

THE FIRST BOOK OF

SAMUEL

Commentary by **ROBERT JAMIESON**

CHAPTER 1

1 SAMUEL 1:1-8.

OF ELKANAH AND HIS TWO WIVES.

1, 2. *a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim* — The first word being in the dual number, signifies the double city — the old and new town of Ramah (^{<0119>}1 Samuel 1:19). There were five cities of this name, all on high ground. This city had the addition of Zophim attached to it, because it was founded by Zuph, “an Ephrathite,” that is a native of Ephratha. Beth-lehem, and the expression “of Ramathaim-zophim” must, therefore, be understood as Ramah in the land of Zuph in the hill country of Ephratha. Others, considering “mount Ephraim” as pointing to the locality in Joseph’s territory, regard “Zophim” not as a proper but a common noun, signifying watchtowers, or watchmen, with reference either to the height of its situation, or its being the residence of prophets who were watchmen (^{<2087>}Ezekiel 3:17). Though a native of Ephratha or Beth-lehem-judah, Elkanah was a Levite (^{<1683>}1 Chronicles 6:33,34). Though of this order, and a good man, he practiced polygamy. This was contrary to the original law, but it seems to have been prevalent among the Hebrews in those days, when there was no king in Israel, and every man did what seemed right in his own eyes [^{<0225>}Judges 21:25].

3. *this man went up out of his city yearly to worship in Shiloh* — In that place was the “earth’s one sanctuary,” and thither he repaired at the three

solemn feasts, accompanied by his family at one of them — probably the passover. Although a Levite, he could not personally offer a sacrifice — that was exclusively the office of the priests; and his piety in maintaining a regular attendance on the divine ordinances is the more worthy of notice because the character of the two priests who administered them was notoriously bad. But doubtless he believed, and acted on the belief, that the ordinances were “effectual means of salvation, not from any virtue in them, or in those who administered them, but from the grace of God being communicated through them.”

4. *when ... Elkanah offered, he gave to Peninnah ... portions* — The offerer received back the greater part of the peace offerings, which he and his family or friends were accustomed to eat at a social feast before the Lord. (See on ^{<000>}Leviticus 3:3 and ^{<020>}Deuteronomy 12:12). It was out of these consecrated viands Elkanah gave portions to all the members of his family; but “unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion”; that is, a larger choice, according to the Eastern fashion of showing regard to beloved or distinguished guests. (See on ^{<000>}1 Samuel 9:24; also see on ^{<043>}Genesis 43:34).

6. *her adversary also provoked her sore* — The conduct of Peninnah was most unbecoming. But domestic broils in the houses of polygamists are of frequent occurrence, and the most fruitful cause of them has always been jealousy of the husband’s superior affection, as in this case of Hannah.

^{<000>}1 SAMUEL 1:9-18.

HANNAH’S PRAYER.

11. *she prayed ... she vowed a vow* — Here is a specimen of the intense desire that reigned in the bosoms of the Hebrew women for children. This was the burden of Hannah’s prayer; and the strong preference she expressed for a male child originated in her purpose of dedicating him to the tabernacle service. The circumstance of his birth bound him to this; but his residence within the precincts of the sanctuary would have to commence at an earlier age than usual, in consequence of the Nazarite vow.

12-18. *Eli marked her mouth* — The suspicion of the aged priest seems to indicate that the vice of intemperance was neither uncommon nor confined to one sex in those times of disorder. This mistaken impression was immediately removed, and, in the words, “God grant,” or rather, “will grant,” was followed by an invocation which, as Hannah regarded it in the light of a prophecy pointing to the accomplishment of her earnest desire, dispelled her sadness, and filled her with confident hope (^{<0118>}1 Samuel 1:18). The character and services of the expected child were sufficiently important to make his birth a fit subject for prophecy.

^{<0120>}1 SAMUEL 1:20.

SAMUEL BORN.

20. *called his name Samuel* — doubtless with her husband’s consent. The names of children were given sometimes by the fathers, and sometimes by the mothers (see ^{<0101>}Genesis 4:1,26 ^{<0159>}5:29 ^{<0137>}19:37 ^{<0121>}21:3); and among the early Hebrews, they were commonly compound names, one part including the name of God.

21. *the man Elkanah ... went up to offer ... his vow* — The solemn expression of his concurrence in Hannah’s vow was necessary to make it obligatory. (See on ^{<0113>}Numbers 30:3).

22. *But Hannah went not up* — Men only were obliged to attend the solemn feasts (^{<0127>}Exodus 23:17). But Hannah, like other pious women, was in the habit of going, only she deemed it more prudent and becoming to defer her next journey till her son’s age would enable her to fulfill her vow.

24. *three bullocks* — The *Septuagint* renders it “a bullock of three years old”; which is probably the true rendering.

CHAPTER 2

1 SAMUEL 2:1-11.

HANNAH'S SONG IN THANKFULNESS TO GOD.

1. *Hannah prayed, and said* — Praise and prayer are inseparably conjoined in Scripture (⁵⁰⁰⁰Colossians 4:2 ⁵⁰⁰⁰1 Timothy 2:1). This beautiful song was her tribute of thanks for the divine goodness in answering her petition.

mine horn is exalted in the Lord — Allusion is here made to a peculiarity in the dress of Eastern women about Lebanon, which seems to have obtained anciently among the Israelite women, that of wearing a tin or silver horn on the forehead, on which their veil is suspended. Wives, who have no children, wear it projecting in an oblique direction, while those who become mothers forthwith raise it a few inches higher, inclining towards the perpendicular, and by this slight but observable change in their headdress, make known, wherever they go, the maternal character which they now bear.

5. *they that were hungry ceased* — that is, to hunger.

the barren hath born seven — that is, many children.

6. *he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up* — that is, He reduces to the lowest state of degradation and misery, and restores to prosperity and happiness.

8. *He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill* — The dunghill, a pile of horse, cow, or camel offal, heaped up to dry in the sun, and used as fuel, was, and is, one of the common haunts of the poorest mendicants; and the change that had been made in the social position of Hannah, appeared to her grateful heart as auspicious and as great as the elevation of a poor despised beggar to the highest and most dignified rank.

inherit the throne of glory — that is, possesses seats of honor.

10. *the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth ... exalt the horn of his anointed* — This is the first place in Scripture where the word “anointed,” or Messiah, occurs; and as there was no king in Israel at the time, it seems the best interpretation to refer it to Christ. There is, indeed, a remarkable resemblance between the song of Hannah and that of Mary (^{<B14>}Luke 1:46).

11. *the child did minister unto the Lord before Eli the priest* — He must have been engaged in some occupation suited to his tender age, as in playing upon the cymbals, or other instruments of music; in lighting the lamps, or similar easy and interesting services.

^{<B12>}I SAMUEL 2:12-17.

THE SIN OF ELI’S SONS.

12. *Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial* — not only careless and irreligious, but men loose in their actions, and vicious and scandalous in their habits. Though professionally engaged in sacred duties, they were not only strangers to the power of religion in the heart, but they had thrown off its restraints, and even ran, as is sometimes done in similar cases by the sons of eminent ministers, to the opposite extreme of reckless and open profligacy.

13-17. *the priests’ custom with the people* — When persons wished to present a sacrifice of peace offering on the altar, the offering was brought in the first instance to the priest, and as the Lord’s part was burnt, the parts appropriated respectively to the priests and offerers were to be sodden. But Eli’s sons, unsatisfied with the breast and shoulder, which were the perquisites appointed to them by the divine law (^{<B27>}Exodus 29:27 ^{<B28>}Leviticus 7:31,32), not only claimed part of the offerer’s share, but rapaciously seized them previous to the sacred ceremony of heaving or waving (see on ^{<B29>}Leviticus 7:29); and moreover they committed the additional injustice of taking up with their fork those portions which they preferred, while still raw. Pious people revolted at such rapacious and profane encroachments on the dues of the altar, as well as what should

have gone to constitute the family and social feast of the offerer. The truth is, the priests having become haughty and unwilling in many instances to accept invitations to those feasts, presents of meat were sent to them; and this, though done in courtesy at first, being, in course of time, established into a right, gave rise to all the rapacious keenness of Eli's sons.

1 SAMUEL 2:18-26.

SAMUEL'S MINISTRY.

18. *But Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child* — This notice of his early services in the outer courts of the tabernacle was made to pave the way for the remarkable prophecy regarding the high priest's family.

girded with a linen ephod — A small shoulder-garment or apron, used in the sacred service by the inferior priests and Levites; sometimes also by judges or eminent persons, and hence allowed to Samuel, who, though not a Levite, was devoted to God from his birth.

19. *his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year* — Aware that he could not yet render any useful service to the tabernacle, she undertook the expense of supplying him with wearing apparel. All weaving stuffs, manufacture of cloth, and making of suits were anciently the employment of women.

20. *Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife* — This blessing, like that which he had formerly pronounced, had a prophetic virtue; which, before long, appeared in the increase of Hannah's family (⁽¹²¹⁾1 Samuel 2:21), and the growing qualifications of Samuel for the service of the sanctuary.

22-24. *the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle* — This was an institution of holy women of a strictly ascetic order, who had relinquished worldly cares and devoted themselves to the Lord; an institution which continued down to the time of Christ (⁽¹²²⁾Luke 2:37). Eli was, on the whole, a good man, but lacking in the moral and religious training of his family. He erred on the side of parental indulgence; and though he reprimanded them (see on ⁽¹²³⁾Deuteronomy 21:18), yet, from fear or indolence, he shrank from laying on them the restraints, or

subjecting them to the discipline, their gross delinquencies called for. In his judicial capacity, he winked at their flagrant acts of maladministration and suffered them to make reckless encroachments on the constitution, by which the most serious injuries were inflicted both on the rights of the people and the laws of God.

25. *they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because* — it should be *therefore*.

the Lord would slay them — It was not God's preordination, but their own wilful and impenitent disobedience which was the cause of their destruction.

I SAMUEL 2:27-35.

A PROPHECY AGAINST ELI'S HOUSE.

27. *there came a man of God unto Eli, and said ... that there shall not be an old man in thine house* — So much importance has always, in the East, been attached to old age, that it would be felt to be a great calamity, and sensibly to lower the respectability of any family which could boast of few or no old men. The prediction of this prophet was fully confirmed by the afflictions, degradation, poverty, and many untimely deaths with which the house of Eli was visited after its announcement (see ^{<0411>}1 Samuel 4:11 ^{<0443>}14:3 ^{<0228>}22:18-23 ^{<1027>}1 Kings 2:27).

31. *I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house* — By the withdrawal of the high priesthood from Eleazar, the elder of Aaron's two sons (after Nadab and Abihu were destroyed, [^{<0434>}Numbers 3:4]), that dignity had been conferred on the family of Ithamar, to which Eli belonged, and now that his descendants had forfeited the honor, it was to be taken from them and restored to the elder branch.

32. *thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation* — A successful rival for the office of high priest shall rise out of another family (^{<1055>}2 Samuel 15:35 ^{<1308>}1 Chronicles 24:3 ^{<1302>}29:22). But the marginal reading, "thou shalt see the affliction of the tabernacle," seems to be a preferable translation.

CHAPTER 3

1 SAMUEL 3:1-10.

THE LORD APPEARS TO SAMUEL IN A VISION.

1. *the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli* — His ministry consisted, of course, of such duties in or about the sanctuary as were suited to his age, which is supposed now to have been about twelve years. Whether the office had been specially assigned him, or it arose from the interest inspired by the story of his birth, Eli kept him as his immediate attendant; and he resided not *in* the sanctuary, but in one of the tents or apartments around it, assigned for the accommodation of the priests and Levites, *his* being near to that of the high priest.

the word of the Lord was precious in those days — It was very rarely known to the Israelites; and in point of fact only two prophets are mentioned as having appeared during the whole administration of the judges (^{Q001}Judges 4:4 ^{Q008}6:8).

there was no open vision — no publicly recognized prophet whom the people could consult, and from whom they might learn the will of God. There must have been certain indubitable evidences by which a communication from heaven could be distinguished. Eli knew them, for he may have received them, though not so frequently as is implied in the idea of an “open vision.”

3. *ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord* — The “temple” seems to have become the established designation of the tabernacle, and the time indicated was towards the morning twilight, as the lamps were extinguished at sunrise (see ^{Q002}Leviticus 6:12,13).

5-18. *he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me* — It is evident that his sleeping chamber was close to that of the aged high priest and that he was accustomed to be called during the night. The three successive calls addressed to the boy convinced Eli of the divine character

of the speaker, and he therefore exhorted the child to give a reverential attention to the message. The burden of [the Lord's message] was an extraordinary premonition of the judgments that impended over Eli's house; and the aged priest, having drawn the painful secret from the child, exclaimed, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good." Such is the spirit of meek and un murmuring submission in which we ought to receive the dispensations of God, however severe and afflictive. But, in order to form a right estimate of Eli's language and conduct on this occasion, we must consider the overwhelming accumulation of judgments denounced against his person, his sons, his descendants — his altar, and nation. With such a threatening prospect before him, his piety and meekness were wonderful. In his personal character he seems to have been a good man, but his sons' conduct was flagrantly bad; and though his misfortunes claim our sympathy, it is impossible to approve or defend the weak and unfaithful course which, in the retributive justice of God, brought these adversities upon him.

CHAPTER 4

1 SAMUEL 4:1-11.

ISRAEL OVERCOME BY THE PHILISTINES.

1. *the word of Samuel came to all Israel* — The character of Samuel as a prophet was now fully established. The want of an “open vision” was supplied by him, for “none of his words were let fall to the ground” (¹1 Samuel 3:19); and to his residence in Shiloh all the people of Israel repaired to consult him as an oracle, who, as the medium of receiving the divine command, or by his gift of a prophet, could inform them what was the mind of God. It is not improbable that the rising influence of the young prophet had alarmed the jealous fears of the Philistines. They had kept the Israelites in some degree of subjection ever since the death of Samson and were determined, by further crushing, to prevent the possibility of their being trained by the counsels, and under the leadership, of Samuel, to reassert their national independence. At all events, the Philistines were the aggressors (¹1 Samuel 4:2). But, on the other hand, the Israelites were rash and inconsiderate in rushing to the field without obtaining the sanction of Samuel as to the war, or having consulted him as to the subsequent measures they took.

Israel went out against the Philistines to battle — that is, to resist this new incursion.

Eben-ezer ... Aphek — Aphek, which means “strength,” is a name applied to any fort or fastness. There were several Apheks in Palestine; but the mention of Eben-ezer determines this “Aphek” to be in the south, among the mountains of Judah, near the western entrance of the pass of Beth-horon, and consequently on the borders of the Philistine territory. The first encounter at Aphek being unsuccessful, the Israelites determined to renew the engagement in better circumstances.

3-9. *Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us* — Strange that they were so blind to the real cause of the disaster and

that they did not discern, in the great and general corruption of religion and morals (^{<0122>}1 Samuel 2:22-25 ^{<0107>}7:3 ^{<0155>}Psalms 78:58), the reason why the presence and aid of God were not extended to them. Their first measure for restoring the national spirit and energy ought to have been a complete reformation — a universal return to purity of worship and morals. But, instead of cherishing a spirit of deep humiliation and sincere repentance, instead of resolving on the abolition of existing abuses, and the re-establishing of the pure faith, they adopted what appeared an easier and speedier course — they put their trust in ceremonial observances, and doubted not but that the introduction of the ark into the battlefield would ensure their victory. In recommending this extraordinary step, the elders might recollect the confidence it imparted to their ancestors (^{<0105>}Numbers 10:35 ^{<0144>}14:44), as well as what had been done at Jericho. But it is more probable that they were influenced by the heathenish ideas of their idolatrous neighbors, who carried their idol Dagon, or his sacred symbols, to their wars, believing that the power of their divinities was inseparably associated with, or residing in, their images. In short, the shout raised in the Hebrew camp, on the arrival of the ark, indicated very plainly the prevalence among the Israelites at this time of a belief in national deities — whose influence was local, and whose interest was especially exerted in behalf of the people who adored them. The joy of the Israelites was an emotion springing out of the same superstitious sentiments as the corresponding dismay of their enemies; and to afford them a convincing, though painful proof of their error, was the ulterior object of the discipline to which they were now subjected — a discipline by which God, while punishing them for their apostasy by allowing the capture of the ark, had another end in view — that of signally vindicating His supremacy over all the gods of the nations.

^{<0102>}1 SAMUEL 4:12-22.

ELI HEARING THE TIDINGS.

13-18. *Eli sat upon a seat by the wayside* — The aged priest, as a public magistrate, used, in dispensing justice, to seat himself daily in a spacious recess at the entrance gate of the city. In his intense anxiety to learn the

issue of the battle, he took up his usual place as the most convenient for meeting with passers-by. His seat was an official chair, similar to those of the ancient Egyptian judges, richly carved, superbly ornamented, high, and *without a back*. The calamities announced to Samuel as about to fall upon the family of Eli [^{Q1834}1 Samuel 2:34] were now inflicted in the death of his two sons, and after his death, by that of his daughter-in-law, whose infant son received a name that perpetuated the fallen glory of the church and nation [^{Q1834}1 Samuel 4:19-22]. The public disaster was completed by the capture of the ark. Poor Eli! He was a good man, in spite of his unhappy weaknesses. So strongly were his sensibilities enlisted on the side of religion, that the news of the capture of the ark proved to him a knell of death; and yet his overindulgence, or sad neglect of his family — the main cause of all the evils that led to its fall — has been recorded, as a beacon to warn all heads of Christian families against making shipwreck on the same rock.

CHAPTER 5

1 SAMUEL 5:1,2.

THE PHILISTINES BRING THE ARK INTO THE HOUSE OF DAGON.

1. *Ashdod* — or Azotus, one of the five Philistine satrapies, and a place of great strength. It was an inland town, thirty-four miles north of Gaza, now called Esdud.

2. *the house of Dagon* — Stately temples were erected in honor of this idol, which was the principal deity of the Philistines, but whose worship extended over all Syria, as well as Mesopotamia and Chaldea; its name being found among the Assyrian gods on the cuneiform inscriptions [RAWLINSON]. It was represented under a monstrous combination of a human head, breast, and arms, joined to the belly and tail of a fish. The captured ark was placed in the temple of Dagon, right before this image of the idol.

1 SAMUEL 5:3-5.

DAGON FALLS DOWN.

3, 4. *they of Ashdod arose early* — They were filled with consternation when they found the object of their stupid veneration prostrate before the symbol of the divine presence. Though set up, it fell again, and lay in a state of complete mutilation; its head and arms, severed from the trunk, were lying in distant and separate places, as if violently cast off, and only the fishy part remained. The degradation of their idol, though concealed by the priests on the former occasion, was now more manifest and infamous. It lay in the attitude of a vanquished enemy and a suppliant, and this picture of humiliation significantly declared the superiority of the God of Israel.

5. *Therefore neither the priests ... nor any ... tread on the threshold of Dagon* — A superstitious ceremony crept in, and in the providence of God was continued, by which the Philistines contributed to publish this proof of the helplessness of their god.

unto this day — The usage continued in practice at the time when this history was written — probably in the later years of Samuel's life.

~~CHAP~~ 1 SAMUEL 5:6-12.

THE PHILISTINES ARE SMITTEN WITH EMERODS.

6. *the hand of the Lord was heavy upon them of Ashdod* — The presumption of the Ashdodites was punished by a severe judgment that overtook them in the form of a pestilence.

smote them with emerods — bleeding piles, hemorrhoids (~~CHAP~~ Psalm 78:66), in a very aggravated form. As the heathens generally regarded diseases affecting the secret parts of the body as punishments from the gods for trespasses committed against themselves, the Ashdodites would be the more ready to look upon the prevailing epidemic as demonstrating the anger of God, already shown against their idol.

7. *the ark of God shall not abide with us* — It was removed successively to several of the large towns of the country, but the same pestilence broke out in every place and raged so fiercely and fatally that the authorities were forced to send the ark back into the land of Israel [~~CHAP~~ 1 Samuel 5:8-10].

11. *they sent* — that is, the magistrates of Ekron.

12. *the cry of the city went up to heaven* — The disease is attended with acute pain, and it is far from being a rare phenomenon in the Philistian plain [VAN DE VELDE].

CHAPTER 6

1 SAMUEL 6:1-9.

THE PHILISTINES COUNSEL HOW TO SEND BACK THE ARK.

1. *the ark ... was in the country of the Philistines seven months* —

Notwithstanding the calamities which its presence had brought on the country and the people, the Philistine lords were unwilling to relinquish such a prize, and tried every means to retain it with peace and safety, but in vain.

2, 3. *the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners* — The designed restoration of the ark was not, it seems, universally approved of, and many doubts were expressed whether the prevailing pestilence was really a judgment of Heaven. The priests and diviners united all parties by recommending a course which would enable them easily to discriminate the true character of the calamities, and at the same time to propitiate the incensed Deity for any acts of disrespect which might have been shown to His ark.

4. *Five golden emerods* — Votive or thank offerings were commonly made by the heathen in prayer for, or gratitude after, deliverance from lingering or dangerous disorders, in the form of metallic (generally silver) models or images of the diseased parts of the body. This is common still in Roman Catholic countries, as well as in the temples of the Hindus and other modern heathen.

five golden mice — This animal is supposed by some to be the jerboa or jumping mouse of Syria and Egypt [BOCHART]; by others, to be the short-tailed field mouse, which often swarms in prodigious numbers and commits great ravages in the cultivated fields of Palestine.

5. *give glory unto the God of Israel* — By these propitiatory presents, the Philistines would acknowledge His power and make reparation for the injury done to His ark.

lighten his hand ... from off your gods — Elohim for god.

6. *Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts?* — The memory of the appalling judgments that had been inflicted on Egypt was not yet obliterated. Whether preserved in written records, or in floating tradition, they were still fresh in the minds of men, and being extensively spread, were doubtless the means of diffusing the knowledge and fear of the true God.

7. *make a new cart* — Their object in making a new one for the purpose seems to have been not only for cleanliness and neatness, but from an impression that there would have been an impropriety in using one that had been applied to meaner or more common services. It appears to have been a covered wagon (see on ¹⁰⁰³2 Samuel 6:3).

two milch kine — Such untrained heifers, wanton and vagrant, would pursue no certain and regular path, like those accustomed to the yoke, and therefore were most unlikely of their own spontaneous motion to prosecute the direct road to the land of Israel.

bring their calves home from them — The strong natural affection of the dams might be supposed to stimulate their return homewards, rather than direct their steps in a foreign country.

8. *take the ark of the Lord, and lay it upon the cart* — This mode of carrying the sacred symbol was forbidden; but the ignorance of the Philistines made the indignity excusable (see on ¹⁰⁰³2 Samuel 6:6).

put the jewels ... in a coffer by the side thereof — The way of securing treasure in the East is still in a chest, chained to the house wall or some solid part of the furniture.

9-12. *Beth-shemesh* — that is, “house of the sun,” now Ain Shems [ROBINSON], a city of priests in Judah, in the southeast border of Dan, lying in a beautiful and extensive valley. JOSEPHUS says they were set agoing near a place where the road divided into two — the one leading back to Ekron, where were their calves, and the other to Beth-shemesh. Their frequent lowings attested their ardent longing for their young, and at the same time the supernatural influence that controlled their movements in a contrary direction.

12. *the lords of the Philistines went after them* — to give their tribute of homage, to prevent imposture, and to obtain the most reliable evidence of the truth. The result of this journey tended to their own deeper humiliation, and the greater illustration of God's glory.

14. *and they clave* — that is, the Beth-shemites, in an irrepressible outburst of joy.

offered the kine — Though contrary to the requirements of the law (^{OLD}Leviticus 1:3 22:19), these animals might properly be offered, as consecrated by God Himself; and though not beside the tabernacle, there were many instances of sacrifices offered by prophets and holy men on extraordinary occasions in other places.

17, 18. *And these are the golden emerods ... and the mice* — There were five representative images of the emerods, corresponding to the five principal cities of the Philistines. But the number of the golden mice must have been greater, for they were sent from the walled towns as well as the country villages.

18. *unto the great stone of Abel* — *Abel*, or *Aben*, means "stone," so that without resorting to *italics*, the reading should be, "the great stone."

19. *he smote the men of Beth-shemesh, because they had looked into the ark* — In the ecstasy of delight at seeing the return of the ark, the Beth-shemesh reapers pried into it beneath the wagon cover; and instead of covering it up again, as a sacred utensil, they let it remain exposed to common inspection, wishing it to be seen, in order that all might enjoy the triumph of seeing the votive offerings presented to it, and gratify curiosity with the sight of the sacred shrine. This was the offense of those Israelites (Levites, as well as common people), who had treated the ark with less reverence than the Philistines themselves.

he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men — Beth-shemesh being only a village, this translation *must* be erroneous, and should be, "he smote fifty out of a thousand," being only fourteen hundred in all who indulged this curiosity. God, instead of decimating, according to an ancient usage, slew only a twentieth part; that is, according to JOSEPHUS, seventy out of fourteen hundred (see ^{OLD}Numbers 4:18-22).

21. *Kirjath-jearim* — “the city of woods,” also called Kirjath-baal (¹³⁵⁰Joshua 15:60 ¹³⁸⁴18:14 ¹³³⁶1 Chronicles 13:6,7). This was the nearest town to Beth-shemesh; and being a place of strength, it was a more fitting place for the residence of the ark. Beth-shemesh being in a low plain, and Kirjath-jearim on a hill, explains the message, “Come ye down, and fetch it up to you.”

CHAPTER 7

1 SAMUEL 7:1,2.

THE ARK AT KIRJATH-JEARIM.

1. *the men of Kirjath-jearim* — “the city of woods,” also Kirjath-baal (^{<1850>}Joshua 15:60 ^{<1881>}18:14 ^{<1315>}1 Chronicles 13:5,6). It was the nearest town to Beth-shemesh and stood on a hill. This was the reason of the message (^{<1021>}1 Samuel 6:21), and why this was chosen for the convenience of people turning their faces to the ark (^{<1029>}1 Kings 8:29-35 ^{<1811>}Psalms 28:2 ^{<2110>}Daniel 6:10).

brought it into the house of Abinadab in the hill — Why it was not transported at once to Shiloh where the tabernacle and sacred vessels were remaining, is difficult to conjecture.

sanctified ... his son — He was not a Levite, and was therefore only set apart or appointed to be keeper of the place.

2. *the ark abode in Kirjath-jearim ... twenty years* — It appears, in the subsequent history, that a much longer period elapsed before its final removal from Kirjath-jearim (^{<1011>}2 Samuel 6:1-19 ^{<1311>}1 Chronicles 13:1-14). But that length of time had passed when the Israelites began to revive from their sad state of religious decline. The capture of the ark had produced a general indifference either as to its loss or its recovery.

all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord — They were then brought, doubtless by the influence of Samuel’s exhortations, to renounce idolatry, and to return to the national worship of the true God.

1 SAMUEL 7:3-6.

**THE ISRAELITES, THROUGH SAMUEL'S INFLUENCE,
SOLEMNLY REPENT AT MIZPEH.**

3-6. *Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel* — A great national reformation was effected through the influence of Samuel. Disgusted with their foreign servitude, and panting for the restoration of liberty and independence, they were open to salutary impressions; and convinced of their errors, they renounced idolatry. The re-establishment of the faith of their fathers was inaugurated at a great public meeting, held at Mizpeh in Judah, and hallowed by the observance of impressive religious solemnities. The drawing water, and pouring it out before the Lord, seems to have been a symbolical act by which, in the people's name, Samuel testified their sense of national corruption, their need of that moral purification of which water is the emblem, and their sincere desire to pour out their hearts in repentance before God.

6. *Samuel judged ... Israel in Mizpeh* — At the time of Eli's death he could not have much exceeded twenty years of age; and although his character and position must have given him great influence, it does not appear that hitherto he had done more than prophets were wont to do. Now he entered on the duties of a civil magistrate.

1 SAMUEL 7:7-14.

WHILE SAMUEL PRAYS, THE PHILISTINES ARE DISCOMFITED.

7-11. *when the Philistines heard*, etc. — The character and importance of the national convention at Mizpeh were fully appreciated by the Philistines. They discerned in it the rising spirit of religious patriotism among the Israelites that was prepared to throw off the yoke of their domination. Anxious to crush it at the first, they made a sudden incursion while the Israelites were in the midst of their solemn celebration. Unprepared for resistance, they besought Samuel to supplicate the divine interposition to save them from their enemies. The prophet's prayers and

sacrifice were answered by such a tremendous storm of thunder and lightning that the assailants, panic-struck, were disordered and fled. The Israelites, recognizing the hand of God, rushed courageously on the foe they had so much dreaded and committed such immense havoc, that the Philistines did not for long recover from this disastrous blow. This brilliant victory secured peace and independence to Israel for twenty years, as well as the restitution of the usurped territory.

12. *Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen* — on an open spot between the town and “the crag” (some well-known rock in the neighborhood). A huge stone pillar was erected as a monument of their victory (¹³⁰¹Leviticus 26:1). The name — Eben-ezer — is thought to have been written on the face of it.

CHAPTER 8

1 SAMUEL 8:1-18.

OCCASIONED BY THE ILL-GOVERNMENT OF SAMUEL'S SONS, THE ISRAELITES ASK A KING.

1-5. *when Samuel was old* — He was now about fifty-four years of age, having discharged the office of sole judge for twelve years. Unable, from growing infirmities, to prosecute his circuit journeys through the country, he at length confined his magisterial duties to Ramah and its neighborhood (⁴⁰⁷⁵1 Samuel 7:15), delegating to his sons as his deputies the administration of justice in the southern districts of Palestine, their provincial court being held at Beer-sheba. The young men, however, did not inherit the high qualities of their father. Having corrupted the fountains of justice for their own private aggrandizement, a deputation of the leading men in the country lodged a complaint against them in headquarters, accompanied with a formal demand for a change in the government. The limited and occasional authority of the judges, the disunion and jealousy of the tribes under the administration of those rulers, had been creating a desire for a united and permanent form of government; while the advanced age of Samuel, together with the risk of his death happening in the then unsettled state of the people, was the occasion of calling forth an expression of this desire now.

6-10. *the thing displeased Samuel when they said, Give us a king to judge us* — Personal and family feelings might affect his views of this public movement. But his dissatisfaction arose principally from the proposed change being revolutionary in its character. Though it would not entirely subvert their theocratic government, the appointment of a visible monarch would necessarily tend to throw out of view their unseen King and Head. God intimated, through Samuel, that their request would, in anger, be granted, while at the same time he apprised them of some of the evils that would result from their choice.

11. *This will be the manner of the king* — The following is a very just and graphic picture of the despotic governments which anciently and still are found in the East, and into conformity with which the Hebrew monarchy, notwithstanding the restrictions prescribed by the law, gradually slid.

He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself — Oriental sovereigns claim a right to the services of any of their subjects at pleasure.

some shall run before his chariots — The royal equipages were, generally throughout the East (as in Persia they still are), preceded and accompanied by a number of attendants who ran on foot.

12. *he will appoint him captains* — In the East, a person must accept any office to which he may be nominated by the king, however irksome it may be to his taste or ruinous to his interests.

13. *he will take your daughters to be confectionaries* — Cookery, baking, and the kindred works are, in Eastern countries, female employment, and thousands of young women are occupied with these offices in the palaces even of petty princes.

14-18. *he will take your fields*, etc. — The circumstances mentioned here might be illustrated by exact analogies in the conduct of many Oriental monarchs in the present day.

19-22. *Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel* — They sneered at Samuel's description as a bugbear to frighten them. Determined, at all hazards, to gain their object, they insisted on being made like all the other nations, though it was their glory and happiness to be unlike other nations in having the Lord for their King and Lawgiver (⁽⁴⁰²³⁾Numbers 23:9 ⁽⁴⁵³³⁾Deuteronomy 33:28). Their demand was conceded, for the government of a king had been provided for in the law; and they were dismissed to wait the appointment, which God had reserved to Himself (⁽⁴⁵⁷⁴⁾Deuteronomy 17:14-20).

CHAPTER 9

1 SAMUEL 9:1-14.

SAUL, DESPAIRING TO FIND HIS FATHER'S ASSES, COMES TO SAMUEL.

1. *a mighty man of power* — that is, of great wealth and substance. The family was of high consideration in the tribe of Benjamin, and therefore Saul's words must be set down among the common forms of affected humility, which Oriental people are wont to use.
2. *Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly* — He had a fine appearance; for it is evident that he must have been only a little under seven feet tall. A gigantic stature and an athletic frame must have been a popular recommendation at that time in that country.
3. *the asses of Kish Saul's father were lost. And Kish said to Saul ... arise, go seek the asses* — The probability is that the family of Kish, according to the immemorial usage of Oriental shepherds in the purely pastoral regions, had let the animals roam at large during the grazing season, at the close of which messengers were despatched in search of them. Such travelling searches are common; and, as each owner has his own stamp marked on his cattle, the mention of it to the shepherds he meets gradually leads to the discovery of the strayed animals. This ramble of Saul's had nothing extraordinary in it, except its *superior* directions and issue, which turned its uncertainty into certainty.
- 4, 5. *he passed through mount Ephraim* — This being situated on the north of Benjamin, indicates the direction of Saul's journey. The district explored means the whole of the mountainous region, with its valleys and defiles, which belonged to Ephraim. Turning apparently southwards — probably through the verdant hills between Shiloh and the vales of Jordan (Shalisha and Shalim) — he approached again the borders of Benjamin, scoured the land of Zuph, and was proposing to return, when his servant

recollected that they were in the immediate neighborhood of the man of God, who would give them counsel.

6. *there is in this city a man of God* — Ramah was the usual residence of Samuel, but several circumstances, especially the mention of Rachel's sepulcher, which lay in Saul's way homeward [^{911E}1 Samuel 10:2], lead to the conclusion that "this city" was not the Ramah where Samuel dwelt.

peradventure he can show us our way that we should go — It seems strange that a dignified prophet should be consulted in such an affair. But it is probable that at the introduction of the prophetic office, the seers had discovered things lost or stolen, and thus their power for higher revelations was gradually established.

7. *Saul said to his servant, But, behold, if we go, what shall we bring the man?* — According to Eastern notions, it would be considered a want of respect for any person to go into the presence of a superior man of rank or of official station without a present of some kind in his hand, however trifling in value.

the bread is spent in our vessels — Shepherds, going in quest of their cattle, put up in a bag as much flour for making bread as will last sometimes for thirty days. It appears that Saul thought of giving the man of God a cake from his travelling bag, and this would have been sufficient to render the indispensable act of civility — the customary tribute to official dignity.

8. *the fourth part of a shekel of silver* — rather more than quarter. Contrary to our Western notions, money is in the East the most acceptable form in which a present can be made to a man of rank.

9. *seer ... Prophet* — The recognized distinction in latter times was, that a seer was one who was favored with visions of God — a view of things invisible to mortal sight; and a prophet foretold future events.

11-13. *as they went up the hill* — The modern village, Er-Rameh, lies on an eminence; and on their way they met a band of young maidens going out to the well, which, like all similar places in Palestine, was beyond the precincts of the town. From these damsels they learned that the day was devoted to a festival occasion, in honor of which Samuel had arrived in the

city; that a sacrifice had been offered, which was done by prophets in extraordinary circumstances at a distance from the tabernacle, and that a feast was to follow — implying that it had been a peace offering; and that, according to the venerable practice of the Israelites, the man of God was expected to ask a special blessing on the food in a manner becoming the high occasion.

14. *Samuel came out against them, for to go up to the high place* — Such were the simple manners of the times that this prophet, the chief man in Israel, was seen going to preside at a high festival undistinguished either by his dress or equipage from any ordinary citizen.

1 SAMUEL 9:15-27.

GOD REVEALS TO SAMUEL SAUL'S COMING, AND HIS APPOINTMENT TO THE KINGDOM.

15, 16. *Now the Lord had told Samuel in his ear a day before* — The description of Saul, the time of his arrival, and the high office to which he was destined, had been secretly intimated to Samuel from heaven. The future king of Israel was to fight the battles of the Lord and protect His people. It would appear that they were at this time suffering great molestation from the Philistines, and that this was an additional reason of their urgent demands for the appointment of a king (see ¹1 Samuel 10:5 13:3).

18-20. *Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is* — Satisfying the stranger's inquiry, Samuel invited him to the feast, as well as to sojourn till the morrow; and, in order to reconcile him to the delay, he assured him that the strayed asses had been recovered.

20, 21. *on whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on thee, and on all thy father's house?* — This was a covert and indirect premonition of the royal dignity that awaited him; and, though Saul's answer shows that he fully understood it, he affected to doubt that the prophet was in earnest.

21. *And Saul answered and said, Amos not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel,* etc. — By selecting a king from this least and nearly

extinct tribe (^{<0746>}Judges 20:46-48), divine wisdom designed to remove all grounds of jealousy among the other tribes.

22. *Samuel took Saul and his servant, and brought them into the parlour*

— The toil-worn but noble-looking traveler found himself suddenly seated among the principal men of the place and treated as the most distinguished guest.

24. *the cook took up the shoulder ... and set it before Saul. And Samuel said, Behold that which is left; set it before thee, and eat* — that is,

reserved (See on ^{<01837>}Genesis 18:7 and ^{<01434>}Genesis 43:34). This was, most probably, the right shoulder; which, as the perquisite of the sacrifice, belonged to Samuel, and which he had set aside for his expected guest. In the sculptures of the Egyptian shambles, also, the first joint taken off was always the right shoulder for the priest. The meaning of those distinguished attentions must have been understood by the other guests.

25-27. *Samuel communed with Saul upon the top of the house* — Saul

was taken to lodge with the prophet for that night. Before retiring to rest, they communed on the flat roof of the house, the couch being laid there (^{<01837>}Joshua 2:6), when, doubtless, Samuel revealed the secret and described the peculiar duties of a monarch in a nation so related to the Divine King as Israel. Next morning early, Samuel roused his guest, and conveying him on his way towards the skirts of the city, sought, before parting, a *private* interview — the object of which is narrated in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 10

1 SAMUEL 10:1-27.

SAMUEL ANOINTS SAUL, AND CONFIRMS HIM BY THE PREDICTION OF THREE SIGNS.

1. *Then Samuel took a vial of oil* — This was the ancient (^{Q008}Judges 9:8) ceremony of investiture with the royal office among the Hebrews and other Eastern nations. But there were two unctions to the kingly office; the one in private, by a prophet (^{Q063}1 Samuel 16:13), which was meant to be only a prophetic intimation of the person attaining that high dignity — the more public and formal inauguration (^{Q009}2 Samuel 2:4 ^{Q005}5:3) was performed by the high priest, and perhaps with the holy oil, but that is not certain. The first of a dynasty was thus anointed, but not his heirs, unless the succession was disputed (^{Q003}1 Kings 1:39 ^{Q010}2 Kings 11:12 ^{Q230}23:30 ^{Q420}2 Chronicles 23:11).

kissed him — This salutation, as explained by the words that accompanied it, was an act of respectful homage, a token of congratulation to the new king (^{Q402}Psalms 2:12).

2. *When thou art departed from me to-day* — The design of these specific predictions of what should be met with on the way, and the number and minuteness of which would arrest attention, was to confirm Saul's reliance on the prophetic character of Samuel, and lead him to give full credence to what had been revealed to him as the word of God.

Rachel's sepulcher — near Beth-lehem (see on ^{Q156}Genesis 35:16).

Zelzah — or Zelah, now *Bet-jalah*, in the neighborhood of that town.

3. *the plain* — or, “the oak of Tabor,” not the celebrated mount, for that was far distant.

three men going up to God to Beth-el — apparently to offer sacrifices there at a time when the ark and the tabernacle were not in a settled abode,

and God had not yet declared the permanent place which He should choose. The kids were for sacrifice, the loaves for the offering, and the wine for the libations.

5. *the hill of God* — probably Geba (^{<09B>}1 Samuel 13:3), so called from a school of the prophets being established there. The company of prophets were, doubtless, the pupils at this seminary, which had probably been instituted by Samuel, and in which the chief branches of education taught were a knowledge of the law, and of psalmody with instrumental music, which is called “prophesying” (here and in ^{<13>}1 Chronicles 25:1,7).

6. *the Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee* — literally, “rush upon thee,” suddenly endowing thee with a capacity and act in a manner far superior to thy previous character and habits; and instead of the simplicity, ignorance, and sheepishness of a peasant, thou wilt display an energy, wisdom, and magnanimity worthy of a prince.

8. *thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal* — This, according to JOSEPHUS, was to be a standing rule for the observance of Saul while the prophet and he lived; that in every great crisis, such as a hostile incursion on the country, he should repair to Gilgal, where he was to remain seven days, to afford time for the tribes on both sides Jordan to assemble, and Samuel to reach it.

9-11. *when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart* — Influenced by the words of Samuel, as well as by the accomplishment of these signs, Saul’s reluctance to undertake the onerous office was overcome. The fulfillment of the two first signs [^{<09B>}1 Samuel 10:7,8] is passed over, but the third is specially described. The spectacle of a man, though more fit to look after his father’s cattle than to take part in the sacred exercises of the young prophets — a man without any previous instruction, or any known taste, entering with ardor into the spirit, and skilfully accompanying the melodies of the sacred band, was so extraordinary a phenomenon, that it gave rise to the proverb, “Is Saul also among the prophets?” (see ^{<09B>}1 Samuel 19:24). The prophetic spirit had come upon him; and to Saul it was as personal and experimental an evidence of the truth of God’s word that had been spoken to him, as converts to Christianity have in themselves from the sanctifying power of the Gospel.

12. *But who is their father?* — The *Septuagint* reads, “Who is his father?” referring to Saul the son of Kish.

17-25. *Samuel called the people together ... at Mizpeh* — a shaft-like hill near Hebron, five hundred feet in height. The national assemblies of the Israelites were held there. A day having been appointed for the election of a king, Samuel, after having charged the people with a rejection of God’s institution and a superseding of it by one of their own, proceeded to the nomination of the new monarch. As it was of the utmost importance that the appointment should be under the divine direction and control, the determination was made by the miraculous lot, tribes, families, and individuals being successively passed until Saul was found. His concealment of himself must have been the result either of innate modesty, or a sudden nervous excitement under the circumstances. When dragged into view, he was seen to possess all those corporeal advantages which a rude people desiderate in their sovereigns; and the exhibition of which gained for the prince the favorable opinion of Samuel also. In the midst of the national enthusiasm, however, the prophet’s deep piety and genuine patriotism took care to explain “the manner of the kingdom,” that is, the royal rights and privileges, together with the limitations to which they were to be subjected; and in order that the constitution might be ratified with all due solemnity, the charter of this constitutional monarchy was recorded and laid up “before the Lord,” that is, deposited in the custody of the priests, along with the most sacred archives of the nation.

26. *And Saul also went home to Gibeah* — near Geba. This was his place of residence (see ⁽¹⁷⁾Judges 20:20), about five miles north of Jerusalem.

there went ... a band of men, whose hearts God had touched — who feared God and regarded allegiance to their king as a conscientious duty. They are opposed to “the children of Belial.”

27. *the children of Belial said, How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought him no presents* — In Eastern countries, the honor of the sovereign and the splendor of the royal household are upheld, not by a fixed rate of taxation, but by presents brought at certain seasons by officials, and men of wealth, from all parts of the kingdom, according to the means of the individual, and of a customary registered value. Such was the tribute which Saul’s opponents withheld, and for want of which he

was unable to set up a kingly establishment for a while. But “biding his time,” he bore the insult with a prudence and magnanimity which were of great use in the beginning of his government.

CHAPTER 11

1 SAMUEL 11:1-4.

NAHASH OFFERS THEM OF JABESH-GILEAD A REPROACHFUL CONDITION.

1. *Then Nahash the Ammonite came up* — Nahash (“serpent”); (see ⁽⁷⁰⁸⁾Judges 8:3). The Ammonites had long claimed the right of original possession in Gilead. Though repressed by Jephthah (⁽⁷¹³⁾Judges 11:33), they now, after ninety years, renew their pretensions; and it was the report of their threatened invasion that hastened the appointment of a king (⁽⁹²²⁾1 Samuel 12:12).

Make a covenant with us, and we will serve thee — They saw no prospect of aid from the western Israelites, who were not only remote, but scarcely able to repel the incursions of the Philistines from themselves.

2. *thrust out all your right eyes* — literally, “scoop” or “hollow out” the ball. This barbarous mutilation is the usual punishment of usurpers in the East, inflicted on chiefs; sometimes, also, even in modern history, on the whole male population of a town. Nahash meant to keep the Jabeshites useful as tributaries, whence he did not wish to render them wholly blind, but only to deprive them of their right eye, which would disqualify them for war. Besides, his object was, through the people of Jabesh-gilead, to insult the Israelitish nation.

3, 4. *send messengers unto all the coasts of Israel* — a curious proof of the general dissatisfaction that prevailed as to the appointment of Saul. Those Gileadites deemed him capable neither of advising nor succoring them; and even in his own town the appeal was made to the people — not to the prince.

1 SAMUEL 11:5-11.

THEY SEND TO SAUL, AND ARE DELIVERED.

7. *he took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces* — (see ⁰⁷⁰²⁹Judges 19:29). This particular form of war summons was suited to the character and habits of an agricultural and pastoral people. Solemn in itself, the denunciation that accompanied it carried a terrible threat to those that neglected to obey it. Saul conjoins the name of Samuel with his own, to lend the greater influence to the measure, and to strike greater terror unto all contemners of the order. The small contingent furnished by Judah suggests that the disaffection to Saul was strongest in that tribe.

8. *Bezek* — This place of general muster was not far from Shechem, on the road to Beth-shan, and nearly opposite the ford for crossing to Jabesh-gilead. The great number on the muster-roll showed the effect of Saul's wisdom and promptitude.

11. *on the morrow, that Saul put the people in three companies* — Crossing the Jordan in the evening, Saul marched his army all night, and came at daybreak on the camp of the Ammonites, who were surprised in three different parts, and totally routed. This happened before the seven days' truce expired.

1 SAMUEL 11:12-15.

SAUL CONFIRMED KING.

12-15. *the people said ..., Who is he that said, Shall Saul reign over us?* — The enthusiastic admiration of the people, under the impulse of grateful and generous feelings, would have dealt summary vengeance on the minority who opposed Saul, had not he, either from principle or policy, shown himself as great in clemency as in valor. The call and sagacious counsel of Samuel directed the popular feelings into a right channel, by appointing a general assembly of the militia, the really effective force of the nation, at Gilgal, where, amid great pomp and religious solemnities, the victorious leader was confirmed in his kingdom (⁰⁸¹¹⁵1 Samuel 11:15).

CHAPTER 12

1 SAMUEL 12:1-5.

SAMUEL TESTIFIES HIS INTEGRITY.

1-4. *Samuel said unto all Israel* — This public address was made after the solemn re-instalment of Saul, and before the convention at Gilgal separated. Samuel, having challenged a review of his public life, received a unanimous testimony to the unsullied honor of his personal character, as well as the justice and integrity of his public administration.

5. *the Lord is witness against you, and his anointed is witness* — that, by their own acknowledgment, he had given them no cause to weary of the divine government by judges, and that, therefore, the blame of desiring a change of government rested with themselves. This was only insinuated, and they did not fully perceive his drift.

1 SAMUEL 12:6-16.

HE REPROVES THE PEOPLE FOR INGRATITUDE.

7-16. *Now therefore stand still, that I may reason with you* — The burden of this faithful and uncompromising address was to show them, that though they had obtained the change of government they had so importunately desired, their conduct was highly displeasing to their heavenly King; nevertheless, if they remained faithful to Him and to the principles of the theocracy, they might be delivered from many of the evils to which the new state of things would expose them. And in confirmation of those statements, no less than in evidence of the divine displeasure, a remarkable phenomenon, on the invocation of the prophet, and of which he gave due premonition, took place.

11. *Bedan* — The *Septuagint* reads “Barak”; and for “Samuel” some versions read “Samson,” which seems more natural than that the prophet should mention himself to the total omission of the greatest of the judges. (Compare ^{<8113>}Hebrews 11:32).

^{<9127>}1 SAMUEL 12:17-25.

HE TERRIFIES THEM WITH THUNDER IN HARVEST-TIME.

17-25. *Is it not wheat harvest to-day?* — That season in Palestine occurs at the end of June or beginning of July, when it seldom or never rains, and the sky is serene and cloudless. There could not, therefore, have been a stronger or more appropriate proof of a divine mission than the phenomenon of rain and thunder happening, without any prognostics of its approach, upon the prediction of a person professing himself to be a prophet of the Lord, and giving it as an attestation of his words being true. The people regarded it as a miraculous display of divine power, and, panic-struck, implored the prophet to pray for them. Promising to do so, he dispelled their fears. The conduct of Samuel, in this whole affair of the king’s appointment, shows him to have been a great and good man who sank all private and personal considerations in disinterested zeal for his country’s good and whose last words in public were to warn the people, and their king, of the danger of apostasy and disobedience to God.

CHAPTER 13

1 SAMUEL 13:1,2.

SAUL'S SELECTED BAND.

1. *Saul reigned one year* — (see *Margin*). The transactions recorded in the eleventh and twelfth chapters were the principal incidents comprising the first year of Saul's reign; and the events about to be described in this happened in the second year.

2. *Saul chose him three thousand men of Israel* — This band of picked men was a bodyguard, who were kept constantly on duty, while the rest of the people were dismissed till their services might be needed. It seems to have been his tactics to attack the Philistine garrisons in the country by different detachments, rather than by risking a general engagement; and his first operations were directed to rid his native territory of Benjamin of these enemies.

1 SAMUEL 13:3,4.

HE CALLS THE HEBREWS TO GILGAL AGAINST THE PHILISTINES.

3, 4. *And Jonathan* — that is, “God-given.”

smote the garrison of the Philistines ... in Geba — Geba and Gibeah were towns in Benjamin, very close to each other (^{13:28}Joshua 18:24,28). The word rendered “garrison” is different from that of ^{13:23}1 Samuel 13:23 ^{14:1}14:1, and signifies, literally, something erected; probably a pillar or flagstaff, indicative of Philistine ascendancy. That the secret demolition of this standard, so obnoxious to a young and noble-hearted patriot, was the feat of Jonathan referred to, is evident from the words, “the Philistines

heard of it,” which is not the way we should expect an attack on a fortress to be noticed.

Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land — This, a well-known sound, was the usual Hebrew war summons; the first blast was answered by the beacon fire in the neighboring places. A second blast was blown — then answered by a fire in a more distant locality, whence the proclamation was speedily diffused over the whole country. As the Philistines resented what Jonathan had done as an overt attempt to throw off their yoke, a levy, en masse, of the people was immediately ordered, the rendezvous to be the old camping ground at Gilgal.

1 SAMUEL 13:5.

THE PHILISTINES' GREAT HOST.

5. *The Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen* — Either this number must include chariots of every kind — or the word “chariots” must mean the men fighting in them (⁴⁰⁰⁸2 Samuel 10:18 ⁴¹²¹1 Kings 20:21 ⁴³⁹⁸1 Chronicles 19:18); or, as some eminent critics maintain, *Sheloshim* (“thirty”), has crept into the text, instead of *Shelosh* (“three”). The gathering of the chariots and horsemen must be understood to be on the Philistine plain, before they ascended the western passes and pitched in the heart of the Benjamite hills, in “Michmash,” (now Mukmas), a “steep precipitous valley” [ROBINSON], eastward from Beth-aven (Beth-el).

1 SAMUEL 13:6-8.

THE ISRAELITES' DISTRESS.

6. *When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait* — Though Saul’s gallantry was unabated, his subjects displayed no degree of zeal and energy. Instead of venturing an encounter, they fled in all directions. Some, in their panic, left the country (⁴⁹¹¹1 Samuel 13:7), but most took refuge in the hiding-places which the broken ridges of the neighborhood abundantly

afford. The rocks are perforated in every direction with “caves,” and “holes,” and “pits” — crevices and fissures sunk deep in the rocky soil, subterranean granaries or dry wells in the adjoining fields. The name of Michmash (“hidden treasure”) seems to be derived from this natural peculiarity [STANLEY].

8. *he* — that is, Saul.

tarried seven days — He was still in the eastern borders of his kingdom, in the valley of Jordan. Some bolder spirits had ventured to join the camp at Gilgal; but even the courage of those stout-hearted men gave way in prospect of this terrible visitation; and as many of them were stealing away, he thought some immediate and decided step must be taken.

1 SAMUEL 13:9-16.

SAUL, WEARY OF WAITING FOR SAMUEL, SACRIFICES.

9-14. *Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings* — Saul, though patriotic enough in his own way, was more ambitious of gaining the glory of a triumph to himself than ascribing it to God. He did not understand his proper position as king of Israel; and although aware of the restrictions under which he held the sovereignty, he wished to rule as an autocrat, who possessed absolute power both in civil and sacred things. This occasion was his first trial. Samuel waited till the last day of the seven, in order to put the constitutional character of the king to the test; and, as Saul, in his impatient and passionate haste knowingly transgressed (⁹⁻¹²1 Samuel 13:12) by invading the priest’s office and thus showing his unfitness for his high office (as he showed nothing of the faith of Gideon and other Hebrew generals), he incurred a threat of the rejection which his subsequent waywardness confirmed.

15, 16. *Samuel ... gat him ... unto Gibeah ... and Saul, and Jonathan his son, and the people that were present with them, abode in Gibeah* — Saul removed his camp thither, either in the hope that, it being his native town, he would gain an increase of followers or that he might enjoy the counsels and influence of the prophet.

17, 18. *the spoilers came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies* — ravaging through the three valleys which radiate from the uplands of Michmash to Ophrah on the north, through the pass of Beth-horon on the west, and down the ravines of Zeboim (“the hyænas”), towards the Ghor or Jordan valley on the east.

19, 20. *Now there was no smith found throughout ... Israel* — The country was in the lowest state of depression and degradation. The Philistines, after the great victory over the sons of Eli, had become the virtual masters of the land. Their policy in disarming the natives has been often followed in the East. For repairing any serious damage to their agricultural implements, they had to apply to the neighboring forts.

21. *Yet they had a file* — as a kind of privilege, for the purpose of sharpening sundry smaller utensils of husbandry.

CHAPTER 14

1 SAMUEL 14:1-14.

JONATHAN MIRACULOUSLY SMITES THE PHILISTINES' GARRISON.

1. *the Philistines' garrison* — “the standing camp” (^{Q1E3}1 Samuel 13:23, *Margin*) “in the passage of Michmash” (^{Q1E6}1 Samuel 13:16), now Wady Es-Suweinit. “It begins in the neighborhood of Betin (Beth-el) and El-Bireh (Beetroth), and as it breaks through the ridge below these places, its sides form precipitous walls. On the right, about a quarter of an acre below, it again breaks off, and passes between high perpendicular precipices” [ROBINSON].

2. *Saul tarried in the uttermost part of Gibeah* — Hebrew, “Geba”; entrenched, along with Samuel and Ahiah the high priest, on the top of one of the conical or spherical hills which abound in the Benjamite territory, and favorable for an encampment, called Migron (“a precipice”).

4. *between the passages* — that is, the deep and great ravine of Suweinit.

Jonathan sought to go over unto the Philistines' garrison — a distance of about three miles running between two jagged points; Hebrew, “teeth of the cliff.”

there was a sharp rock on the one side, and a sharp rock on the other side ... Bozez — (“shining”) from the aspect of the chalky rock.

Seneh — (“the thorn”) probably from a solitary acacia on its top. They are the only rocks of the kind in this vicinity; and the top of the crag towards Michmash was occupied as the post of the Philistines. The two camps were in sight of each other; and it was up the steep rocky sides of this isolated eminence that Jonathan and his armorbearer (^{Q1E6}1 Samuel 14:6) made their adventurous approach. This enterprise is one of the most gallant that history or romance records. The action, viewed in itself, was

rash and contrary to all established rules of military discipline, which do not permit soldiers to fight or to undertake any enterprise that may involve important consequences without the order of the generals.

6. *it may be that the Lord will work for us* — This expression did not imply a doubt; it signified simply that the object he aimed at was not in his own power — but it depended upon God — and that he expected success neither from his own strength nor his own merit.

9, 10. *if they say, Come up unto us; then we will go up: for the Lord hath delivered them into our hand* — When Jonathan appears here to prescribe a sign or token of God's will, we may infer that the same spirit which inspired this enterprise suggested the means of its execution, and put into his heart what to ask of God. (See on ^{<1240>}Genesis 24:12).

11. *Behold, the Hebrews come forth out of the holes* — As it could not occur to the sentries that two men had come with hostile designs, it was a natural conclusion that they were Israelite deserters. And hence no attempt was made to hinder their ascent, or stone them.

14, 15. *that first slaughter, which Jonathan and his armor-bearer made, was about twenty men, within as it were an half acre of land, which a yoke of oxen might plow* — This was a very ancient mode of measurement, and it still subsists in the East. The men who saw them scrambling up the rock had been surprised and killed, and the spectacle of twenty corpses would suggest to others that they were attacked by a numerous force. The success of the adventure was aided by a panic that struck the enemy, produced both by the sudden surprise and the shock of an earthquake. The feat was begun and achieved by the faith of Jonathan, and the issue was of God.

16. *the watchmen of Saul ... looked* — The wild disorder in the enemies' camp was described and the noise of dismay heard on the heights of Gibeah.

17-19. *Then said Saul unto the people that were with him, Number now, and see who is gone from us* — The idea occurred to him that it might be some daring adventurer belonging to his own little troop, and it would be easy to discover him.

18. *Saul said unto Ahiah, Bring hither the ark of God* — There is no evidence that the ark had been brought from Kirjath-jearim. The *Septuagint* version is preferable; which, by a slight variation of the text, reads, “the ephod”; that is, the priestly cape, which the high priest put on when consulting the oracle. That this should be at hand is natural, from the presence of Ahiah himself, as well as the nearness of Nob, where the tabernacle was then situated.

19. *Withdraw thine hand* — The priest, invested with the ephod, prayed with raised and extended hands. Saul perceiving that the opportunity was inviting, and that God appeared to have sufficiently declared in favor of His people, requested the priest to cease, that they might immediately join in the contest. The season for consultation was past — the time for prompt action was come.

20-22. *Saul and all the people* — All the warriors in the garrison at Gibeah, the Israelite deserters in the camp of the Philistines, and the fugitives among the mountains of Ephraim, now all rushed to the pursuit, which was hot and sanguinary.

23. *So the Lord saved Israel that day: and the battle passed over unto Beth-aven* — that is, “Beth-el.” It passed over the forest, now destroyed, on the central ridge of Palestine, then over to the other side from the eastern pass of Michmash (^{Chel}1 Samuel 14:31), to the western pass of Aijalon, through which they escaped into their own plains.

24. *Saul had adjured the people* — Afraid lest so precious an opportunity of effectually humbling the Philistine power might be lost, the impetuous king laid an anathema on any one who should taste food until the evening. This rash and foolish denunciation distressed the people, by preventing them taking such refreshments as they might get on the march, and materially hindered the successful attainment of his own patriotic object.

25. *all they of the land came to a wood; and there was honey* — The honey is described as “upon the ground,” “dropping” from the trees, and in honeycombs — indicating it to be bees’ honey. “Bees in the East are not, as in England, kept in hives; they are all in a wild state. The forests

literally flow with honey; large combs may be seen hanging on the trees as you pass along, full of honey” [ROBERTS].

31-34. *the people were very faint. And the people flew upon the spoil* — at evening, when the time fixed by Saul had expired. Faint and famishing, the pursuers fell voraciously upon the cattle they had taken, and threw them on the ground to cut off their flesh and eat them raw, so that the army, by Saul’s rashness, were defiled by eating blood, or living animals; probably, as the Abyssinians do, who cut a part of the animal’s rump, but close the hide upon it, and nothing mortal follows from that wound. They were painfully conscientious in keeping the king’s order for fear of the curse, but had no scruple in transgressing God’s command. To prevent this violation of the law, Saul ordered a large stone to be rolled, and those that slaughtered the oxen to cut their throats on that stone. By laying the animal’s head on the high stone, the blood oozed out on the ground, and sufficient evidence was afforded that the ox or sheep was dead before it was attempted to eat it.

45. *the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not* — When Saul became aware of Jonathan’s transgression in regard to the honey, albeit it was done in ignorance and involved no guilt, he was, like Jephthah [⁻⁰⁷¹³¹Judges 11:31,35], about to put his son to death, in conformity with his vow [⁻⁰⁹⁴⁴⁴1 Samuel 14:44]. But the more enlightened conscience of the army prevented the tarnishing the glory of the day by the blood of the young hero, to whose faith and valor it was chiefly due.

47, 48. *So Saul ... fought against all his enemies on every side* — This signal triumph over the Philistines was followed, not only by their expulsion from the land of Israel, but by successful incursions against various hostile neighbors, whom he harassed though he did not subdue them.

CHAPTER 15

1 SAMUEL 15:1-6.

SAUL SENT TO DESTROY AMALEK.

1. Samuel also said unto Saul, The Lord sent me to anoint thee ...: now therefore hearken thou unto ... the Lord — Several years had been passed in successful military operations against troublesome neighbors. During these Saul had been left to act in a great measure at his own discretion as an independent prince. Now a second test is proposed of his possessing the character of a theocratic monarch in Israel; and in announcing the duty required of him, Samuel brought before him his official station as the Lord's vicegerent, and the peculiar obligation under which he was laid to act in that capacity. He had formerly done wrong, for which a severe rebuke and threatening were administered to him (⁰¹³³¹1 Samuel 13:13,14). Now an opportunity was afforded him of retrieving that error by an exact obedience to the divine command.

2, 3. Amalek — the powerful tribe which inhabited the country immediately to the eastward of the northern Cushites. Their territory extended over the whole of the eastern portion of the desert of Sinai to Rephidim — the earliest opponent (⁰²⁵¹⁸Deuteronomy 25:18 ⁰²⁷⁰⁸Exodus 17:8-16) — the hereditary and restless enemy of Israel (⁰⁴⁴⁴⁵Numbers 14:45 ⁰⁷⁰⁸³Judges 3:13 ⁰⁷⁰⁶⁸6:3), and who had not repented (⁰⁴⁴⁴⁸1 Samuel 14:48) of their bitter and sleepless hatred during the five hundred years that had elapsed since their doom was pronounced. Being a people of nomadic habits, they were as plundering and dangerous as the Bedouin Arabs, particularly to the southern tribes. The national interest required, and God, as KING OF ISRAEL, decreed that this public enemy should be removed. Their destruction was to be without reservation or exception.

I remember — I am reminded of what Amalek did — perhaps by the still remaining trophy or memorial erected by Moses (⁰²⁷¹⁵Exodus 17:15,16).

4. *Saul gathered the people together* — The alacrity with which he entered on the necessary preparations for the expedition gave a fair, but delusive promise of faithfulness in its execution.

Telaim — or Telem, among the uttermost cities of the tribe of Judah towards the coast of Edom (^{<OR>}Joshua 15:21,24).

5. *Saul came to a city of Amalek* — probably their capital.

laid wait in the valley — following the strategic policy of Joshua at Ai (^{<OR>}Joshua 8:4).

6. *Kenites* — (See on ^{<OR>}Judges 1:16). In consequence, probably, of the unsettled state of Judah, they seem to have returned to their old desert tracts. Though now intermingled with the Amalekites, they were not implicated in the offenses of that wicked race; but for the sake of their ancestors, between whom and those of Israel there had been a league of amity, a timely warning was afforded them to remove from the scene of danger.

^{<OR>}1 SAMUEL 15:7-9.

HE SPARES AGAG AND THE BEST OF THE SPOIL.

7-9. *Saul smote the Amalekites* — His own view of the proper and expedient course to follow was his rule, not the command of God.

8, 9. *he took Agag ... alive* — This was the common title of the Amalekite kings. He had no scruple about the apparent cruelty of it, for he made fierce and indiscriminate havoc of the people. But he spared Agag, probably to enjoy the glory of displaying so distinguished a captive, and, in like manner, the most valuable portions of the booty, as the cattle. By this wilful and partial obedience to a positive command (^{<OR>}1 Samuel 15:3), complying with it in some parts and violating it in others, as suited his own taste and humor, Saul showed his selfish, arbitrary temper, and his love of despotic power, and his utter unfitness to perform the duties of a delegated king in Israel.

1 SAMUEL 15:10,11.

GOD REJECTS HIS FOR DISOBEDIENCE.

10, 11. *Then came the word of the Lord unto Samuel, saying, It repenteth me that I have set up Saul* — Repentance is attributed in Scripture to Him when bad men give Him cause to alter His course and method of procedure, and to treat them as if He did “repent” of kindness shown. To the heart of a man like Samuel, who was above all envious considerations, and really attached to the king, so painful an announcement moved all his pity and led him to pass a sleepless night of earnest intercession.

12. *Saul came to Carmel* — in the south of Judah (¹Joshua 15:55 ¹Samuel 25:2).

he set him up a place — that is, a pillar (²2 Samuel 18:18); literally, *a hand*, indicating that whatever was the form of the monument, it was surmounted, according to the ancient fashion, by the figure of a hand, the symbol of power and energy. The erection of this vainglorious trophy was an additional act of disobedience. His pride had overborne his sense of duty in first raising this monument to his own honor, and then going to Gilgal to offer sacrifice to God.

13-23. *Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord* — Saul was either blinded by a partial and delusive self-love, or he was, in his declaration to Samuel, acting the part of a bold and artful hypocrite. He professed to have fulfilled the divine command, and that the blame of any defects in the execution lay with the people. Samuel saw the real state of the case, and in discharge of the commission he had received before setting out, proceeded to denounce his conduct as characterized by pride, rebellion, and obstinate disobedience. When Saul persisted in declaring that he had obeyed, alleging that the animals, whose bleating was heard, had been reserved for a liberal sacrifice of thanksgiving to God, his shuffling, prevaricating answer called forth a stern rebuke from the prophet. It well deserved it — for the destination of the spoil to the altar was a flimsy pretext — a gross deception, an attempt to conceal the selfishness of the original motive under the cloak of religious zeal and gratitude.

24-26. *I have sinned ... turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord*

— The erring, but proud and obstinate monarch was now humbled. He was conscience-smitten for the moment, but his confession proceeded not from sincere repentance, but from a sense of danger and desire of averting the sentence denounced against him. For the sake of public appearance, he besought Samuel not to allow their serious differences to transpire, but to join with him in a public act of worship. Under the influence of his painfully agitated feelings, he designed to offer sacrifice, partly to express his gratitude for the recent victory, and partly to implore mercy and a reversal of his doom. It was, from another angle, a politic scheme, that Samuel might be betrayed into a countenancing of his design in reserving the cattle for sacrificing. Samuel declined to accompany him.

I feared the people, and obeyed their voice — This was a different reason from the former he had assigned. It was the language of a man driven to extremities, and even had it been true, the principles expounded by Samuel showed that it could have been no extenuation of the offense. The prophet then pronounced the irreversible sentence of the rejection of Saul and his family. He was judicially cut off for his disobedience.

27, 28. *he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle* — the *moil*, upper tunic, official robe. In an agony of mental excitement, he took hold of the prophet's dress to detain him; the rending of the mantle (¹Samuel 15:27) was adroitly pointed to as a significant and mystical representation of his severance from the throne.

29. *the Strength of Israel* — *Hebrew*, “He that gives a victory to Israel,” a further rebuke of his pride in rearing the Carmel trophy, and an intimation that no loss would be sustained in Israel by his rejection.

31. *Samuel turned again after Saul* — not to worship along with him; but first, that the people might have no ground, on pretense of Saul's rejection, to withdraw their allegiance from him; and secondly, to compensate for Saul's error, by executing God's judgment upon Agag.

32. *Agag came unto him delicately* — or cheerfully, since he had gained the favor and protection of the king.

33. *Samuel hewed Agag* — This cruel tyrant met the retribution of a righteous Providence. Never has it been unusual for great or official personages in the East to perform executions with their own hands. Samuel did it “before the Lord” in Gilgal, appointing that same mode of punishment (hitherto unknown in Israel) to be used towards him, which he had formerly used towards others.

CHAPTER 16

1 SAMUEL 16:1-10.

SAMUEL SENT BY GOD TO BETHLEHEM.

1. *the Lord said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul* — Samuel's grief on account of Saul's rejection, accompanied, doubtless, by earnest prayers for his restitution, showed the amiable feelings of the man; but they were at variance with his public duty as a prophet. The declared purpose of God to transfer the kingdom of Israel into other hands than Saul's was not an angry menace, but a fixed and immutable decree; so that Samuel ought to have sooner submitted to the peremptory manifestation of the divine will. But to leave him no longer room to doubt of its being unalterable, he was sent on a private mission to anoint a successor to Saul (see on ¹1 Samuel 10:1). The immediate designation of a king was of the greatest importance for the interests of the nation in the event of Saul's death, which, to this time, was dreaded; it would establish David's title and comfort the minds of Samuel and other good men with a right settlement, whatever contingency might happen.

I have provided me a king — The language is remarkable, and intimates a difference between this and the former king. Saul was the people's choice, the fruit of their wayward and sinful desires for their own honor and aggrandizement. The next was to be a king who would consult the divine glory, and selected from that tribe to which the pre-eminence had been early promised (¹Genesis 49:10).

2. *How can I go?* — This is another instance of human infirmity in Samuel. Since God had sent him on this mission, He would protect him in the execution.

I am come to sacrifice — It seems to have been customary with Samuel to do this in the different circuits to which he went, that he might encourage the worship of God.

3. *call Jesse to the sacrifice* — that is, the social feast that followed the peace offering. Samuel, being the offerer, had a right to invite any guest he pleased.

4. *the elders of the town trembled at his coming* — Beth-lehem was an obscure town, and not within the usual circuit of the judge. The elders were naturally apprehensive, therefore, that his arrival was occasioned by some extraordinary reason, and that it might entail evil upon their town, in consequence of the estrangement between Samuel and the king.

5. *sanctify yourselves* — by the preparations described (^{Q194}Exodus 19:14,15). The elders were to sanctify themselves. Samuel himself took the greatest care in the sanctification of Jesse's family. Some, however, think that the former were invited only to join in the sacrifice, while the family of Jesse were invited by themselves to the subsequent feast.

6-10. *Samuel said, Surely the Lord's anointed is before him* — Here Samuel, in consequence of taking his impressions from the external appearance, falls into the same error as formerly (^{Q191}1 Samuel 10:24).

^{Q191}1 SAMUEL 16:11-14.

HE ANOINTS DAVID.

11. *There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep* — Jesse having evidently no idea of David's wisdom and bravery, spoke of him as the most unfit. God, in His providence, so ordered it, that the appointment of David might the more clearly appear to be a divine purpose, and not the design either of Samuel or Jesse. David having not been sanctified with the rest of his family, it is probable that he returned to his pastoral duties the moment the special business on which he had been summoned was done.

12. *he was ruddy*, etc. — JOSEPHUS says that David was ten, while most modern commentators are of the opinion that he must have been fifteen years of age.

13. *Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him* — This transaction must have been strictly private.

14-18. *The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him* — His own gloomy reflections, the consciousness that he had not acted up to the character of an Israelitish king, the loss of his throne, and the extinction of his royal house, made him jealous, irritable, vindictive, and subject to fits of morbid melancholy.

19. *Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David* — In the East the command of a king is imperative; and Jesse, however reluctant and alarmed, had no alternative but to comply.

20. *Jesse took an ass laden with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent them ... unto Saul* — as a token of homage and respect.

21. *David came to Saul* — Providence thus prepared David for his destiny, by placing him in a way to become acquainted with the manners of the court, the business of government, and the general state of the kingdom.

became his armor-bearer — This choice, as being an expression of the king's partiality, shows how honorable the office was held to be.

23. *David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well* — The ancients believed that music had a mysterious influence in healing mental disorders.

CHAPTER 17

1 SAMUEL 17:1-3.

THE ISRAELITES AND PHILISTINES BEING READY TO BATTLE.

1. *the Philistines gathered together their armies* — twenty-seven years after their overthrow at Michmash. Having now recovered their spirits and strength, they sought an opportunity of wiping out the infamy of that national disaster, as well as to regain their lost ascendancy over Israel.

Shocoh — now Shuweikeh, a town in the western plains of Judah (^{<0855>}Joshua 15:35), nine Roman miles from Eleutheropolis, toward Jerusalem [ROBINSON].

Azekah — a small place in the neighborhood.

Ephes-dammim — or, “Pas-dammim” (^{<1313>}1 Chronicles 11:13), “the portion” or “effusion of blood,” situated between the other two.

2. *valley of Elah* — that is, “the Terebinth,” now Wady Er-Sumt [ROBINSON]. Another valley somewhat to the north, now called Wady Beit Hanina, has been fixed on by the tradition of ages.

1 SAMUEL 17:4-11.

GOLIATH CHALLENGES A COMBAT.

4-11. *a champion* — *Hebrew*, a “man between two”; that is, a person who, on the part of his own people, undertook to determine the national quarrel by engaging in single combat with a chosen warrior in the hostile army.

5. *helmet of brass* — The Philistine helmet had the appearance of a row of feathers set in a tiara, or metal band, to which were attached scales of the

same material, for the defense of the neck and the sides of the face [OSBORN].

a coat of mail — a kind of corslet, quilted with leather or plates of metal, reaching only to the chest, and supported by shoulder straps, leaving the shoulders and arms at full liberty.

6. *greaves of brass* — boots, terminating at the ankle, made in one plate of metal, but round to the shape of the leg, and often lined with felt or sponge. They were useful in guarding the legs, not only against the spikes of the enemy, but in making way among thorns and briers.

a target of brass — a circular frame, carried at the back, suspended by a long belt which crossed the breast from the shoulders to the loins.

7. *staff of his spear* — rather under five feet long, and capable of being used as a javelin (^(OSBORN)1 Samuel 19:10). It had an iron head.

one bearing a shield — In consequence of their great size and weight, the Oriental warrior had a trusty and skillful friend, whose office it was to bear the large shield behind which he avoided the missile weapons of the enemy. He was covered, cap-a-pie, with defensive armor, while he had only two offensive weapons — a sword by his side and a spear in his hand.

8-11. *I defy the armies of Israel ...; give me a man, that we may fight together* — In cases of single combat, a warrior used to go out in front of his party, and advancing towards the opposite ranks, challenge someone to fight with him. If his formidable appearance, or great reputation for physical strength and heroism, deterred any from accepting the challenge, he used to parade himself within hearing of the enemy's lines, specify in a loud, boastful, bravado style, defying them, and pouring out torrents of abuse and insolence to provoke their resentment.

1 SAMUEL 17:12-58.

DAVID ACCEPTS THE CHALLENGE, AND SLAYS HIM.

17. *Take now for thy brethren an ephah of this parched corn, and these ten loaves* — In those times campaigns seldom lasted above a few days at a time. The soldiers were volunteers or militia, who were supplied with provisions from time to time by their friends at home.

18. *carry these ten cheeses to the captain* — to enlist his kind attention. Oriental cheeses are very small; and although they are frequently made of so soft a consistence as to resemble curds, those which David carried seem to have been fully formed, pressed, and sufficiently dried to admit of their being carried.

take their pledge — Tokens of the soldiers' health and safety were sent home in the convenient form of a lock of their hair, or piece of their nail, or such like.

20. *David left the sheep with a keeper* — This is the only instance in which the hired shepherd is distinguished from the master or one of his family.

trench — some feeble attempt at a rampart. It appears (see *Margin*) to have been formed by a line of carts or chariots, which, from the earliest times, was the practice of nomad people.

22. *left his carriage in the hand of the keeper of the carriage* — to make his way to the standard of Judah.

25. *make his father's house free in Israel* — His family should be exempted from the impositions and services to which the general body of the Israelites were subjected.

34-36. *a lion, and a bear* — There were two different rencontres, for those animals prowl alone. The bear must have been a Syrian bear, which is believed to be a distinct species, or perhaps a variety, of the brown bear. The beard applies to the lion alone. Those feats seem to have been performed with no weapons more effective than the rude staves and stones of the field, or his shepherd's crook.

37. *The Lord that delivered me* — It would have been natural for a youth, and especially an Oriental youth, to make a parade of his gallantry. But David's piety sank all consideration of his own prowess and ascribed the success of those achievements to the divine aid, which he felt assured would not be withheld from him in a cause which so intimately concerned the safety and honor of His people.

Saul said unto David, Go, and the Lord be with thee — The pious language of the modest but valiant youth impressed the monarch's heart. He felt that it indicated the true military confidence for Israel, and, therefore, made up his mind, without any demur, to sanction a combat on which the fate of his kingdom depended, and with a champion supporting his interests apparently so unequal to the task.

38, 39. *Saul armed David with his armor* — The ancient Hebrews were particularly attentive to the personal safety of their warriors, and hence Saul equipped the youthful champion with his own defensive accoutrements, which would be of the best style. It is probable that Saul's coat of mail, or corslet, was a loose shirt, otherwise it could not have fitted both a stripling and a man of the colossal stature of the king.

40. *brook* — wady.

bag — or scrip for containing his daily food.

sling — The sling consisted of a double rope with a thong, probably of leather, to receive the stone. The slinger held a second stone in his left hand. David chose five stones, as a reserve, in case the first should fail. Shepherds in the East carry a sling and stones still, for the purpose of driving away, or killing, the enemies that prowl about the flock.

42-47. *the Philistine said ... said David to the Philistine* — When the two champions met, they generally made each of them a speech, and sometimes recited some verses, filled with allusions and epithets of the most opprobrious kind, hurling contempt and defiance at one another. This kind of abusive dialogue is common among the Arab combatants still. David's speech, however, presents a striking contrast to the usual strain of these invectives. It was full of pious trust, and to God he ascribed all the glory of the triumph he anticipated.

49. *smote the Philistine in his forehead* — At the opening for the eyes — that was the only exposed part of his body.

51. *cut off his head* — not as an evidence of the giant's death, for his slaughter had been effected in presence of the whole army, but as a trophy to be borne to Saul. The heads of slain enemies are always regarded in the East as the most welcome tokens of victory.

52. *Shaaraim* — (See ⁽⁹¹³⁵⁾Joshua 15:36).

54. *tent* — the sacred tabernacle. David dedicated the sword of Goliath as a votive offering to the Lord.

55-58. *Saul ... said unto Abner ... whose son is this youth?* — A young man is more spoken of in many Eastern countries by his father's name than his own. The growth of the beard, and other changes on a now full-grown youth, prevented the king from recognizing his former favorite minstrel [⁽⁹¹³⁵⁾1 Samuel 16:23].

CHAPTER 18

1 SAMUEL 18:1-4.

JONATHAN LOVES DAVID.

1. *the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David* — They were nearly of an age. The prince had taken little interest in David as a minstrel; but his heroism and modest, manly bearing, his piety and high endowments, kindled the flame not of admiration only, but of affection, in the congenial mind of Jonathan.
2. *Saul would let him go no more home* — He was established as a permanent resident at court.
3. *Then Jonathan and David made a covenant* — Such covenants of brotherhood are frequent in the East. They are ratified by certain ceremonies, and in presence of witnesses, that the persons covenanting will be sworn brothers for life.
4. *Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David* — To receive any part of the dress which had been worn by a sovereign, or his eldest son and heir, is deemed, in the East, the *highest* honor which can be conferred on a subject (see on ~~18~~ Esther 6:8). The girdle, being connected with the sword and the bow, may be considered as being part of the military dress, and great value is attached to it in the East.

1 SAMUEL 18:5-9.

SAUL ENVIES HIS PRAISE.

6. *the women came out of all cities of Israel* — in the homeward march from the pursuit of the Philistines. This is a characteristic trait of Oriental manners. On the return of friends long absent, and particularly on the return of a victorious army, bands of women and children issue from the

towns and villages, to form a triumphal procession, to celebrate the victory, and, as they go along, to gratify the soldiers with dancing, instrumental music, and extempore songs, in honor of the generals who have earned the highest distinction by feats of gallantry. The Hebrew women, therefore, were merely paying the customary gratulations to David as the deliverer of their country, but they committed a great indiscretion by praising a subject at the expense of their sovereign.

9. *Saul eyed David* — that is, invidiously, with secret and malignant hatred.

1 SAMUEL 18:10-12.

SEEKS TO KILL HIM.

10. *on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul* — This rankling thought brought on a sudden paroxysm of his mental malady.

he prophesied — The term denotes one under the influence either of a good or a bad spirit. In the present it is used to express that Saul was in a frenzy. David, perceiving the symptoms, hastened, by the soothing strains of his harp, to allay the stormy agitation of the royal mind. But before its mollifying influence could be felt, Saul hurled a javelin at the head of the young musician.

there was a javelin in Saul's hand — Had it been followed by a fatal result, the deed would have been considered the act of an irresponsible maniac. It was repeated more than once ineffectually, and Saul became impressed with a dread of David as under the special protection of Providence.

1 SAMUEL 18:13-16.

FEARS HIM FOR HIS GOOD SUCCESS.

13. *Therefore Saul removed him from him* — sent him away from the court, where the principal persons, including his own son, were spellbound with admiration of the young and pious warrior.

made him captain over a thousand — gave him a military commission, which was intended to be an honorable exile. But this post of duty served only to draw out before the public the extraordinary and varied qualities of his character, and to give him a stronger hold of the people's affections.

1 SAMUEL 18:17-21.

HE OFFERS HIM HIS DAUGHTER FOR A SNARE.

17. *Saul said to David, Behold my elder daughter Merab, her will I give thee to wife* — Though bound to this already [¹⁷²⁵1 Samuel 17:25], he had found it convenient to forget his former promise. He now holds it out as a new offer, which would tempt David to give additional proofs of his valor. But the fickle and perfidious monarch broke his pledge at the time when the marriage was on the eve of being celebrated, and bestowed Merab on another man (see on ¹⁷¹⁸2 Samuel 21:8); an indignity as well as a wrong, which was calculated deeply to wound the feelings and provoke the resentment of David. Perhaps it was intended to do so, that advantage might be taken of his indiscretion. But David was preserved from this snare.

20. *Michal Saul's daughter loved David* — This must have happened some time after.

they told Saul, and the thing pleased him — Not from any favor to David, but he saw that it would be turned to the advancement of his malicious purposes, and the more so when, by the artful intrigues and flattery of his spies, the loyal sentiments of David were discovered.

25. *The king desireth not any dowry* — In Eastern countries the husband *purchases* his wife either by gifts or services. As neither David nor his family were in circumstances to give a suitable dowry for a princess, the king intimated that he would be graciously pleased to accept some gallant deed in the public service.

a hundred foreskins of the Philistines — Such mutilations on the bodies of their slain enemies were commonly practiced in ancient war, and the number told indicated the glory of the victory. Saul's willingness to accept a public service had an air of liberality, while his choice of so difficult and hazardous a service seemed only putting a proper value on gaining the hand of a king's daughter. But he covered unprincipled malice against David under this proposal, which exhibited a zeal for God and the covenant of circumcision.

26. *the days were not expired* — The period within which this exploit was to be achieved was not exhausted.

27. *David ... slew of the Philistines two hundred men* — The number was doubled, partly to show his respect and attachment to the princess, and partly to oblige Saul to the fulfillment of his pledge.

29. *Saul was yet the more afraid of David* — because Providence had visibly favored him, by not only defeating the conspiracy against his life, but through his royal alliance paving his way to the throne.

CHAPTER 19

1 SAMUEL 19:1-7.

JONATHAN DISCLOSES HIS FATHER'S PURPOSE TO KILL DAVID.

1. *Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David* — The murderous design he had secretly cherished he now reveals to a few of his intimate friends. Jonathan was among the number. He prudently said nothing at the time, but secretly apprised David of his danger; and waiting till the morning, when his father's excited temper would be cooled, he stationed his friend in a place of concealment, where, overhearing the conversation, he might learn how matters really stood and take immediate flight, if necessary.

4-7. *Jonathan spake good of David* — He told his father he was committing a great sin to plot against the life of a man who had rendered the most invaluable services to his country and whose loyalty had been uniformly steady and devoted. The strong remonstrances of Jonathan produced an effect on the impulsive mind of his father. As he was still susceptible of good and honest impressions, he bound himself by an oath to relinquish his hostile purpose; and thus, through the intervention of the noble-minded prince, a temporary reconciliation was effected, in consequence of which David was again employed in the public service.

1 SAMUEL 19:8-17.

SAUL'S MALICIOUS RAGE BREAKS OUT AGAINST DAVID.

8-10. *David went out, and fought with the Philistines, and slew them with a great slaughter* — A brilliant victory was gained over the public enemy. But these fresh laurels of David reawakened in the moody breast of Saul the former spirit of envy and melancholy. On David's return to

court, the temper of Saul became more fiendish than ever; the melodious strains of the harp had lost all their power to charm; and in a paroxysm of uncontrollable frenzy he aimed a javelin at the person of David — the missile having been thrown with such force that it pierced the chamber wall. David providentially escaped; but the king, having now thrown off the mask and being bent on aggressive measures, made his son-in-law's situation everywhere perilous.

11, 12. *Saul sent messengers unto David's house, to watch him, and to slay him* — The fear of causing a commotion in the town, or favoring his escape in the darkness, seemed to have influenced the king in ordering them to patrol till the morning. This infatuation was overruled by Providence to favor David's escape; for his wife, secretly apprised by Jonathan, who was aware of the design, or by spying persons in court livery watching the gate, let him down through a window (see on ^{CH25} Joshua 2:15).

13, 14. *And Michal took an image, and laid it in the bed* — “an image,” literally, “the teraphim,” and laid, not in the bed, but literally on the “divan”; and “the pillows,” that is, the cushion, which usually lay at the back of the divan and was stuffed with “goat's hair,” she took from its bolster or heading at the upper part of the divan. This she placed lower down, and covered with a mantle, as if to foster a proper warmth in a patient; at the same time spreading the goat's hair skin, so as to resemble human hair in a dishevelled state. The pretext was that David lay there sick. The first messengers of Saul, keeping at a respectable distance, were deceived; but the imposition was detected on a closer inspection.

15. *Bring him to me in the bed* — a portable couch or mattress.

^{CH25} I SAMUEL 19:18-23.

DAVID FLEES TO SAMUEL.

18-23. *David fled, ... and came to Samuel to Ramah* — Samuel was living in great retirement, superintending the school of the prophets, established in the little hamlet of Naioth, in the neighborhood of Ramah. It was a

retreat congenial to the mind of David; but Saul, having found out his asylum, sent three successive bodies of men to apprehend him. The character of the place and the influence of the sacred exercises produced such an effect on them that they were incapable of discharging their commission, and were led, by a resistless impulse, to join in singing the praises of God. Saul, in a fit of rage and disappointment, determined to go himself. But, before reaching the spot, his mental susceptibilities were roused even more than his messengers, and he was found, before long, swelling the ranks of the young prophets. This singular change can be ascribed only to the power of Him who can turn the hearts of men even as the rivers of water.

~~19:24~~ 1 SAMUEL 19:24.

SAUL PROPHECIES.

24. *lay down naked* — that is, divested of his armor and outer robes — in a state of trance. Thus God, in making the wrath of man to praise Him, preserved the lives of all the prophets, frustrated all the purposes of Saul, and preserved the life of His servant.

CHAPTER 20

1 SAMUEL 20:1-10.

DAVID CONSULTS WITH JONATHAN FOR HIS SAFETY.

1-3. *David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and came and said before Jonathan* — He could not remain in Naioth, for he had strong reason to fear that when the religious fit, if we may so call it, was over, Saul would relapse into his usual fell and sanguinary temper. It may be thought that David acted imprudently in directing his flight to Gibeah. But he was evidently prompted to go thither by the most generous feelings — to inform his friend of what had recently occurred, and to obtain that friend's sanction to the course he was compelled to adopt. Jonathan could not be persuaded there was any real danger after the oath his father had taken; at all events, he felt assured his father would do nothing without telling him. Filial attachment naturally blinded the prince to defects in the parental character and made him reluctant to believe his father capable of such atrocity. David repeated his unshaken convictions of Saul's murderous purpose, but in terms delicately chosen (¹1 Samuel 20:3), not to wound the filial feelings of his friend; while Jonathan, clinging, it would seem, to a hope that the extraordinary scene enacted at Naioth might have wrought a sanctified improvement on Saul's temper and feelings, undertook to inform David of the result of his observations at home.

5. *David said unto Jonathan, Behold, to-morrow the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat* — The beginning of a new month or moon was always celebrated by special sacrifices, followed by feasting, at which the head of a family expected all its members to be present. David, both as the king's son-in-law and a distinguished courtier, dined on such occasions at the royal table, and from its being generally known that David had returned to Gibeah, his presence in the palace would be naturally expected. This occasion was chosen by the two friends for testing the king's state of feeling. As a suitable pretext for David's absence, it was arranged that he should visit his family at Beth-lehem, and

thus create an opportunity of ascertaining how his non-appearance would be viewed. The time and place were fixed for Jonathan reporting to David; but as circumstances might render another interview unsafe, it was deemed expedient to communicate by a concerted signal.

1 SAMUEL 20:11-23.

THEIR COVENANT RENEWED BY OATH.

11. *Jonathan said to David, Come, let us go into the field* — The private dialogue, which is here detailed at full length, presents a most beautiful exhibition of these two amiable and noble-minded friends. Jonathan was led, in the circumstances, to be the chief speaker. The strength of his attachment, his pure disinterestedness, his warm piety, his invocation to God (consisting of a prayer and a solemn oath combined), the calm and full expression he gave of his conviction that his own family were, by the divine will, to be disinherited, and David elevated to the possession of the throne, the covenant entered into with David on behalf of his descendants, and the imprecation (¹Samuel 20:16) denounced on any of them who should violate his part of the conditions, the reiteration of this covenant on both sides (¹Samuel 20:17) to make it indissoluble — all this indicates such a power of mutual affection, such magnetic attractiveness in the character of David, such susceptibility and elevation of feeling in the heart of Jonathan, that this interview for dramatic interest and moral beauty stands unrivalled in the records of human friendship.

19. *when thou hast stayed three days* — either with your family at Bethlehem, or wherever you find it convenient.

come to the place where thou didst hide thyself when the business was in hand — *Hebrew*, “in the day,” or “time of the business,” when the same matter was under inquiry formerly (¹Samuel 19:22).

remain by the stone Ezel — *Hebrew*, “the stone of the way”; a sort of milestone which directed travelers. He was to conceal himself in some cave or hiding-place near that spot.

23. *as touching the matter which thou and I have spoken of* — The plan being concerted, the friends separated for a time, and the amiable character of Jonathan again peers out in his parting allusion to their covenant of friendship.

1 SAMUEL 20:24-40.

SAUL, MISSING DAVID, SEEKS TO KILL JONAHAN.

25. *the king sat upon his seat, as at other times ... by the wall* — The left-hand corner at the upper end of a room was and still is in the East, the most honorable place. The person seated there has his left arm confined by the wall, but his right hand is at full liberty. From Abner's position next the king, and David's seat being left empty, it would seem that a state etiquette was observed at the royal table, each of the courtiers and ministers having places assigned them according to their respective gradations of rank.

Jonathan arose — either as a mark of respect on the entrance of the king, or in conformity with the usual Oriental custom for a son to stand in presence of his father.

26. *he is not clean* — No notice was taken of David's absence, as he might be laboring under some ceremonial defilement.

27. *on the morrow, which was the second day of the month* — The time of the moon's appearance being uncertain — whether at midday, in the evening, or at midnight, the festival was extended over two days. Custom, not the law, had introduced this.

Saul said unto Jonathan his son, Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse — The question was asked, as it were, casually, and with as great an air of indifference as he could assume. And Jonathan having replied that David had asked and obtained his permission to attend a family anniversary at Beth-lehem [⁴⁰⁰⁸Acts 20:28,29], the pent-up passions of the king burst out in a most violent storm of rage and invective against his son.

30. *Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman* — This is a striking Oriental form of abuse. Saul was not angry with his wife; it was the son alone, upon whom he meant, by this style of address, to discharge his resentment. The principle on which it is founded seems to be, that to a genuine filial instinct it is a more inexpiable offense to hear the name or character of a parent traduced, than any personal reproach. This was, undoubtedly, one cause of “the fierce anger” in which the high-minded prince left the table without tasting a morsel.

33. *Saul cast a javelin at him* — This is a sad proof of the maniacal frenzy into which the unhappy monarch was transported.

35. *Jonathan went out into the field at the time appointed* — or, “at the place appointed.”

36. *he said unto his lad, Run, find out now the arrows which I shoot* — The direction given aloud to the attendant was the signal preconcerted with David. It implied danger.

40. *Jonathan gave his artillery unto his lad* — that is, his missive weapons. The French word *artillerie*, signifies “archery.” The term is still used in England, in the designation of the “artillery company of London,” the association of archers, though they have long disused bows and arrows. Jonathan’s boy being despatched out of the way, the friends enjoyed the satisfaction of a final meeting.

◀1 SAMUEL 20:41,42.

JONATHAN AND DAVID LOVINGLY PART.

41, 42. *David ... fell on his face to the ground, and bowed three times* — a token of homage to the prince’s rank; but on a close approach, every other consideration was sunk in the full flow of the purest brotherly affection.

42. *Jonathan said to David, Go in peace* — The interview being a stolen one, and every moment precious, it was kindness in Jonathan to hasten his friend’s departure.

CHAPTER 21

1 SAMUEL 21:1-7.

DAVID, AT NOB, OBTAINS OF AHIMELECH HALLOWED BREAD.

1. *Then came David to Nob to Ahimelech* — Nob, a city of the priests (⁽¹²²⁾1 Samuel 22:19), was in the neighborhood of Jerusalem, on the Mount of Olives — a little north of the top, and on the northeast of the city. It is computed to have been about five miles distant from Gibeah. Ahimelech, the same as Ahiah, or perhaps his brother, both being sons of Ahitub (compare ⁽⁹⁴⁾1 Samuel 14:3, with ⁽⁹²⁾1 Samuel 22:4-11,20). His object in fleeing to this place was partly for the supply of his necessities, and partly for comfort and counsel, in the prospect of leaving the kingdom.

Ahimelech was afraid at the meeting of David — suspecting some extraordinary occurrence by his appearing so suddenly, and in such a style, for his attendants were left at a little distance.

2. *The king hath commanded me a business, and hath said unto me, Let no man know* — This was a direct falsehood, extorted through fear. David probably supposed, like many other persons, that a lie is quite excusable which is told for the sole purpose of saving the speaker's life. But what is essentially sinful, can never, from circumstances, change its immoral character; and David had to repent of this vice of lying (⁽⁴³⁾Psalms 119:29).

4. *there is hallowed bread* — There would be plenty of bread in his house; but there was no time to wait for it. "The hallowed bread" was the old shew-bread, which had been removed the previous day, and which was reserved for the use of the priests alone (⁽⁸⁴⁾Leviticus 24:9). Before entertaining the idea that this bread could be lawfully given to David and his men, the high priest seems to have consulted the oracle (⁽²²⁾1 Samuel 22:10) as to the course to be followed in this emergency. A dispensation to use the hallowed bread was specially granted by God Himself.

5. *these three days* — as required by law (^{<0915>}Exodus 19:15). David and his attendants seem to have been lurking in some of the adjoining caves, to elude pursuit, and to have been, consequently, reduced to great extremities of hunger.

the bread is in a manner common — that is, now that it is no longer standing on the Lord's table. It is eaten by the priests, and may also, in our circumstances, be eaten by us.

yea, though it were sanctified this day in the vessel — that is, though the hallowed bread had been but newly placed on the vessel, the ritual ordinance would have to yield to the great law of necessity and mercy (see on ^{<0103>}Matthew 12:3; also see ^{<0125>}Mark 2:25 ^{<0103>}Luke 6:3).

6. *there was no bread there* — in the tabernacle. The removal of the old and the substitution of the new bread was done on the Sabbath (^{<0208>}Leviticus 24:8), the loaves being kept warm in an oven heated the previous day.

7. *Doeg, an Edomite* — who had embraced the Hebrew religion.

detained before the Lord — at the tabernacle, perhaps, in the performance of a vow, or from its being the Sabbath, which rendered it unlawful for him to prosecute his journey.

the chiefest of the herdmen that belonged to Saul — Eastern monarchs anciently had large possessions in flocks and herds; and the office of the chief shepherd was an important one.

^{<0203>}1 SAMUEL 21:9.

HE TAKES GOLIATH'S SWORD.

9. *sword of Goliath* — (See on ^{<0154>}1 Samuel 17:54).

behind the ephod — in the place allowed for keeping the sacred vestments, of which the ephod is mentioned as the chief. The giant's sword was deposited in that safe custody as a memorial of the divine goodness in delivering Israel.

There is none like that — not only for its size and superior temper, but for its being a pledge of the divine favor to him, and a constant stimulus to his faith.

1 SAMUEL 21:10-15.

AT GATH HE FEIGNS HIMSELF MAD.

10. *David ... fled ... to Achish the king of Gath* — which was one of the five principalities of the Philistines. In this place his person must have been known, and to venture into that country, he their greatest enemy, and with the sword of Goliath in his hand, would seem to have been a perilous experiment; but, doubtless, the protection he received implies that he had been directed by the divine oracle. Achish was generous (¹⁰²⁷⁶1 Samuel 27:6). He might wish to weaken the resources of Saul, and it was common in ancient times for great men to be harbored by neighboring princes.

13. *feigned himself mad* — It is supposed to have been an attack of epilepsy, real or perhaps only pretended. This disease is relieved by foaming at the mouth.

let his spittle fall down upon his beard — No wonder that Achish supposed him insane, as such an indignity, whether done by another, or one's self, to the beard, is considered in the East an intolerable insult.

CHAPTER 22

1 SAMUEL 22:1-8.

DAVID'S KINDRED AND OTHERS RESORT TO HIM AT ADULLAM.

1. *David ... escaped to the cave Adullam* — supposed to be that now called Deir-Dubban, a number of pits or underground vaults, some nearly square, and all about fifteen or twenty feet deep, with perpendicular sides, in the soft limestone or chalky rocks. They are on the borders of the Philistine plain at the base of the Judea mountains, six miles southwest from Beth-lehem, and well adapted for concealing a number of refugees.

his brethren and all his father's house ... went down — to escape the effects of Saul's rage, which seems to have extended to all David's family. From Beth-lehem to Deir-Dubban it is, indeed, a descent all the way.

2. *every one that was in distress* — (See on ^{<0710>}Judges 11:3).

3. *David went thence to Mizpeh of Moab* — “Mizpeh” signifies a watchtower, and it is evident that it must be taken in this sense here, for it is called “the hold” or fort (^{<0224>}1 Samuel 22:4). The king of Moab was an enemy of Saul (^{<0447>}1 Samuel 14:47), and the great-grandson of Ruth, of course, was related to the family of Jesse. David, therefore, had less anxiety in seeking an asylum within the dominions of this prince than those of Achish, because the Moabites had no grounds for entertaining vindictive feelings against him, and their enmity, to Saul rendered them the more willing to receive so illustrious a refugee from his court.

5. *the prophet Gad said unto David, Abide not in the hold* — This sound advice, no doubt, came from a higher source than Gad's own sagacity. It was right to appear publicly among the people of his own tribe, as one conscious of innocence and trusting in God; and it was expedient that, on the death of Saul, his friends might be encouraged to support his interest.

forest of Hareth — southwest of Jerusalem.

6. *Saul abode ... under a tree in Ramah* — literally, “under a grove on a hill.” Oriental princes frequently sit with their court under some shady canopy in the open air. A spear was the early scepter.

7, 8. *Hear now, ye Benjamites* — This was an appeal to stimulate the patriotism or jealousy of his own tribe, from which he insinuated it was the design of David to transfer the kingdom to another. This address seems to have been made on hearing of David’s return with his four hundred men to Judah. A dark suspicion had risen in the jealous mind of the king that Jonathan was aware of this movement, which he dreaded as a conspiracy against the crown.

^{<0219>}1 SAMUEL 22:9-16.

DOEG ACCUSES AHIMELECH.

9. *Doeg ... set over the servants* — *Septuagint*, “the mules of Saul.”

10. *he inquired of the Lord for him* — Some suppose that this was a malicious fiction of Doeg to curry favor with the king, but Ahimelech seems to acknowledge the fact. The poor simple-minded high priest knew nothing of the existing family feud between Saul and David. The informer, if he knew it, said nothing of the cunning artifice by which David obtained the aid of Ahimelech. The *facts looked* against him, and the whole priesthood along with him were declared abettors of conspiracy [^{<0216>}1 Samuel 22:16,17].

^{<0217>}1 SAMUEL 22:17-19.

SAUL COMMANDS TO KILL THE PRIESTS.

17, 18. *the footmen that stood about him* — his bodyguard, or his runners (^{<0081>}1 Samuel 8:11 ^{<0051>}2 Samuel 15:1 ^{<1005>}1 Kings 1:5 ^{<1148>}1 Kings 14:28), who held an important place at court (^{<4210>}2 Chronicles 12:10). But they chose rather to disobey the king than to offend God by imbruing their hands in

the blood of his ministering servants. A foreigner alone (^{<BIB1>}Psalm 52:1-3) could be found willing to be the executioner of this bloody and sacrilegious sentence. Thus was the doom of the house of Eli fulfilled [^{<BIB1>}1 Samuel 2:30-36].

19. *Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword* — The barbarous atrocities perpetrated against this city seem to have been designed to terrify all the subjects of Saul from affording either aid or an asylum to David. But they proved ruinous to Saul's own interest, as they alienated the priesthood and disgusted all good men in the kingdom.

^{<BIB1>}1 SAMUEL 22:20-23.

ABIATHAR ESCAPES AND FLEES AFTER DAVID.

20-23. *one of the sons of Ahimelech ... escaped* — This was Abiathar, who repaired to David in the forest of Hareth, rescuing, with his own life, the high priest's vestments (^{<BIB1>}1 Samuel 23:6,9). On hearing his sad tale, David declared that he had dreaded such a fatal result from the malice and intriguing ambition of Doeg; and, accusing himself as having been the occasion of all the disaster to Abiathar's family, David invited him to remain, because, firmly trusting himself in the accomplishment of the divine promise, David could guarantee protection to him.

CHAPTER 23

1 SAMUEL 23:1-6.

DAVID RESCUES KEILAH.

1. *Then they told David* — rather, “now they had told”; for this information had reached him previous to his hearing (^{<0216>}1 Samuel 23:6) of the Nob tragedy.

Keilah — a city in the west of Judah (^{<054>}Joshua 15:44), not far from the forest of Hareth.

and they rob the threshing-floors — These were commonly situated on the fields and were open to the wind (^{<0011>}Judges 6:11 ^{<0302>}Ruth 3:2).

2-5. *David inquired of the Lord* — most probably through Gad (^{<0211>}2 Samuel 24:11 ^{<0309>}1 Chronicles 21:9), who was present in David’s camp (^{<0215>}1 Samuel 22:5), probably by the recommendation of Samuel. To repel unprovoked assaults on unoffending people who were engaged in their harvest operations, was a humane and benevolent service. But it was doubtful how far it was David’s duty to go against a public enemy without the royal commission; and on that account he asked, and obtained, the divine counsel. A demur on the part of his men led David to renew the consultation for their satisfaction; after which, being fully assured of his duty, he encountered the aggressors and, by a signal victory, delivered the people of Keilah from further molestation.

6. *an ephod* — in which was the Urim and Thummim (^{<0230>}Exodus 28:30). It had, probably, been committed to his care, while Ahimelech and the other priests repaired to Gibeah, in obedience to the summons of Saul.

1 SAMUEL 23:7-13.

SAUL'S COMING, AND TREACHERY OF THE KEILITES.

7. *it was told Saul that David was come to Keilah* — Saul imagined himself now certain of his victim, who would be hemmed within a fortified town. The wish was father to the thought. How wonderfully slow and unwilling to be convinced by all his experience, that the special protection of Providence shielded David from all his snares!

8. *Saul called all the people together to war* — not the united tribes of Israel, but the inhabitants of the adjoining districts. This force was raised, probably, on the ostensible pretext of opposing the Philistines, while, in reality, it was secretly to arouse mischief against David.

9. *he said to Abiathar the priest, Bring hither the ephod* — The consultation was made, and the prayer uttered, by means of the priest. The alternative conditions here described have often been referred to as illustrating the doctrine of God's foreknowledge and preordination of events.

1 SAMUEL 23:14-18.

DAVID ESCAPES TO ZIPH.

14, 15. *David abode in the wilderness ... of Ziph* — A mountainous and sequestered region was generally called a wilderness, and took its name from some large town in the district. Two miles southeast of Hebron, and in the midst of a level plain, is Tell-ziph, an isolated and conical hillock, about a hundred feet high, probably the acropolis [VAN DE VELDE], or the ruins [ROBINSON] of the ancient city of Ziph, from which the surrounding wilderness was called. It seems, anciently, to have been covered by an extensive woods. The country has for centuries lost its woods and forests, owing to the devastations caused by man.

16, 17. *Jonathan went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God* — by the recollection of their mutual covenant. What a

victory over natural feelings and lower considerations must the faith of Jonathan have won, before he could seek such an interview and give utterance to such sentiments! To talk with calm and assured confidence of himself and family being superseded by the man who was his friend by the bonds of a holy and solemn covenant, could only have been done by one who, superior to all views of worldly policy, looked at the course of things in the spirit and through the principles of that theocracy which acknowledged God as the only and supreme Sovereign of Israel. Neither history nor fiction depicts the movements of a friendship purer, nobler, and more self-denying than Jonathan's!

~~(1279)~~ 1 SAMUEL 23:19-29.

SAUL PURSUES HIM.

19-23. *Then came up the Ziphites to Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself with us?* — From the tell of Ziph a panorama of the whole surrounding district is to be seen. No wonder, then, that the Ziphites saw David and his men passing to and fro in the mountains of the wilderness. Spying him at a distance when he ventured to show himself on the hill of Hachilah, “on the right hand of the wilderness,” that is, the south side of Ziph, they sent in haste to Saul, to tell him of the lurking place of his enemy [VAN DE VELDE].

25. *David ... came down into a rock, and abode in the wilderness of Maon* — Tell Main, the hillock on which was situated the ancient Maon (~~(1285)~~ Joshua 15:55), and from which the adjoining wilderness took its name, is one mile north, ten east from Camel. The mountain plateau seems here to end. It is true the summit ridge of the southern hills runs out a long way further towards the southwest; but towards the southeast the ground sinks more and more down to a tableland of a lower level, which is called “the plain to the right hand [that is, to the south] of the wilderness” [VAN DE VELDE].

29. *David went up from thence, and dwelt in strong holds at En-gedi* — that is, “the spring of the wild goats or gazelles” — a name given to it from the vast number of ibexes or Syrian chamois which inhabit these cliffs on

the western shore of the Dead Sea (¹⁸⁵²Joshua 15:62). It is now called Ain Jiddy. On all sides the country is full of caverns, which might then serve as lurking places for David and his men, as they do for outlaws at the present day [ROBINSON].

CHAPTER 24

1 SAMUEL 24:1-7.

DAVID IN A CAVE AT ENGEDI CUTS OFF SAUL'S SKIRT, BUT SPARES HIS LIFE.

2. *Saul ... went ... to seek David ... upon the rocks of the wild goats* — Nothing but the blind infatuation of fiendish rage could have led the king to pursue his outlawed son-in-law among those craggy and perpendicular precipices, where were inaccessible hiding places. The large force he took with him seemed to give him every prospect of success. But the overruling providence of God frustrated all his vigilance.

3. *he came to the sheepcotes* — most probably in the upper ridge of Wady Chareitun. There a large cave — I am quite disposed to say the cave — lies hardly five minutes to the east of the village ruin, on the south side of the wady. It is high upon the side of the calcareous rock, and it has undergone no change since David's time. The same narrow natural vaulting at the entrance; the same huge natural chamber in the rock, probably the place where Saul lay down to rest in the heat of the day; the same side vaults, too, where David and his men were concealed. There, accustomed to the obscurity of the cavern, they saw Saul enter, while, blinded by the glare of the light outside, he saw nothing of him whom he so bitterly persecuted.

4-7. *the men of David said ... Behold the day of which the Lord said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand* — God had never made any promise of delivering Saul into David's hand; but, from the general and repeated promises of the kingdom to him, they concluded that the king's death was to be effected by taking advantage of some such opportunity as the present. David steadily opposed the urgent instigations of his followers to put an end to his and their troubles by the death of their persecutor (a revengeful heart would have followed their advice, but David rather wished to overcome evil with good, and heap coals of fire upon his head); he, however, cut off a fragment from the skirt

of the royal robe. It is easy to imagine how this dialogue could be carried on and David's approach to the king's person could have been effected without arousing suspicion. The bustle and noise of Saul's military men and their beasts, the number of cells or divisions in these immense caverns (and some of them far interior) being enveloped in darkness, while every movement could be seen at the cave's mouth — the probability that the garment David cut from might have been a loose or upper cloak lying on the ground, and that Saul might have been asleep — these facts and presumptions will be sufficient to account for the incidents detailed.

~~8-15~~ 1 SAMUEL 24:8-15.

HE URGES THEREBY HIS INNOCENCY.

8-15. *David also arose ... and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul* — The closeness of the precipitous cliffs, though divided by deep wadies, and the transparent purity of the air enable a person standing on one rock to hear distinctly the words uttered by a speaker standing on another (~~8-15~~ Judges 9:7). The expostulation of David, followed by the visible tokens he furnished of his cherishing no evil design against either the person or the government of the king, even when he had the monarch in his power, smote the heart of Saul in a moment and disarmed him of his fell purpose of revenge. He owned the justice of what David said, acknowledged his own guilt, and begged kindness to his house. He seems to have been naturally susceptible of strong, and, as in this instance, of good and grateful impressions. The improvement of his temper, indeed, was but transient — his language that of a man overwhelmed by the force of impetuous emotions and constrained to admire the conduct, and esteem the character, of one whom he hated and dreaded. But God overruled it for ensuring the present escape of David. Consider his language and behavior. This language — “a dead dog,” “a flea,” terms by which, like Eastern people, he strongly expressed a sense of his lowliness and the entire committal of his cause to Him who alone is the judge of human actions, and to whom vengeance belongs, his steady repulse of the vindictive counsels of his followers; the relentings of heart which he felt even for the apparent indignity he had done to the person of the Lord's anointed; and

the respectful homage he paid the jealous tyrant who had set a price on his head — evince the magnanimity of a great and good man, and strikingly illustrate the spirit and energy of his prayer “when he was in the cave” (~~4811~~ Psalm 142:1, title).

CHAPTER 25

1 SAMUEL 25:1-9.

SAMUEL DIES.

1. *Samuel died* — After a long life of piety and public usefulness, he left behind him a reputation which ranks him among the greatest of Scripture worthies.

buried him in his house at Ramah — that is, his own mausoleum. The Hebrews took as great care to provide sepulchers anciently as people do in the East still, where every respectable family has its own house of the dead. Often this is in a little detached garden, containing a small stone building (where there is no rock), resembling a house, which is called the sepulcher of the family — it has neither door nor window.

David arose, and went down to the wilderness of Paran — This removal had probably no connection with the prophet's death; but was probably occasioned by the necessity of seeking provision for his numerous followers.

the wilderness of Paran — stretching from Sinai to the borders of Palestine in the southern territories of Judea. Like other wildernesses, it presented large tracts of natural pasture, to which the people sent their cattle at the grazing season, but where they were liable to constant and heavy depredations by prowling Arabs. David and his men earned their subsistence by making reprisals on the cattle of these freebooting Ishmaelites; and, frequently for their useful services, they obtained voluntary tokens of acknowledgment from the peaceful inhabitants.

2. *in Carmel* — now Kurmul. The district takes its name from this town, now a mass of ruins; and about a mile from it is Tell Main, the hillock on which stood ancient Maon.

the man was very great — His property consisted in cattle, and he was considered wealthy, according to the ideas of that age.

3. *he was of the house of Caleb* — of course, of the same tribe with David himself; but many versions consider Caleb (“dog”) not as a proper, but a common noun, and render it, “he was snappish as a dog.”

4-9. *Nabal did shear his sheep, and David sent out ten young men*, etc. — David and his men lurked in these deserts, associating with the herdsmen and shepherds of Nabal and others and doing them good offices, probably in return for information and supplies obtained through them. Hence when Nabal held his annual sheep-shearing in Carmel, David felt himself entitled to share in the festival and sent a message, recounting his own services and asking for a present. “In all these particulars we were deeply struck with the truth and strength of the biblical description of manners and customs almost identically the same as they exist at the present day. On such a festive occasion, near a town or village, even in our own time, an Arab sheik of the neighboring desert would hardly fail to put in a word either in person or by message; and his message, both in form and substance, would be only a transcript of that of David” [ROBINSON].

1 SAMUEL 25:10-13.

THE CHURLISH ANSWER PROVOKES HIM.

10-12. *Nabal answered David’s servants, ... Who is David?* etc. — Nabal’s answer seems to indicate that the country was at the time in a loose and disorderly state. David’s own good conduct, however, as well as the important services rendered by him and his men, were readily attested by Nabal’s servants. The preparations of David to chastise his insolent language and ungrateful requital are exactly what would be done in the present day by Arab chiefs, who protect the cattle of the large and wealthy sheep masters from the attacks of the marauding border tribes or wild beasts. Their protection creates a claim for some kind of tribute, in the shape of supplies of food and necessaries, which is usually given with great good will and gratitude; but when withheld, is enforced as a right.

Nabal's refusal, therefore, was a violation of the established usages of the place.

13. *two hundred abode by the stuff* — This addition to his followers was made after his return into Judah (see ^{<025>}1 Samuel 22:2).

~~<025>~~ 1 SAMUEL 25:14-35.

ABIGAIL PACIFIES HIM.

14-18. *Then Abigail made haste* — The prudence and address of Nabal's wife were the means of saving him and family from utter destruction. She acknowledged the demand of her formidable neighbors; but justly considering, that to atone for the insolence of her husband, a greater degree of liberality had become necessary, she collected a large amount of food, accompanying it with the most valued products of the country.

bottles — goatskins, capable of holding a great quantity.

parched corn — It was customary to eat parched corn when it was fully grown, but not ripe.

19. *she said unto her servants, Go on before me; behold, I come after you* — People in the East always try to produce an effect by their presents, loading on several beasts what might be easily carried by one, and bringing them forward, article by article, in succession. Abigail not only sent her servants in this way, but resolved to go in person, following her present, as is commonly done, to watch the impression which her munificence would produce.

23. *she hastened, and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face* — Dismounting in presence of a superior is the highest token of respect that can be given; and it is still an essential act of homage to the great. Accompanying this act of courtesy with the lowest form of prostration, she not only by her attitude, but her language, made the fullest amends for the disrespect shown by her husband, as well as paid the fullest tribute of respect to the character and claims of David.

25. *Nabal* — signifying *fool*, gave pertinence to his wife's remark.

26. *let thine enemies ... be as Nabal* — be as foolish and contemptible as he.

29. *the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God* — An Orientalism, expressing the perfect security of David's life from all the assaults of his enemies, under the protecting shield of Providence, who had destined him for high things.

32-35. *David said to Abigail, Blessed be the Lord* — Transported by passion and blinded by revenge, he was on the eve of perpetrating a great injury. Doubtless, the timely appearance and prudent address of Abigail were greatly instrumental in changing his purpose. At all events, it was the means of opening his eyes to the moral character of the course on which he had been impetuously rushing; and in accepting her present, he speaks with lively satisfaction as well as gratitude to Abigail, for having relieved him from bloodshed.

1 SAMUEL 25:36-44.

NABAL'S DEATH.

36. *he held a feast in his house, like the feast of a king* — The sheep-shearing season was always a very joyous occasion. Masters usually entertained their shepherds; and even Nabal, though of a most niggardly disposition, prepared festivities on a scale of sumptuous liberality. The modern Arabs celebrate the season with similar hilarity.

37, 38. *in the morning ... his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him* — He probably fainted from horror at the perilous situation in which he had unconsciously placed himself; and such a shock had been given him by the fright to his whole system, that he rapidly pined and died.

39-42. *the Lord hath returned the wickedness of Nabal upon his own head* — If this was an expression of pleasure, and David's vindictive feelings were gratified by the intelligence of Nabal's death, it was an instance of human infirmity which we may lament; but perhaps he referred

to the unmerited reproach (⁴⁹²⁵⁰1 Samuel 25:10,11), and the contempt of God implied in it.

David sent and communed with Abigail, to take her to wife — This unceremonious proceeding was quite in the style of Eastern monarchs, who no sooner take a fancy for a lady than they despatch a messenger to intimate their royal wishes that she should henceforth reside in the palace; and her duty is implicitly to obey. David's conduct shows that the manners of the Eastern nations were already imitated by the great men in Israel; and that the morality of the times which God permitted, gave its sanction to the practice of polygamy. His marriage with Abigail brought him a rich estate.

44. *Michal* — By the unchallengeable will of her father, she who was David's wife was given to another. But she returned and sustained the character of his wife when he ascended the throne.

CHAPTER 26

1 SAMUEL 26:1-4.

SAUL COMES TO THE HILL OF HACHILAH AGAINST DAVID.

1, 2. *the Ziphites came unto Saul to Gibeah* — This people seem to have thought it impossible for David to escape, and therefore recommended themselves to Saul, by giving him secret information (see on ¹Samuel 23:19). The knowledge of their treachery makes it appear strange that David should return to his former haunt in their neighborhood; but, perhaps he did it to be near Abigail's possessions, and under the impression that Saul had become mollified. But the king had relapsed into his old enmity. Though Gibeah, as its name imports, stood on an elevated position, and the desert of Ziph, which was in the hilly region of Judea, may have been higher than Gibeah, it was still necessary to descend in leaving the latter place; thence Saul "went down to the wilderness of Ziph."

4, 5. *David ... sent out spies ... and David arose, and came to the place where Saul had pitched* — Having obtained certain information of the locality, he seems, accompanied by his nephew (¹Samuel 26:6), to have hid himself, perhaps disguised, in a neighboring wood, or hill, on the skirts of the royal camp towards night, and waited to approach it under covert of the darkness.

1 SAMUEL 26:5-25.

DAVID STAYS ABISHAI FROM KILLING SAUL, BUT TAKES HIS SPEAR AND CRUSE.

5. *Saul lay in the trench, and the people pitched round about him* — Among the nomad people of the East, the encampments are usually made in a circular form. The circumference is lined by the baggage and the men,

while the chief's station is in the center, whether he occupy a tent or not. His spear, stuck in the ground, indicates his position. Similar was the disposition of Saul's camp — in this hasty expedition he seems to have carried no tent, but to have slept on the ground. The whole troop was sunk in sleep around him.

8-12. *Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand* — This midnight stratagem shows the activity and heroic enterprise of David's mind, and it was in unison with the style of warfare in ancient times.

let me smite him ... even to the earth at once — The ferocious vehemence of the speaker is sufficiently apparent from his language, but David's magnanimity soared far above the notions of his followers. Though Saul's cruelty and perfidy and general want of right principle had sunk him to a low pitch of degradation, yet that was no reason for David's imitating him in doing wrong. Besides, he was the sovereign; David was a subject. Though God had rejected him from the kingdom, it was in every way the best and most dutiful course, instead of precipitating his fall by imbruing their hands in his blood and thereby contracting the guilt of a great crime, to wait the awards of that retributive providence which sooner or later would take him off by some sudden and mortal blow. He who, with impetuous haste was going to exterminate Nabal, meekly spared Saul. But Nabal refused to give a tribute to which justice and gratitude, no less than custom, entitled David. Saul was under the judicial infatuation of heaven. Thus David withheld the hand of Abishai; but, at the same time, he directed him to carry off some things which would show where they had been, and what they had done. Thus he obtained the best of victories over him, by heaping coals of fire on his head.

11. *the spear that is at his bolster, and the cruse of water* — The Oriental spear had, and still has, a spike at the lower extremity, intended for the purpose of sticking the spear into the ground when the warrior is at rest. This common custom of Arab sheiks was also the practice of the Hebrew chiefs.

at his bolster — literally, "at his head"; perhaps, Saul as a sovereign had the distinguished luxury of a bolster carried for him. A "cruse of water" is usually, in warm climates, kept near a person's couch, as a drink in the

night time is found very refreshing. Saul's cruse would probably be of superior materials, or more richly ornamented than common ones, and therefore by its size or form be easily distinguished.

13-20. *Then David ... stood on the top of an hill afar off ... and cried to the people* — (See on ⁴⁰⁰⁰Judges 9:7). The extraordinary purity and elasticity of the air in Palestine enable words to be distinctly heard that are addressed by a speaker from the top of one hill to people on that of another, from which it is separated by a deep intervening ravine. Hostile parties can thus speak to each other, while completely beyond the reach of each other's attack. It results from the peculiar features of the country in many of the mountain districts.

15. *David said to Abner, Art not thou a valiant man: ... wherefore then hast thou not kept thy lord the king?* — The circumstance of David having penetrated to the center of the encampment, through the circular rows of the sleeping soldiers, constituted the point of this sarcastic taunt. This new evidence of David's moderation and magnanimous forbearance, together with his earnest and kindly expostulation, softened the obduracy of Saul's heart.

19. *If the Lord have stirred thee up against me* — By the evil spirit He had sent, or by any spiritual offenses by which we have mutually displeased Him.

let him accept an offering — that is, let us conjointly offer a sacrifice for appeasing His wrath against us.

if they be the children of men — The prudence, meekness, and address of David in ascribing the king's enmity to the instigations of some malicious traducers, and not to the jealousy of Saul himself, is worthy of notice.

saying, Go, serve other gods — This was the drift of their conduct. By driving him from the land and ordinances of the true worship, into foreign and heathen countries, they were exposing him to all the seductions of idolatry.

20. *as when one doth hunt a partridge* — People in the East, in hunting the partridge and other game birds, pursue them, till observing them becoming languid and fatigued after they have been put up two or three

times, they rush upon the birds stealthily and knock them down with bludgeons [SHAW, *Travels*]. It was exactly in this manner that Saul was pursuing David. He drove him from time to time from his hiding-place, hoping to render him weary of his life, or obtain an opportunity of accomplishing his destruction.

25. *So David went on his way* — Notwithstanding this sudden relenting of Saul, David placed no confidence in his professions or promises, but wisely kept at a distance and awaited the course of Providence.

CHAPTER 27

1 SAMUEL 27:1-4.

SAUL HEARING THAT DAVID WAS FLED TO GATH, SEEKS NO MORE FOR HIM.

1. *David said in his heart, ... there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines* — This resolution of David's was, in every respect, wrong:

(1) It was removing him from the place where the divine oracle intimated him to remain (¹1 Samuel 22:5);

(2) It was rushing into the idolatrous land, for driving him into which he had denounced an imprecation on his enemies (¹1 Samuel 26:19);

(3) It was a withdrawal of his counsel and aid from God's people. It was a movement, however, overruled by Providence to detach him from his country and to let the disasters impending over Saul and his followers be brought on by the Philistines.

2, 3. *Achish, the son of Maach, king of Gath* — The popular description of this king's family creates a presumption that he was a different king from the reigning sovereign on David's first visit to Gath. Whether David had received a special invitation from him or a mere permission to enter his territories, cannot be determined. It is probable that the former was the case. From the universal notoriety given to the feud between Saul and David, which had now become irreconcilable, it might appear to Achish good policy to harbor him as a guest, and so the better pave the way for the hostile measures against Israel which the Philistines were at this time meditating.

1 SAMUEL 27:5-12.

DAVID BEGS ZIKLAG OF ACHISH.

5. *let them give me a place in some town in the country* — It was a prudent arrangement on the part of David; for it would prevent him being an object of jealous suspicion, or of mischievous plots among the Philistines. It would place his followers more beyond the risk of contamination by the idolatries of the court and capital; and it would give him an opportunity of making reprisals on the freebooting tribes that infested the common border of Israel and the Philistines.

6. *Ziklag* — Though originally assigned to Judah (^{<0651>}Joshua 15:31), and subsequently to Simeon (^{<0895>}Joshua 19:5), this town had never been possessed by the Israelites. It belonged to the Philistines, who gave it to David.

8. *David ... went up, and invaded the Geshurites* — (See ^{<0332>}Joshua 13:2). ***and the Gizrites*** — or the Gerizi [GESENIUS], (^{<0202>}Joshua 12:12), some Arab horde which had once encamped there.

and the Amalekites — Part of the district occupied by them lay on the south of the land of Israel (^{<0754>}Judges 5:14 ^{<0725>}12:15).

10. *Achish said, Whither have ye made a road to-day?* — that is, *raid*, a hostile excursion for seizing cattle and other booty.

David said, Against the south of Judah, and against the south of the Jerahmeelites — Jerahmeel was the great-grandson of Judah, and his posterity occupied the southern portion of that tribal domain.

the south of the Kenites — the posterity of Jethro, who occupied the south of Judah (^{<0716>}Judges 1:16 ^{<0221>}Numbers 24:21). The deceit practiced upon his royal host and the indiscriminate slaughter committed, lest any one should escape to tell the tale, exhibit an unfavorable view of this part of David's history.

CHAPTER 28

1 SAMUEL 28:1-6.

ACHISH'S CONFIDENCE IN DAVID.

1. *The Philistines gathered their armies together for warfare, to fight with Israel* — The death of Samuel, the general dissatisfaction with Saul, and the absence of David, instigated the cupidity of those restless enemies of Israel.

Achish said to David, Know thou assuredly, that thou shalt go out with me to battle — This was evidently to try him. Achish, however, seems to have thought he had gained the confidence of David and had a claim on his services.

2. *Surely thou shalt know what thy servant can do* — This answer, while it seemed to express an apparent cheerfulness in agreeing to the proposal, contained a studied ambiguity — a wary and politic generality.

Therefore will I make thee keeper of mine head for ever — or, “my life”; that is, “captain of my bodyguard,” an office of great trust and high honor.

3. *Now Samuel is dead*, etc. — This event is here alluded to as affording an explanation of the secret and improper methods by which Saul sought information and direction in the present crisis of his affairs. Overwhelmed in perplexity and fear, he yet found the common and legitimate channels of communication with Heaven shut against him. And so, under the impulse of that dark, distempered, superstitious spirit which had overmastered him, he resolved, in desperation, to seek the aid of one of those fortune telling impostors whom, in accordance with the divine command (^{GENE}Leviticus 19:31 ^{GENE}20:6,27 ^{GENE}Deuteronomy 18:11), he had set himself formerly to exterminate from his kingdom.

4. *the Philistines ... pitched in Shunem* — Having collected their forces for a last grand effort, they marched up from the seacoast and encamped in

the “valley of Jezreel.” The spot on which their encampment was fixed was Shunem (⁽¹⁹⁹⁸⁾Joshua 19:18), now Sulem, a village which still exists on the slope of a range called “Little Hermon.” On the opposite side, on the rise of Mount Gilboa, hard by “the spring of Jezreel,” was Saul’s army — the Israelites, according to their wont, keeping to the heights, while their enemies clung to the plain.

⁽¹⁹⁹⁸⁾1 SAMUEL 28:7-25.

SAUL SEEKS A WITCH, WHO, BEING ENCOURAGED BY HIM, RAISES UP SAMUEL.

7, 8. *Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit* — From the energetic measures which he himself had taken for extirpating the dealers in magical arts (the profession having been declared a capital offense), his most attached courtiers might have had reason to doubt the possibility of gratifying their master’s wish. Anxious inquiries, however, led to the discovery of a woman living very secluded in the neighborhood, who had the credit of possessing the forbidden powers. To her house he repaired by night in disguise, accompanied by two faithful servants.

En-dor — “the fountain of the circle” (that figure being constantly affected by magicians) was situated directly on the other side of the Gilboa range, opposite Tabor; so that, in this midnight adventure, Saul had to pass over the shoulder of the ridge on which the Philistines were encamped.

8-14. *bring me him up, whom I shall name unto thee* — This pythoness united to the arts of divination a claim to be a necromancer (⁽¹⁹⁸¹⁾Deuteronomy 18:11); and it was her supposed power in calling back the dead of which Saul was desirous to avail himself. Though she at first refused to listen to his request, she accepted his pledge that no risk would be incurred by her compliance. It is probable that his extraordinary stature, the deference paid him by his attendants, the easy distance of his camp from En-dor, and the proposal to call up the great prophet and first magistrate in Israel (a proposal which no private individual would venture

to make), had awakened her suspicions as to the true character and rank of her visitor. The story has led to much discussion whether there was a real appearance of Samuel or not. On the one hand, the woman's profession, which was forbidden by the divine law, the refusal of God to answer Saul by any divinely constituted means, the well-known age, figure, and dress of Samuel, which she could easily represent herself, or by an accomplice — his apparition being evidently at some distance, being muffled, and not actually seen by Saul, whose attitude of prostrate homage, moreover, must have prevented him distinguishing the person though he had been near, and the voice seemingly issuing out of the ground, and coming along to Saul — and the vagueness of the information, imparted much which might have been reached by natural conjecture as to the probable result of the approaching conflict — the woman's representation — all of this has led many to think that this was a mere deception. On the other hand, many eminent writers (considering that the apparition came before her arts were put in practice; that she herself was surprised and alarmed; that the prediction of Saul's own death and the defeat of his forces was confidently made), are of opinion that Samuel really appeared.

24. *the woman had a fat calf ... and she hasted, and killed it*, etc. — (See on ^{CRB}Genesis 18:1-8).

25. *Then they rose up, and went away that night* — Exhausted by long abstinence, overwhelmed with mental distress, and now driven to despair, the cold sweat broke on his anxious brow, and he sank helpless on the ground. But the kind attentions of the woman and his servants having revived him, he returned to the camp to await his doom.

CHAPTER 29

1 SAMUEL 29:1-5.

DAVID MARCHING WITH THE PHILISTINES TO FIGHT WITH ISRAEL.

1. *Aphek* — (^{<1218>}Joshua 12:8), in the tribe of Issachar, and in the plain of Esdraelon. A person who compares the Bible account of Saul's last battle with the Philistines, with the region around Gilboa, has the same sort of evidence that the account relates what is true, that a person would have that such a battle as Waterloo really took place. Gilboa, Jezreel, Shunem, En-dor, are all found, still bearing the same names. They lie within sight of each other. Aphek is the only one of the cluster not yet identified. Jezreel on the northern slope of Gilboa, and at the distance of twenty minutes to the east, is a large fountain, and a smaller one still nearer; just the position which a chieftain would select, both on account of its elevation and the supply of water needed for his troops [HACKETT, *Scripture Illustrated*].

2. *David and his men passed on in the reward with Achish* — as the commander of the lifeguards of Achish, who was general of this invading army of the Philistines.

3. *these days, or these years* — He had now been with the Philistines a full year and four months (^{<1217>}1 Samuel 27:7), and also some years before. It has been thought that David kept up a private correspondence with this Philistine prince, either on account of his native generosity, or in the anticipation that an asylum in his territories would sooner or later be needed.

4. *the princes of the Philistines were wroth with him* — It must be considered a happy circumstance in the overruling providence of God to rescue David out of the dangerous dilemma in which he was now placed. But David is not free from censure in his professions to Achish (^{<1218>}1 Samuel 29:8), to do what he probably had not the smallest purpose of doing — of fighting with Achish against his enemies. It is just an instance

of the unhappy consequences into which a false step — a departure from the straight course of duty — will betray everyone who commits it.

9. *notwithstanding the princes of the Philistines have said* — The Philistine government had constitutional checks — or at least the king was not an absolute sovereign; but his authority was limited — his proceedings liable to be controlled by “the powerful barons of that rude and early period — much as the kings of Europe in the Middle Ages were by the proud and lawless aristocracy which surrounded them” [CHALMERS].

CHAPTER 30

1 SAMUEL 30:1-5.

THE AMALEKITES SPOIL ZIKLAG.

1. *Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag* — While the strength of the Philistine forces was poured out of their country into the plain of Esdraelon, the Amalekite marauders seized the opportunity of the defenseless state of Philistia to invade the southern territory. Of course, David's town suffered from the ravages of these nomad plunderers, in revenge for his recent raid upon their territory.
2. *they slew not any, either great or small, but carried them away* — Their conduct seems to stand in favorable contrast to that of David (⁴⁹²⁷¹1 Samuel 27:11). But their apparent clemency did not arise from humane considerations. It is traceable to the ancient war usages of the East, where the men of war, on the capture of a city, were unsparingly put to death, but there were no warriors in Ziklag at the time. The women and boys were reserved for slaves, and the old people were spared out of respect to age.
3. *David and his men came to the city, and, behold, it was burned with fire* — The language implies that the smoke of the conflagration was still visible, and the sacking very recent.

1 SAMUEL 30:6-15.

BUT DAVID, ENCOURAGED BY GOD, PURSUES THEM.

6. *David was greatly distressed* — He had reason, not only on his own personal account (⁴⁹⁸¹⁶1 Samuel 30:5), but on account of the vehement outcry and insurrectionary threats against him for having left the place so defenseless that the families of his men fell an unresisting prey to the

enemy. Under the pressure of so unexpected and widespread a calamity, of which he was upbraided as the indirect occasion, the spirit of any other leader guided by ordinary motives would have sunk;

but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God — His faith supplied him with inward resources of comfort and energy, and through the seasonable inquiries he made by Urim, he inspired confidence by ordering an immediate pursuit of the plunderers.

9. *came to the brook Besor* — now Wady Gaza, a winter torrent, a little to the south of Gaza. The bank of a stream naturally offered a convenient rest to the soldiers, who, through fatigue, were unable to continue the pursuit.

11-15. *they found an Egyptian in the field, and brought him to David* — Old and homeborn slaves are usually treated with great kindness. But a purchased or captured slave must look to himself; for, if feeble or sick, his master will leave him to perish rather than encumber himself with any additional burden. This Egyptian seems to have recently fallen into the hands of an Amalekite, and his master having belonged to the marauding party that had made the attack on Ziklag, he could give useful information as to the course taken by them on their return.

14. *the Cherethites* — that is, the Philistines (²²⁵¹Ezekiel 25:16 ²²⁵²Zephaniah 2:5).

15. *Swear unto me by God* — Whether there was still among these idolatrous tribes a lingering belief in one God, or this Egyptian wished to bind David by the God whom the Hebrews worshipped, the solemn sanction of an oath was mutually recognized.

²²⁵³1 SAMUEL 30:16-31.

AND RECOVERS HIS TWO WIVES AND ALL THE SPOIL.

16. *they were spread abroad upon all the earth* — Believing that David and all his men of war were far away, engaged with the Philistine expedition, they deemed themselves perfectly secure and abandoned

themselves to all manner of barbaric revelry. The promise made in answer to the devout inquiries of David (^{<OR8>}1 Samuel 30:8) was fulfilled. The marauders were surprised and panic-stricken. A great slaughter ensued — the people as well as the booty taken from Ziklag was recovered, besides a great amount of spoil which they had collected in a wide, freebooting excursion.

21. *David came to the two hundred men, which were so faint that they could not follow* — This unexpected accession of spoil was nearly proving an occasion of quarrel through the selfish cupidity of some of his followers, and serious consequences might have ensued had they not been prevented by the prudence of the leader, who enacted it as a standing ordinance — the equitable rule — that all the soldiers should share alike (see ^{<OR11>}Numbers 31:11; see on ^{<OR25>}Numbers 31:25).

26. *when David came to Ziklag, he sent of the spoil to the elders of Judah* — This was intended as an acknowledgment to the leading men in those towns and villages of Judah which had ministered to his necessities in the course of his various wanderings. It was the dictate of an amiable and grateful heart; and the effect of this well timed liberality was to bring a large accession of numbers to his camp (^{<OR22>}1 Chronicles 12:22). The enumeration of these places shows what a numerous and influential party of adherents to his cause he could count within his own tribe [^{<OR27>}1 Samuel 30:27-31].

CHAPTER 31

1 SAMUEL 31:1-7.

SAUL HAVING LOST HIS ARMY AT GILBOA, AND HIS SONS BEING SLAIN, HE AND HIS ARMOR-BEARER KILL THEMSELVES.

1. *Now the Philistines fought against Israel* — In a regular engagement, in which the two armies met (^{<0801>}1 Samuel 28:1-4), the Israelites were forced to give way, being annoyed by the arrows of the enemy, which, destroying them at a distance before they came to close combat, threw them into panic and disorder. Taking advantage of the heights of Mount Gilboa, [the Israelites] attempted to rally, but in vain. Saul and his sons fought like heroes; but the onset of the Philistines being at length mainly directed against the quarter where they were, Jonathan and two brothers, Abinadab or Ishui (^{<0949>}1 Samuel 14:49) and Melchishua, overpowered by numbers, were killed on the spot.

3-5. *the battle went sore against Saul*, etc. — He seems to have bravely maintained his ground for some time longer; but exhausted with fatigue and loss of blood, and dreading that if he fell alive into the enemy's hands, they would insolently maltreat him (^{<0682>}Joshua 8:29 ^{<0624>}10:24 ^{<0781>}Judges 8:21), he requested his armor bearer to despatch him. However, that officer refused to do so. Saul then falling on the point of his sword killed himself; and the armor bearer, who, according to Jewish writers, was Doeg, following the example of his master, put an end to his life also. They died by one and the same sword — the very weapon with which they had massacred the Lord's servants at Nob.

6. *So Saul died* — (see on ^{<1303>}1 Chronicles 10:13 and ^{<2831>}Hosea 13:11).

and his three sons — The influence of a directing Providence is evidently to be traced in permitting the death of Saul's three eldest and most energetic sons, particularly that of Jonathan, for whom, had he survived

his father, a strong party would undoubtedly have risen and thus obstructed the path of David to the throne.

and all his men, that same day together — his servants or bodyguard (^{<306>}1 Chronicles 10:6).

7. *the men of Israel that were on the other side of the valley* — probably the valley of Jezreel — the largest and southernmost of the valleys that run between Little Hermon and the ridges of the Gilboa range direct into the Jordan valley. It was very natural for the people in the towns and villages there to take fright and flee, for had they waited the arrival of the victors, they must, according to the war usages of the time, have been deprived either of their liberty or their lives.

^{<308>}1 SAMUEL 31:8-10.

THE PHILISTINES TRIUMPH OVER THEIR DEAD BODIES.

8, 9. *on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his three sons fallen* — On discovering the corpses of the slaughtered princes on the battlefield, the enemy reserved them for special indignities. They consecrated the armor of the king and his sons to the temple of Ashtaroth fastened their bodies on the temple of Shen, while they fixed the royal heads ignominiously in the temple of Dagon (^{<300>}1 Chronicles 10:10); thus dividing the glory among their several deities.

10. *to the wall* — (^{<312>}2 Samuel 21:12) — “the street” of Beth-shan. The street was called from the temple which stood in it. And they had to go along it to the wall of the city (see ^{<371>}Joshua 17:11).

^{<311>}1 SAMUEL 31:11-13.

THE MEN OF JABESH-GILEAD RECOVER THE BODIES AND BURY THEM AT JABESH.

11-13. *the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead heard of that which the Philistines had done* — Mindful of the important and timely services

Saul had rendered them, they gratefully and heroically resolved not to suffer such indignities to be inflicted on the remains of the royal family.

12. *valiant men arose, and went all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons* — Considering that Beth-shan is an hour and a half's distance, and by a narrow upland passage, to the west of the Jordan (the whole being a journey from Jabesh-gilead of about ten miles), they must have made all haste to travel thither to carry off the headless bodies and return to their own side of the Jordan in the course of a single night.

burnt them — This was not a Hebrew custom. It was probably resorted to on this occasion to prevent all risk of the Beth-shanites coming to disinter the royal remains for further insult.