from Egypt. Why, that meal was instrumental in restoring peace and plenty of bread to

the many ten thousands between Dan and Beer-sheba.'

" ' You speak of the story going down to succeeding ages,' said Ben Huppim. ' That is not the worst of it. It has spread abroad, and will spread abroad tremendously in the present age. It has gone ahead of me, no doubt, to the land of Dan. The whole country is full of it by this time. I shall never hear the last of it. But I am resolved what to do. I shall act in self-defence. I'll tell the story myself. Yes, and tell it better than Madam Fame can tell it, with all her hundred tongues.'

" Thus pleasantly passed the evening away. The captain very cordially accepted the kind invitation of Phinehas, and remained with the family a number of days, to the great delight of all, not forgetting the little boys, who became familiar with him, and questioned him late and early concerning battles, and bear-hunts, and lion-fights, and strange adventures in which he had been engaged.

" At length, he took an affectionate leave of the hospitable family, and proceeded to his own home. His anticipations were found fully verified. The whole story of the surrounding and search of the building at Enrogel, the chase of Jonathan and Ahimaaz over the Mount of Olives, and the scenes and doings at Bahurim, with divers additions, amendments, enlargements, and various readings, were spread through all the country. Envy and jealousy, however, were greatly disappointed in their hopes of some stain or diminution of the lustre of the captain's military fame. As soon as he reached home, it was admitted, on all hands, that

the very best version of the whole story was that which the captain told himself, to admiring circles of delighted auditors.

“ He lived, honored, useful, and happy, to a good old age. And even when gray-headed and far advanced in life, at social assemblies of the people of the land, it was a favorite entertainment with the younger persons, to form a cheerful circle around the old captain, and prevail on him to relate the story of his pursuit of Ahimaaaz and Jonathan, and his rough and unceremonious introduction at Bahurim, and the cordial and lasting friendships afterwards formed with the kind and worthy family of Phinehas the Levite.

“ Belial,” said another of the audience, “ what became of Ahimaaaz and Tamar ? ”

“ Not long after David’s restoration,” answered Belial, “ the marriage of Ahimaaaz and Tamar was celebrated, in Jerusalem, with circumstances of unusual joy. The number of invited guests was very great. Many of the heads of the tribes were there, and the large circle of friends connected with the house of Zadok and the house of Abiathar. But among all the guests, none entered with greater zest into the lively festivities of the occasion, than their old friend, Hushai the Archite.

“ Hushai’s colloquial powers were extraordinary, and his sociability inexhaustible. And for these reasons, connected with his great moral worth, he had long been King David’s chosen companion and friend. To the unlimited entertainment of the company now convened, Hushai told his finest anecdotes in his finest style. At length, a general wish was expressed that he would repeat the particulars of Tamar’s famous

adventure to Enrogel. This chimed in with the humor of the old lawyer to a jot and tittle. The eager auditors thronged around him, while he depicted, first, the perplexity and despair of Zadok, Abiathar, and himself, when it was ascertained that the gates of Jerusalem were guarded by Absalom's friends, and that to be detected in any attempt to favor David, would be inevitable death. He then described the calm courage, and sublime heroism, with which the tender, delicate girl entered the room, and volunteered to become their messenger, — told of the palpitating anxiety with which they watched her progress down the street, and her successful attempt to pass the guard at the gate; and then the long hours of painful uncertainty, until they heard of the report of the Danite pursuers that Jonathan and Ahimaaz had escaped. He next rehearsed the distress of the family, and particularly the mother when the night began to grow late, and Tamar did not return, — the careful search made next morning around the walls of Jerusalem, and as far as the town of Bahurim, and yet no tidings of their dauntless heroine could be learned. Anxiety and troubled apprehensions in the family circle rose higher and higher, from day to day, until, on the downfall of Absalom, Tamar was reconducted, in honor and safety, to her father's house, by Phinehas the Levite.

“As the thrilling narrative of Hushai, in his peculiarly happy manner, brought up these various incidents, there appeared in the circle of listeners, now, a breathless attention; now, a pleasing smile that mantled every visage; and now, the big tear, that stood and trembled in every eye. He seemed to command the

passions of his hearers, as the skilful player manages the strings of a well-tuned instrument.

“I would only remark further,” continued Belial, “that Hushai concluded his narrative with one of those playful turns that often varied his discourses. ‘I have heard,’ said he, ‘of a wheel within a wheel; and the events of this evening,’ glancing his eye towards the bride, ‘have led me to conclude that my little messenger to Enrogel may have had another motive for the hazardous undertaking, beyond her anxiety to save the life of her brother Jonathan, and even the life and kingdom of David.’

“Ahimaaz and Tamar lived long and happily together, and long was their family blessed and honored in Israel.”

Here Lucifer erected his stately form, and turned to the speaker. “I also would ask a question or two further respecting the history you have sketched. My first question is this:—

“Why have commentators on the Bible generally represented the character of Joab so differently from the view that you have now given? You know they are mostly severe and harsh in their censures of that great commander.”

“An excellent question,” said Belial, “and one easily answered. Commentators on the Bible have generally been men who had little sympathy with military life. Joab was eminently a military man. To this he was devoted from early youth. To this he considered himself called, in the providence of God. To do him justice, he must be weighed in military scales. This is essential to a proper understanding of his character.

Had it not been for the prejudice the world has entertained against the Bible, or had this man's history been detailed in any other book, he would have ranked among the very foremost military leaders that have appeared in any age or nation. In fact, the Macedonian phalanx of Alexander, the Roman legion of Julius Cæsar, or the far-famed Legion of Honor of Napoleon, never surpassed, if indeed they equalled, the Cherethites, and Pelethites, and life-guards, when headed by this great captain of Israel. A correct estimate of the character of Joab is only obtained by taking into view the circumstances of the age in which he lived, and the military life to which he considered himself called, in divine providence.

“Again, the expression applied to David, in the first book of Samuel, that the Lord had sought a man after his own heart, seems to have led some commentators to suppose, that not only the main tenor of his life, but that all the *acts* of David were to be justified. Hence some writers have labored much to excuse or varnish over the conduct of David in relation to Uriah. This is plainly a mistake. Yet, influenced by this, many have thought that when David differed with Joab, the commander, not the king, was always in the wrong. One commentator censures Joab for so readily giving battle to Abner, at the pool of Gibeon; though it is evident that all his firmness and valor were necessary, on that occasion, to sustain the throne of David. Another attempts to blame him for obeying the positive orders of David, in reference to Uriah, though Joab was evidently unacquainted with the motives of the king, and knew not but he had good reasons for

the orders he had sent. Moreover, as a soldier, he felt bound to obey the orders of his superior, without inquiring into all the reasons on which those orders were founded. The only instance on record where he disobeyed the orders of David, is in the case of Absalom; and there he considered the judgment of the king deluded by the affection of the father, and that the death of Absalom was essential to the safety of the throne and kingdom; and public opinion in Israel and Judah confirmed the correctness of his opinion, and applauded the patriotism of his act."

"But what do you say of the death of Abner?" inquired Lucifer.

"The spirit and circumstances of the age," said Belial, "must be considered, in order to understand the case correctly. Abner had slain Asahel, the brother of Joab, in his retreat from the battle of Gibeon. The writer of the Second Book of Samuel declares, 'So Joab and Abishai, his brother, slew Abner, because he had slain their brother, Asahel.' Abishai is mentioned as consenting and approving, though Joab, alone, did the deed. The ideas prevalent in Israel, at that time, concerning the duty of avenging a brother's blood, may be understood by turning to their law, providing cities of refuge for the manslayer. (Deut. xix. 4—6.)

"And this is the case of the slayer which shall flee thither, that he may live. Whoso killeth his neighbor ignorantly, whom he hated not in time past; as when a man goeth into the wood with his neighbor to hew wood, and his hand fetcheth a stroke with the axe to cut down the tree, and the head slippeth from the helve, and lighteth upon his neighbor, that he die; he

shall flee unto one of those cities, and live: lest the avenger of blood pursue the slayer, while his heart is hot, and overtake him, because the way is long, and slay him.'

"Now, such being the state of the public mind in Israel, respecting the avenging of a brother's blood, it is difficult for those who live in a very different state of society, to decide how far Joab and Abishai, as public men, and military men, might feel themselves constrained to go, in order to maintain their standing with the community. Abner was a vile, depraved man."

"One question more," said Lucifer. "Why does David seem often harsh towards Joab, and at last order Solomon to have him put to death?"

"It is no uncommon thing," said Belial, "for great and successful servants of kings to fall under their displeasure. Did not Columbus, the discoverer of a new world, die in prison, because the splendor of his success was greater than the king he served could bear? This is no rare occurrence among the sons of men. David was but a man, and if the great reputation of his chief commander rose beyond what was agreeable to the king, need we be astonished at it? David himself had great military reputation in the earlier part of his life; and if, when his sister's son, by brilliant deeds, was thought by many to have eclipsed those of the king, need we wonder if he failed to show the meekness of Jonathan, in like circumstances? The defeat of Abner at the pool of Gibeon was pronounced a most consummate military exploit in that age. Abner himself was a great general. He had a host of veteran warriors. He had made the most careful and thorough prepara-

tion. Abner's forces were by far the most numerous, and the battle was fought in the open plain; and yet, in every manœuvre, military evolution, and stratagem of war, Abner was surpassed, out-generalled, over-matched; and his loss in the engagement over that of Joab was eighteen to one. You could not keep the minds of men, nor the tongues of men, still, in that age, more than in this. And the fame of Joab, as an unequalled general, was blazed abroad over the whole land. To say that David felt this, is but to say he was a man. And that it sometimes appeared in his conduct, is no way strange. Certain it is, Joab tried to guard against this feeling of rivalry in military fame, on the part of the king. An instance of this is recorded in the twelfth chapter of second Samuel.

“ ‘And Joab fought against Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and took the royal city.

“ ‘And Joab sent messengers to David, and said, I have fought against Rabbah, and have taken the city of waters.

“ ‘Now, therefore, gather the rest of the people together, and encamp against the city, and take it: lest I take the city, and it be called after my name.

“ ‘And David gathered all the people together, and went to Rabbah, and fought against it, and took it.’

“ ‘But it is time,’ said Belial, “to close this sketch of the character of Joab. He was regarded, in the age in which he lived, by the great body of the people, as,

“ 1. The dutiful son.

“ 2. The affectionate brother.

“ 3. The man of chastity. The want of which was the disgrace and ruin of Abner. (2 Sam. iii. 6—10.)

“ 4. The man of truth and justice. This was the basis of his great popularity in the army for forty years.

“ 5. The faithful servant of his king.

“ 6. The warm and wakeful patriot. (2 Sam. xx. 20.)

“ 7. One generous and kind to those in distress. (2 Sam. xiv. 1—3; also verses 28—33.)

“ 8. Anxious to avoid needless bloodshed. (2 Sam. ii. 28; xviii. 16, and xx. 20—22.)

“ 9. Wise among counsellors. (2 Sam. xxiv. 3. 1 Chron. xxi. 3.)

“ 10. Pious towards God. (2 Sam. x. 12.)

“ 11. Unrivalled as a disciplinarian; and,

“ 12. Matchless in the field of battle.

“ But the king never could forget his killing of Absalom. Such was Joab. Long will the soldier honor his memory. Our narrative takes leave of him here, with the single remark, that having sustained himself in public life for the period of forty years, at length, old and gray-headed, he laid down his life, where, often in the prime and beauty of manhood, he had worshipped, at the altar of his God.”*

* Many Bible readers have been greatly perplexed to account for David's order, that Joab should be put to death. Now, observe, the Bible was never designed to sanction *despotism*. David's government was despotic. There was no *trial by jury*, when the king was offended. “Whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive.” Israel sinned grievously in asking a king. The venerable prophet Samuel forewarned them of the sore aggressions which a king, when clothed with supreme power, would perpetrate on their dearest rights. (1 Sam. viii. 9—18, and xii. 19.) Now, it required no revelation from heaven to teach men that *despotic power* in the hands of a *bad man* is dreadful. But the Bible teaches that even in the hands of a *good man* it is liable to horrible abuse. Had the case of Joab come before an impartial jury of his countrymen, the verdict would have been essentially different.

CHAPTER XXIX.

DAVID'S TRUE GREATNESS.

"**THERE** is yet another question," said Lucifer, "I wish to have solved. You have mentioned several defects in the character of David, as a man and as a prince. How is it that his name has come down with such great reputation in the church till the present day?"

"I have before observed," said Belial, "that the Bible records the imperfections, as well as the excellences, of ancient saints. Some have thought that the design is to show that the salvation there revealed is a salvation not for those who are without fault, but for sinners, who have much to mourn over, but who, on repentance, find acceptance through the merits of a divine Redeemer. As to David, though he was great as a man, and great as a pious prince, yet he had his imperfections. But there are *two* reasons, — and they are ample, — for the great reputation of David, in the church, from the day in which he lived until the present time. First. His uniform rejection of idolatry, and his firm, unwavering adherence to the worship of the true God. Idolatry, the worship of false gods," said Belial, addressing himself particularly to Lucifer, "is the master device of hell!"

"Yes!" exclaimed the chief, with kindling anima-

tion, "it is the great engine of destruction to Adam's race. Egypt, Nineveh, Babylon, Greece, and Rome were taken in this snare. It is the most successful device we have ever employed to turn the nations into the broad road. It is the sheet anchor of our kingdom in the world. At this hour, millions are led by its influence in the way of perdition."

"Kings and potentates," said Belial, "priests and people, almost without number, have fallen before the power of this mighty delusion. But King David, to the utter astonishment of the hosts of hell, was resolute and unbending in his opposition to idolatry. Neither in prosperity nor in adversity, neither in youth nor in advanced age, would he listen to its allurements, or have any communion with its bewitching observances. In the worship of the true God, he was steadfast and immovable through his entire earthly history. In this light, the sacred writers, with great frequency, hold him up as a pattern to the kings of Israel and Judah. In this light, he is very often commended as having 'followed the Lord with a perfect heart.'

"The second reason for the high and lasting reputation of David, is this: as a *sacred poet*, he stands before the church and the world, in all the grandeur of unrivalled superiority. The psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs which he composed for the use of the church, have been sung in every language where the Bible has gone, for near three thousand years. Their spread and extent is greater in this age than ever before. They now bid fair to become, shortly, the principal channel through which every kindred and people under heaven will offer up their gratitude and praise to God. It is

one of the most dreadful influences with which the hosts of hell have to contend.

“The power of song over the human mind is great. This is found in the experience of almost every nation. But when the great truths of religion are combined with the charms of poetry and the enchantment of music, their influence is almost resistless.

“David, as a sacred poet, has never yet been equalled. The perfections of Jehovah are at one time his theme, — the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Lord, as they appear in the wide earth, and wider heaven. At another time, he celebrates the wonderful works of God in behalf of his church, in days of old. At another time, he expatiates on the designs of mercy that are to be unfolded in ages to come — the incarnation, obedience, death, resurrection, and eternal kingdom of the Messiah, with the kindred truths embraced in the system of God’s revelation to man. When these psalms and sacred hymns first came abroad, the effect was tremendous. They were not only sung in the sanctuary, and in the large worshipping assemblies, but they were sung in the family, and committed to memory by individuals all over the land. The mother taught them to her children around the fireside; and in the social circle they were often the medium of friendly intercourse. Thus the great truths of religion were presented in a form that took a mighty hold of the attention, and made powerful appeals to the conscience and the heart.”

Here Belial rose to his feet, while uncommon animation shone in his countenance. He swung his arm aloft, and in an elevated voice called out, “Powers

of darkness, if you would successfully war against the church of God, guard this point with the utmost vigilance. Arm yourselves with every artifice which the magazines of the bottomless pit can furnish."

"Belial," said Lucifer, "I am fully aware of the great importance of the point on which you are speaking. I wish the armies of hell to be most thoroughly drilled in reference to it. And therefore, I particularly desire you to relate the plans and schemes you employed in the age of David, and the periods immediately following."

"The tide was too strong," said Belial, "to be met by open and direct resistance. Long before the close of David's life, many of these plain and powerful psalms and spiritual songs were memorized by thousands throughout Judah, Ephraim, Benjamin, and indeed all the tribes of Israel. In the family, they were the means of imparting instruction; in the sick chamber, they were the instrument of consolation to the afflicted, and often those who were about to die would express their hopes and their confidence by quoting some appropriate line or stanza from one of those sacred odes.

"The poetical powers of the Psalmist were of the very highest order. The darling theme on which he sung, was the redeeming love of God. We need not wonder if such truths, with such accompaniments, became the fire and the hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces. There was a mighty impulse given to religion in Israel, by this means; you see it clearly in the recorded history of that people in the reign of David and of Solomon. Let me only remark further, that when the queen of Sheba came to Jerusalem, she was

overwhelmed with the grandeur of those songs of praise to the God of Israel, composed by David for the use of the church. But," said Belial, addressing Lucifer, "your majesty has asked for the devices I employed to counteract these influences.

"Long and laboriously did I investigate and revolve that matter in my mind, before any effectual method of counteracting the influence of these sacred songs could be found. But at length I hit on the plan of 'revising, improving, and modernizing,' and found, that if it could be carried out, it would accomplish all I desired."

"Revising, improving, and modernizing," said Lucifer; "tell us what you mean."

"Your majesty is well aware," said Belial, "of the havoc and destruction that has been perpetrated amidst the sacred poetry of Watts, Cowper, Newton, and other standard writers in the Christian church, within the last generation."

Lucifer bowed and smiled with much apparent delight. "Success to it!" said he; "it has rejoiced me exceedingly. Is that what you mean by 'revising, improving, and modernizing?' I hate the *praising* of God by the church. It is that service in which the church below most nearly approaches the employment of the church above. It peculiarly honors God. Success to every attempt that will mar the *praises* of the saints, or render them indifferent to the commands that enjoin the praising of God."

"I heartily sympathize with you," answered Belial; "and I discovered that the most effectual method to ruin, and, indeed, annihilate the sacred poetry used by the church in offering up her praise to God, was to

instigate a class of incompetent men, who were not capable of seeing the beauty of the original composition, to 'revise, improve, and modernize.' This class of men abound in every age. They can produce nothing original that is worth publishing, and yet they have a constant itching for authorship. Their only expedient, therefore, is to pounce on the writings of some valuable author, work up a new edition, 'revised, improved, and modernized,' and have themselves towed into public notice by the power of the author's name, whose writings they have crippled and cut to pieces."

"Admirable! admirable!" exclaimed Lucifer; "and now tell us how you put your plan in execution."

"My first care," said Belial, "was to find the suitable person. It is only an inferior mind that will embark in such an undertaking. A first-rate intellect will not spend time in such employment. It was not long, however, till I was suited exactly in the person of Ben Adoni-bezek."

"Ben Adoni-bezek?" said Lucifer: "who was he?"

"He was a lineal descendant of that old Canaanitish king, mentioned in the first chapter of the book of Judges, who cut off the thumbs and great toes of the threescore and ten kings, who gathered their meat under his table."

"A most suitable person, I should think," said Lucifer, "as a fondness for mutilation ran in the family."

"This memorable individual came before the public soon after the death of David. He was under the immediate direction of the demon of 'Science, falsely so called.' He maintained, that the age in which he appeared was an age of light, improvement, and great

intellectual elevation. He affirmed that the writings of the fathers were obsolete, old-fashioned, and behind the spirit of the times. He appeared fully conscious that he was incapable of producing any thing original that was worthy of public notice ; but he made great pretensions to capacity for improving the writings of valuable authors who were dead. He could modernize their language, strike out objectionable passages, and now and then make additions from his own brain, causing them to speak a language when dead which they had never spoken while living."

"Well," said Lucifer, "and how did he succeed?"

"I suggested to him," said Belial, "that his first innovations should be made with caution, and the mutilations be but few ; one word in a line, perhaps, only changed ; again two or three words in a stanza. But though the mutilations at first appeared small, yet I saw that the effect would be great, as it would create confusion and jar when several persons attempted to sing together, and thus the attention would be distracted, and the impression of truth on the mind, in a great measure, prevented.

"If I found that the public would bear these innovations and corruptions of the original text, I designed then to urge Ben Adoni-bezek to become more bold and daring, and to strike out whole lines of the original, and supply their place with vapid and stupid conceits of his own. Essential doctrines could thus be disguised, or thrown out, powerful paragraphs marred or omitted, and, in short, such mutilations introduced, that the character of the original publications would be wholly changed and their value destroyed.

"I will remark further, that this favorite device for

a time seemed to grow upon my hands, and promise to become magnificent. I saw that I need not confine it to sacred poetry, but that it could be extended to those who had written in prose. I thought of having works issued with such titles as the following : ‘The Book of Genesis, a new edition, greatly improved since it came from the hand of Moses ;’ ‘The Book of Exodus, improved edition, language modernized, and adapted to the refined taste of this enlightened age ;’ ‘The Book of Joshua, greatly improved, objectionable passages struck out, and valuable additions, by a modern author ;’ and, to crown the whole, ‘The Psalms of David, revised, embellished, and improved, by Ben Adoni-bezek.’ ”

Here Lucifer laughed heartily, and seemed to have immense delight in the survey of this device of hell, when a demon, who had not spoken before, rose and remarked, that the statements just made reminded him of a scene he had witnessed just before the death of the apostle John.

“ Let us have it,” exclaimed Lucifer : “ this is a subject of great interest, and it is one I wish all the powers of darkness to understand and appreciate fully.”

“ Well,” said the demon, “ John, the beloved disciple, had just returned from the Isle of Patmos, where he had written the book of Revelation. John was now very aged and infirm. He was reclining on a couch, and from his emaciated aspect, and the paleness that was on his cheek, it was evident that he was drawing nigh to the end of his earthly pilgrimage. Polycarp, one of his disciples, whom he greatly esteemed, came into the room. John handed him the manuscript of the book of Revelation, which he had now completed.

Polycarp looked over it, wholly absorbed, for a long time, and then observed, 'A prophetic view of the church until the end of time! A book of great value; but, ah! how can it be preserved in its purity, that it may be a blessing to succeeding generations? O, these book-rats, what a pest they are!'

"'What is it that troubles you, Polycarp?'" asked John.

"'Why,'" said Polycarp, 'I see that this is a book of great value to the church, and I was grieved to think that as soon as you are dead, it will be assailed by that intolerable class of mutilators, called book-rats, who will gnaw and nibble, mar and masticate, until scarcely any thing of value will be left.'

"'What!'" exclaimed John, rising up suddenly; 'do you think they will alter my book when I am dead?'

"'Alter it!'" said Polycarp, 'certainly; and the greater its value, the greater the number of those hungry mutilators who will be eager to take hold of it.'

"The visage of the aged apostle now kindled up with holy indignation. The strength of his emotion appeared in his eye, cheek, and brow, as he stretched out his long, emaciated arm and hand towards Polycarp. 'Reach me the book. Did you read the last paragraph?'

"'No,'" answered Polycarp; 'I have read only about three fourths of the book.'

"'I will turn to the last paragraph, and read it.'

"He did so, and read aloud: 'For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God

shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

“‘That is,’ said he, fixing his eye on Polycarp, ‘do not alter my book when I am dead; even so, amen.’

“Thunder and lightning!” said Lucifer; “the old apostle would speak for himself. But, Belial, you have not yet told what was the success of Ben Adonibezek.”

“I must confess,” said Belial, “that his success in that age was but limited. The good taste and judgment of the church were decidedly against his innovations. Many alleged that, as he had not capacity to write a single stanza of original poetry, it was absurd for him to pretend to improve the poetry of the great Psalmist. So they adhered firmly to the original compositions.”

“They viewed it, I presume,” said Lucifer, “very much as the community would now look on the presumption of one who cannot paint even a common portrait, should he undertake to ‘revise and improve’ some great work of one of the masters of the art, such as ‘Christ Healing the Sick,’ by Benjamin West, or those powerful paintings by another hand, ‘The Temptation,’ and ‘The Expulsion from Eden.’ A third or fourth rate man makes wild work when he presumes to thrust himself amidst the fine arts—statuary, sculpture, painting, and poetry—and conceits, forsooth, that he is competent to ‘revise and improve’ the productions of exalted genius. I saw much of this when the Goths and Vandals overran the Roman empire. Beau-

tiful statues, of exquisite finish, symmetry, and proportion, the offspring of the most consummate and towering talent, were 'revised and modernized' by the ruthless hands of those who had no capacity to perceive the perfection and grace of the monuments which they thus destroyed. Not only were thumbs, fingers, and toes, great and small, broken off, but ears, noses, cheeks, and chins, were demolished by those who were so utterly destitute of taste, that they were wholly unconscious of the destruction which they perpetrated. Your aim was to expose the sacred poetry of the church to the same fate."

"Exactly so," answered Belial; "and notwithstanding the failure of Ben Adoni-bezek, I regarded the *plan* as admirable; I resolved not to abandon it. And I have the pleasure to inform you that of late years that same plan has succeeded finely, through the management of the Demon of Science, falsely so called."

"Where is the Demon of False Science?"

"I will call him forward," said Belial.

The Demon of False Science was accordingly called forward. He was a restless, meddling, fidgety-looking demon. He was blind of one eye, and the other seemed set almost crosswise in his head.

"You are the Demon of False Science?" said Lucifer.

"Your majesty," said he, "will please to call me so."

"Very well," said Lucifer: "I wish to be particularly informed of your success in molesting the church by destroying valuable books."

"My labors in that line," said the demon, "have been continued for many ages, and my success of late has been very gratifying. I attempted mutilations in the writings of the ancient prophets, of which your majesty

has just been told, that would have eclipsed the light of religion, had I succeeded. But never, since I embarked in the business of destroying valuable authors by 'revising and modernizing,' have I found so fine a field for my enterprise as in the United States of America. The ancient Greeks and Romans would have risen up at once against an attempt to mutilate Homer or Virgil. The English would frown on any mischief of this kind in reference to Milton or Shakspeare; but in the United States it is wonderful how tamely the church has submitted to the most palpable outrages, perpetrated under my supervision, upon Watts, Newton, Cowper, Steele, and other standard writers of sacred poetry."

"Have you accomplished all you design?"

"Not as yet," answered the Demon of False Science. "I must proceed gradually. It will require two or three generations to fully carry out my purpose. Adoni-bezek would cut off the thumbs and great toes. Ben Adoni-bezek would go a step farther, and the son of Ben Adoni-bezek would go farther still. By the mutilators of this generation, I have greatly disfigured many of the finest of the hymns of Watts and others. Now, after a little breathing spell, I design to set another generation at the same work, and then another; and it will not be long till I shall 'revise and modernize' all that is valuable out of them. But I must tell your majesty that my great success, of late, has excited a hope far beyond all I had in view when I first embarked in this business."

"Ah," said Lucifer; "what hope is that?"

"In marring the works of departed authors," said the demon, "I had only thought of annoying the church on earth; but as the intercourse between earth and heaven is so intimate and constant, and as departed

saints often visit the church below, I have begun to hope that they too may be interrupted and grieved by what I have done. Isaac Watts declared, before his death, that 'he regarded his Psalms and Hymns as the most valuable service he had been able to accomplish for the church during his whole life.' Now, if he and other sacred poets are apprised of the mischief and destruction that have been perpetrated on their favorite works, under my supervision and direction, I cannot see how it is possible for them to avoid being troubled and grieved at the heart, even in the world above."

"It will be good policy," said Lucifer, "to keep up a bold pretence that your mutilation is improvement."

"Yes," said the demon, "though it be the *improvement* experienced by the towering eagle, when those strong pinions that have borne him in triumph to the clouds are singed or shorn; the improvement experienced by Samson, when his abundant locks had been 'revised' by the scissors of Delilah."

"Success to it!" exclaimed Lucifer; "success to the business of 'revising, improving, and modernizing.' It has relieved my mind on a point where it has labored much and long. Since the translation of the Bible by John Wickliffe, no other book has been published in the English language that has exerted a religious influence so extensive and powerful as the Psalms and Hymns of Isaac Watts. The ablest writings of Baxter, Henry, Owen, or Edwards, have not reached half so many minds, nor effected such deep and lasting impressions. In revivals of religion, their agency has been tremendous. Often have I seen, in great congregations, the rich and the poor, the aged and the young, melted and bowed by the omnipotent gospel truth embodied in

those Sacred Songs. They have sent quaking and terror to the very heart of the empire of hell.

“But since incompetent men have laid rash hands on these standard hymns, I am glad to find that they have lost much of their power; their *religious* influence is greatly diminished, and may soon be wholly destroyed. Our cause has little to apprehend from that quarter hereafter, if these sons of Adoni-bezek are allowed to practise and prosper.”

To the Demon of False Science these statements seemed to impart the highest gratification. He stood in a conspicuous station, and cast his one-eyed glances to the right and left over the multitude, as if dizzy with the height to which fame had exalted him.

Lucifer now arose. “Let all the powers of darkness favor this master device. It promises much in behalf of the empire of hell. I should deeply regret to see the church wake up, and reject those crippled copies of her songs of praise, and return to the use of her standard hymns in their primitive perfection.

“Now,” continued he, “it is time to close this session. We will soon meet again, and resume our deliberations. I will, in conclusion, give a sentiment in which I am persuaded you can all heartily join.

“Long life and prosperity to the sons of Adoni-bezek!”

One universal shout arose, and the sentiment was reiterated by ten thousand voices. In a moment the vast hall was empty; and the mighty congress was gone.

THE END.

LINES ON THE MISSOURI RIVER.

I.

MISSOURI, Missouri, I gaze on thy stream,
 And fancies thick rising enchant like a dream ;
 As thy restless, bold surges go foaming along,
 I make thee the burden and theme of my song.

II.

Old records rehearse how the great son of Nun,
 Made a famous address to the Moon and the Sun ;
 Thou Monarch of Rivers, no reason I see,
 Why the bard may not dedicate stanzas to thee.

III.

From the snow-covered mountains piled up in the north,
 Thy waves, like an army, come thundering forth ;
 A continent owns thy dominion, and brings
 Thee her tribute from thousands of beautiful springs.

IV.

A wonderful empire by thee is possessed,
 Thou strong and unparalleled son of the West ;
 No rival nor equal has dared thee oppose,
 Since earth at creation from chaos arose.

V.

While Nineveh, Babylon, Athens, and Rome
 Rose, flourished, and faded, and sunk to the tomb,
 Thy beauties remain, and as youthful now seem
 As when first the wild buffalo drank of thy stream.

VI.

In the deep and inscrutable counsels of God,
 Thy realm lay concealed during ages of blood :
 'Twas the will of high Heaven that thy plains should be free ;
 No Nimrod or Cæsar e'er trampled on thee.

VII.

While bloodthirsty monarchs their banners unfurled,
 And crushed groaning nations throughout the old world,
 The guardian of Israel, as at the Red Sea,
 Kept a "pillar of cloud" betwixt tyrants and thee.

VIII.

But the long-promised mandate of Heaven comes now —
 "Beat spears to a pruning-hook, swords to a plough;"
 And as the blest gospel diffuses its light,
 Like Canaan to Moses thy plains come in sight.

IX.

To the eye of the prophet on Pisgah's high top,
 First "Gilead," then "Ephraim," then "Judah" came up;
 And thus in succession, before our glad eyes,
 Thy rich and extended savannas arise.

X.

Missouri, Missouri, I view thee with pride:
 What cities, what temples shall garnish thy side!
 And to millions of millions a home thou'lt afford,
 When the kingdoms of earth shall have turned to the Lord.

XI.

When Satan is bound, and the Spirit of God
 Has established with men his perpetual abode,
 From both thy long shores, from thy source to the main,
 Hallelujahs shall rise to the Lamb that was slain.

XII.

When the wolf and the lamb shall lie down on the green,
 And the trail of the serpent no longer is seen,
 For the worship of God, on the sweet day of rest,
 What assemblies shall meet on these plains of the West.

XIII.

Roll on, matchless river; thy grandeur display:
 Though we who now view thee must soon pass away,
 Thy restless, bold surges shall dash on thy shore,
 Till the mighty archangel shouts, "TIME IS NO MORE!"

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