

THE SECOND BOOK OF

SAMUEL

Commentary by **ROBERT JAMIESON**

CHAPTER 1

2 SAMUEL 1:1-16.

AN AMALEKITE BRINGS TIDINGS OF SAUL'S DEATH.

1. *David had abode two days in Ziklag* — Though greatly reduced by the Amalekite incendiaries, that town was not so completely sacked and destroyed, but David and his six hundred followers, with their families, could still find some accommodation.

2-12. *a man came out of the camp from Saul* — As the narrative of Saul's death, given in the last chapter, is inspired, it must be considered the true account, and the Amalekite's story a fiction of his own, invented to ingratiate himself with David, the presumptive successor to the throne. David's question, "How went the matter?" evinces the deep interest he took in the war, an interest that sprang from feelings of high and generous patriotism, not from views of ambition. The Amalekite, however, judging him to be actuated by a selfish principle, fabricated a story improbable and inconsistent, which he thought would procure him a reward. Having probably witnessed the suicidal act of Saul, he thought of turning it to his own account, and suffered the penalty of his grievously mistaken calculation (compare **2 Samuel 1:9** with **1 Samuel 31:4,5**).

10. *the crown* — a small metallic cap or wreath, which encircled the temples, serving the purpose of a helmet, with a very small horn projecting in front, as the emblem of power.

the bracelet that was on his arm — the armlet worn above the elbow; an ancient mark of royal dignity. It is still worn by kings in some Eastern countries.

13-15. *David said unto the young man ... Whence art thou?* — The man had at the outset stated who he was. But the question was now formally and judicially put. The punishment inflicted on the Amalekite may seem too severe, but the respect paid to kings in the West must not be regarded as the standard for that which the East may think due to royal station. David's reverence for Saul, as the Lord's anointed, was in his mind a principle on which he had faithfully acted on several occasions of great temptation. In present circumstances it was especially important that his principle should be publicly known; and to free himself from the imputation of being in any way accessory to the execrable crime of regicide was the part of a righteous judge, no less than of a good politician.

2 SAMUEL 1:17-27.

DAVID LAMENTS SAUL AND JONATHAN.

17, 18. *David lamented with this lamentation* — It has always been customary for Eastern people, on the death of great kings and warriors, to celebrate their qualities and deeds in funeral songs. This inimitable pathetic elegy is supposed by many writers to have become a national war song, and to have been taught to the young Israelites under the name of "The Bow," in conformity with the practice of Hebrew and many classical writers in giving titles to their songs from the principal theme (^{}Psalm 22:1 ^{}56:1 ^{}60:1 ^{}80:1 ^{}100:1). Although the words "the use of" are a supplement by our translators, they may be rightly introduced, for the natural sense of this parenthetical verse is, that David took immediate measures for instructing the people in the knowledge and practice of archery, their great inferiority to the enemy in this military arm having been the main cause of the late national disaster.

19. *The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places* — literally, "the gazelle" or "antelope of Israel." In Eastern countries, that animal is the chosen type of beauty and symmetrical elegance of form.

how are the mighty fallen! — This forms the chorus.

21. *let there be no dew, neither let there be rain* — To be deprived of the genial atmospheric influences which, in those anciently cultivated hills, seem to have reared plenty of first-fruits in the corn harvests, was specified as the greatest calamity the lacerated feelings of the poet could imagine. The curse seems still to lie upon them; for the mountains of Gilboa are naked and sterile.

the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away — To cast away the shield was counted a national disgrace. Yet, on that fatal battle of Gilboa, many of the Jewish soldiers, who had displayed unflinching valor in former battles, forgetful of their own reputation and their country's honor, threw away their shields and fled from the field. This dishonorable and cowardly conduct is alluded to with exquisitely touching pathos.

24-27. *Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights*, etc. — The fondness for dress, which anciently distinguished Oriental women, is their characteristic still. It appears in their love of bright, gay, and divers colors, in profuse display of ornaments, and in various other forms. The inmost depths of the poet's feeling are stirred, and his amiable disposition appears in the strong desire to celebrate the good qualities of Saul, as well as Jonathan. But the praises of the latter form the burden of the poem, which begins and ends with that excellent prince.

CHAPTER 2

2 SAMUEL 2:1-7.

DAVID, BY GOD'S DIRECTION, GOES UP TO HEBRON, AND IS MADE KING OVER JUDAH.

1-4. *David inquired of the Lord* — By Urim (^{<ORIG>}1 Samuel 23:6,9 ^{<ORIG>}30:7,8). He knew his destination, but he knew also that the providence of God would pave the way. Therefore he would take no step in such a crisis of his own and the nation's history, without asking and obtaining the divine direction. He was told to go into Judah, and fix his headquarters in Hebron, whither he accordingly repaired with his now considerable force. There his interests were very powerful; for he was not only within his own tribe, and near chiefs with whom he had been long in friendly relations (see on ^{<ORIG>}1 Samuel 30:26), but Hebron was the capital and center of Judah, and one of the Levitical cities; the inhabitants of which were strongly attached to him, both from sympathy with his cause ever since the massacre at Nob, and from the prospect of realizing in his person their promised pre-eminence among the tribes. The princes of Judah, therefore, offered him the crown over their tribe, and it was accepted. More could not, with prudence, be done in the circumstances of the country (^{<ORIG>}1 Chronicles 11:3).

5-7. *David sent messengers unto the men of Jabesh-gilead* — There can be no doubt that this message of thanks for their bold and dangerous enterprise in rescuing the bodies of Saul and his sons was an expression of David's personal and genuine feeling of satisfaction. At the same time, it was a stroke of sound and timely policy. In this view the announcement of his royal power in Judah, accompanied by the pledge of his protection of the men of Jabesh-gilead, should they be exposed to danger for their adventure at Beth-shan, would bear an important significance in all parts of the country and hold out an assurance that he would render them the same timely and energetic succor that Saul had done at the beginning of his reign.

2 SAMUEL 2:8-17.

ABNER MAKES ISH-BOSHETH KING OVER ISRAEL.

8-17. *Abner the son of Ner, captain of Saul's host took Ish-bosheth* — Here was the establishment of a rival kingdom, which, however, would probably have had no existence but for Abner.

Ish-bosheth — or “Esh-baal” (^{<1083>}1 Chronicles 8:33 9:39). The Hebrews usually changed names ending with Baal into Bosheth (“shame”) (compare ^{<1083>}Judges 9:53 with ^{<1121>}2 Samuel 11:21). This prince was so called from his imbecility.

Abner — was first cousin of Saul, commander of the forces, and held in high respect throughout the country. Loyalty to the house of his late master was mixed up with opposition to David and views of personal ambition in his originating this factious movement. He, too, was alive to the importance of securing the eastern tribes; so, taking Ish-bosheth across the Jordan, he proclaimed him king at Mahanaim, a town on the north bank of the Jabbok, hallowed in patriarchal times by the divine presence (^{<1031>}Genesis 32:2). There he rallied the tribes around the standard of the unfortunate son of Saul.

9, 10. *over Gilead* — used in a loose sense for the land beyond Jordan.

Ashurites — the tribe of Asher in the extreme north.

Jezreel — the extensive valley bordering on the central tribes.

over all Israel ... But Judah — David neither could nor would force matters. He was content to wait God's time and studiously avoided any collision with the rival king, till, at the lapse of two years, hostilities were threatened from that quarter.

12. *Abner ... and the servants of Ish-bosheth ... went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon* — This town was near the confines of Judah, and as the force with which Abner encamped there seemed to have some aggressive design, David sent an army of observation, under the command of Joab, to watch his movements.

14. *Abner said to Joab, Let the young men now arise, and play before us*

— Some think that the proposal was only for an exhibition of a little tilting match for diversion. Others suppose that, both parties being reluctant to commence a civil war, Abner proposed to leave the contest to the decision of twelve picked men on either side. This fight by championship instead of terminating the matter, inflamed the fiercest passions of the two rival parties; a general engagement ensued, in which Abner and his forces were defeated and put to flight.

~~1015~~ **2 SAMUEL 2:19-32.**

ASAHEL SLAIN.

19-32. *Asahel pursued after Abner* — To gain the general's armor was deemed the grandest trophy. Asahel, ambitious of securing Abner's, had outstripped all other pursuers, and was fast gaining on the retreating commander. Abner, conscious of possessing more physical power, and unwilling that there should be "blood" between himself and Joab, Asahel's brother, twice urged him to desist. The impetuous young soldier being deaf to the generous remonstrance, the veteran raised the pointed butt of his lance, as the modern Arabs do when pursued, and, with a sudden back thrust, transfixed him on the spot, so that he fell, and lay weltering in his blood. But Joab and Abishai continued the pursuit by another route till sunset. On reaching a rising ground, and receiving a fresh reinforcement of some Benjamites, Abner rallied his scattered troops and earnestly appealed to Joab's better feelings to stop the further effusion of blood, which, if continued, would lead to more serious consequences — a destructive civil war. Joab, while upbraiding his opponent as the sole cause of the fray, felt the force of the appeal and led off his men; while Abner probably dreading a renewal of the attack when Joab should learn his brother's fate, and vow fierce revenge, endeavored, by a forced march, to cross the Jordan that night. On David's side the loss was only nineteen men, besides Asahel. But of Ish-bosheth's party there fell three hundred and sixty. This skirmish is exactly similar to the battles of the Homeric warriors, among whom, in the flight of one, the pursuit by another, and the

dialogue held between them, there is vividly represented the style of ancient warfare.

CHAPTER 3

<101E>2 SAMUEL 3:1-5.

SIX SONS BORN TO DAVID.

1. *there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David*

— The rival parties had varying success, but David’s interest steadily increased; less, however, by the fortunes of war, than a growing adherence to him as the divinely designated king.

2. *unto David were sons born in Hebron* — The six sons mentioned had all different mothers.

3. *Chileab* — (“his father’s picture”) — called also Daniel (<101E>1 Chronicles 3:1).

Maacah the daughter of Talmi king of Geshur — a region in Syria, north of Israel. This marriage seems to have been a political match, made by David, with a view to strengthen himself against Ish-bosheth’s party, by the aid of a powerful friend and ally in the north. Piety was made to yield to policy, and the bitter fruits of this alliance with a heathen prince he reaped in the life of the turbulent Absalom.

5. *Eglah David’s wife* — This addition has led many to think that Eglah was another name for Michal, the *first* and *proper* wife, who, though she had no family after her insolent ridicule of David (<101E>2 Samuel 6:23), might have had a child before.

<101E>2 SAMUEL 3:6-12.

ABNER REVOLTS TO DAVID.

6-11. *Abner made himself strong for the house of Saul* — In the East, the wives and concubines of a king are the property of his successor to this

extent, that for a private person to aspire to marry one of them would be considered a virtual advance of pretensions to the crown (see ¹¹²⁷1 Kings 2:17). It is not clear whether the accusation against Abner was well or ill founded. But he resented the charge as an indignity, and, impelled by revenge, determined to transfer all the weight of his influence to the opposite party. He evidently set a full value on his services, and seems to have lorded it over his weak nephew in a haughty, overbearing manner.

12, 13. *Abner sent messengers to David* — Though his language implied a secret conviction, that in supporting Ish-bosheth he had been laboring to frustrate the divine purpose of conferring the sovereignty of the kingdom on David, this acknowledgment was no justification either of the measure he was now adopting, or of the motives that prompted it. Nor does it seem possible to uphold the full integrity and honor of David's conduct in entertaining his secret overtures for undermining Ish-bosheth, except we take into account the divine promise of the kingdom, and his belief that the secession of Abner was a means designed by Providence for accomplishing it. The demand for the restoration of his wife Michal was perfectly fair; but David's insisting on it at that particular moment, as an indispensable condition of his entering into any treaty with Abner, seems to have proceeded not so much from a lingering attachment as from an expectation that his possession of her would incline some adherents of the house of Saul to be favorable to his cause.

17-21. *Abner had communication with the elders of Israel* — He spoke the truth in impressing their minds with the well-known fact of David's divine designation to the kingdom. But he acted a base and hypocritical part in pretending that his present movement was prompted by religious motives, when it sprang entirely from malice and revenge against Ish-bosheth. The particular appeal of the Benjamites was a necessary policy; their tribe enjoyed the honor of giving birth to the royal dynasty of Saul; they would naturally be disinclined to lose that *prestige*. They were, besides, a determined people, whose contiguity to Judah might render them troublesome and dangerous. The enlistment of their interest, therefore, in the scheme, would smooth the way for the adhesion of the other tribes; and Abner enjoyed the most convenient opportunity of using his great influence in gaining over that tribe while escorting Michal to David with a suitable equipage. The mission enabled him to cover his

treacherous designs against his master — to draw the attention of the elders and people to David as uniting in himself the double recommendation of being the nominee of Jehovah, no less than a connection of the royal house of Saul, and, without suspicion of any dishonorable motives, to advocate policy of terminating the civil discord, by bestowing the sovereignty on the husband of Michal. In the same character of public ambassador, he was received and feted by David; and while, ostensibly, the restoration of Michal was the sole object of his visit, he busily employed himself in making private overtures to David for bringing over to his cause those tribes which he had artfully seduced. Abner pursued a course unworthy of an honorable man and though his offer was accepted by David, the guilt and infamy of the transaction were exclusively his.

2 SAMUEL 3:22-30.

JOAB KILLS ABNER.

24-27. *Joab came to the king, and said, What hast thou done?* — Joab's knowledge of Abner's wily character might have led him to doubt the sincerity of that person's proposals and to disapprove the policy of relying on his fidelity. But undoubtedly there were other reasons of a private and personal nature which made Joab displeased and alarmed by the reception given to Abner. The military talents of that general, his popularity with the army, his influence throughout the nation, rendered him a formidable rival. In the event of his overtures being carried out, the important service of bringing over all the other tribes to the king of Judah would establish so strong a claim on the gratitude of David, that his accession would inevitably raise a serious obstacle to the ambition of Joab. To these considerations was added the remembrance of the blood feud that existed between them since the death of his brother Asahel (¹⁰²³2 Samuel 2:23). Determined, therefore, to get Abner out of the way, Joab feigned some reason, probably in the king's name, for recalling him, and, going out to meet him, stabbed him unawares; not within Hebron, for it was a city of refuge, but at a noted well in the neighborhood.

31. *David said to Joab, and to all the people that were with him, Rend your clothes, and gird you with sackcloth* — David's sorrow was sincere and profound, and he took occasion to give it public expression by the funeral honors he appointed for Abner.

King David himself followed the bier — a sort of wooden frame, partly resembling a coffin, and partly a hand-barrow.

33, 34. *the king lamented over Abner* — This brief elegy is an effusion of indignation as much as of sorrow. As Abner had stabbed Asahel in open war [^{<1023>}2 Samuel 2:23], Joab had not the right of the Goel. Besides, he had adopted a lawless and execrable method of obtaining satisfaction (see on ^{<1025>}1 Kings 2:5). The deed was an insult to the authority, as well as most damaging to the prospects of the king. But David's feelings and conduct on hearing of the death, together with the whole character and accompaniments of the funeral solemnity, tended not only to remove all suspicion of guilt from him, but even to turn the tide of popular opinion in his favor, and to pave the way for his reigning over all the tribes more honorably than by the treacherous negotiations of Abner.

CHAPTER 4

2 SAMUEL 4:1,2.

BAANAH AND RECHAB SLAY ISH-BOSHETH, AND BRING HIS HEAD TO HEBRON.

4. *Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son that was lame of his feet* — This is mentioned as a reason why, according to Oriental notions, he was considered unfit for exercising the duties of sovereignty.

5, 6. *Rechab and Baanah went and came about the heat of the day to the house of Ish-bosheth*, etc. — It is still a custom in the East to allow their soldiers a certain quantity of corn, together with some pay; and these two captains very naturally went to the palace the day before to fetch wheat, in order to distribute it to the soldiers, that it might be sent to the mill at the accustomed hour in the morning.

7. *when they came into the house, he lay on his bed* — Rechab and Baanah came in the heat of the day, when they knew that Ish-bosheth, their master, would be resting on his divan; and as it was necessary, for the reason just given, to have the corn the day before it was needed, their coming at that time, though it might be a little earlier than usual, created no suspicion, and attracted no notice [HARMER].

gat them away through the plain — that is, the valley of the Jordan, through which their way lay from Mahanaim to Hebron.

8. *They brought the head of Ish-bosheth unto David ... and said, Behold the head of Ish-bosheth* — Such bloody trophies of rebels and conspirators have always been acceptable to princes in the East, and the carriers have been liberally rewarded. Ish-bosheth being a usurper, the two assassins thought they were doing a meritorious service to David by removing the only existing obstacle to the union of the two kingdoms.

2 SAMUEL 4:10-12.**DAVID CAUSES THEM TO BE PUT TO DEATH.**

12. *slew them, and cut off their hands and their feet* — as the instruments in perpetrating their crime. The exposure of the mutilated remains was intended as not only a punishment of their crime, but also the attestation of David's abhorrence.

CHAPTER 5

2 SAMUEL 5:1-5.

THE TRIBES ANOINT DAVID KING OVER ISRAEL.

1, 2. *Then came all the tribes of Israel* — a combined deputation of the leading authorities in every tribe. [See on ^{<1111>}1 Chronicles 11:1.] David possessed the first and indispensable qualification for the throne; namely, that of being an Israelite (^{<1575>}Deuteronomy 17:15). Of his military talent he had furnished ample proof. And the people's desire for his assumption of the government of Israel was further increased by their knowledge of the will and purpose of God, as declared by Samuel (^{<911>}1 Samuel 16:11-13).

3. *King David made a league with them in Hebron before the Lord* — (see on ^{<911>}1 Samuel 10:17). This formal declaration of the constitution was chiefly made at the commencement of a new dynasty, or at the restoration of the royal family after a usurpation (^{<1117>}2 Kings 11:17), though circumstances sometimes led to its being renewed on the accession of any new sovereign (^{<1124>}1 Kings 12:4). It seems to have been accompanied by religious solemnities.

2 SAMUEL 5:6-12.

HE TAKES ZION FROM THE JEBUSITES.

6. *the king and his men went to Jerusalem unto the Jebusites* — The first expedition of David, as king of the whole country, was directed against this place, which had hitherto remained in the hands of the natives. It was strongly fortified and deemed so impregnable that the blind and lame were sent to man the battlements, in derisive mockery of the Hebrew king's attack, and to shout, "David cannot come in hither." To understand the full meaning and force of this insulting taunt, it is necessary to bear in

mind the depth and steepness of the valley of Gihon, and the lofty walls of the ancient Canaanitish fortress.

7. *the stronghold of Zion* — Whether Zion be the southwestern hill commonly so-called, or the peak now level on the north of the temple mount, it is the towering height which catches the eye from every quarter — “the hill fort,” “the rocky hold” of Jerusalem.

8. *Whosoever getteth up to the gutter* — This is thought by some to mean a subterranean passage; by others a spout through which water was poured upon the fire which the besiegers often applied to the woodwork at the gateways, and by the projections of which a skillful climber might make his ascent good; a third class render the words, “whosoever dasheth them against the precipice” (^{<13106>}1 Chronicles 11:6).

9. *David dwelt in the fort*, etc. — Having taken it by storm, he changed its name to “the city of David,” to signify the importance of the conquest, and to perpetuate the memory of the event.

David built round about from Millo and inward — probably a row of stone bastions placed on the northern side of Mount Zion, and built by David to secure himself on that side from the Jebusites, who still lived in the lower part of the city. The house of Millo was perhaps the principal corner tower of that fortified wall.

11, 12. *Hiram ... sent carpenters, and masons* — The influx of Tyrian architects and mechanics affords a clear evidence of the low state to which, through the disorders of long-continued war, the better class of artisans had declined in Israel.

^{<10513>}2 SAMUEL 5:13-16.

ELEVEN SONS BORN TO HIM.

13. *David took him more concubines and wives* — In this conduct David transgressed an express law, which forbade the king of Israel to multiply wives unto himself (^{<15717>}Deuteronomy 17:17).

2 SAMUEL 5:17-25.

HE SMITES THE PHILISTINES.

17. *when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel* — During the civil war between the house of Saul and David, those restless neighbors had remained quiet spectators of the contest. But now, jealous of David, they resolved to attack him before his government was fully established.

18. *valley of Rephaim* — that is, “of giants,” a broad and fertile plain, which descends gradually from the central mountains towards the northwest. It was the route by which they marched against Jerusalem. The “hold” to which David went down “was some fortified place where he might oppose the progress of the invaders,” and where he signally defeated them.

21. *there they left their images* — probably their “lares” or household deities, which they had brought into the field to fight for them. They were burnt as ordained by law (^{<BIB>}Deuteronomy 7:5).

22. *the Philistines came up yet again* — The next year they renewed their hostile attempt with a larger force, but God manifestly interposed in David’s favor.

24. *the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees* — now generally thought not to be mulberry trees, but some other tree, most probably the poplar, which delights in moist situations, and the leaves of which are rustled by the slightest movement of the air [ROYLE].

CHAPTER 6

2 SAMUEL 6:1-5.

DAVID FETCHES THE ARK FROM KIRJATH-JEARIM ON A NEW CART.

1. *Again, David gathered together all the chosen men of Israel* — (See ^{<1012>}2 Samuel 5:1). The object of this second assembly was to commence a national movement for establishing the ark in Jerusalem, after it had continued nearly fifty years in the house of Abinadab (see on ^{<1330>}1 Chronicles 13:1).
2. *from Baale of Judah* — A very large force of picked men were selected for this important work lest the undertaking might be opposed or obstructed by the Philistines. Besides, a great concourse of people accompanied them out of veneration for the sacred article. The journey *to* Baale, which is related (^{<1336>}1 Chronicles 13:6), is here presupposed, and the historian describes the course of the procession *from* that place to the capital.
3. *they set the ark of God upon a new cart* — or a covered wagon (see on ^{<1017>}1 Samuel 6:7). This was a hasty and inconsiderate procedure, in violation of an express statute (see on ^{<1045>}Numbers 4:15 and see ^{<1078>}Numbers 7:9 ^{<1083>}18:3).

2 SAMUEL 6:6-11.

UZZAH SMITTEN.

- 6-8. *they came to Nachon's threshing-floor* — or Chidon's (^{<1339>}1 Chronicles 13:9). The Chaldee version renders the words, "came to the place prepared for the reception of the ark," that is, near the city of David (^{<1013>}2 Samuel 6:13).

the oxen shook it — or, “stumbled” (^{<1339>}1 Chronicles 13:9). Fearing that the ark was in danger of being overturned, Uzzah, under the impulse of momentary feeling, laid hold of it to keep it steady. Whether it fell and crushed him, or some sudden disease attacked him, he fell dead upon the spot. This melancholy occurrence not only threw a cloud over the joyous scene, but entirely stopped the procession; for the ark was left where it then was, in the near neighborhood of the capital. It is of importance to observe the proportionate severity of the punishments attending the profanation of the ark. The Philistines suffered by diseases, from which they were relieved by their oblations, because the law had not been given to them (^{<918>}1 Samuel 5:8-12); the Bethshemites also suffered, but not fatally (^{<919>}1 Samuel 6:19); their error proceeded from ignorance or inadvertency. But Uzzah, who was a Levite, and well instructed, suffered death for his breach of the law. The severity of Uzzah’s fate may seem to us too great for the nature and degree of the offense. But it does not become us to sit in judgment on the dispensations of God; and, besides, it is apparent that the divine purpose was to inspire awe of His majesty, a submission to His law, and a profound veneration for the symbols and ordinances of His worship.

9, 10. *David was afraid of the Lord that day*, etc. — His feelings on this alarming judgment were greatly excited on various accounts, dreading that the displeasure of God had been provoked by the removal of the ark, that the punishment would be extended to himself and people, and that they might fall into some error or neglect during the further conveyance of the ark. He resolved, therefore, to wait for more light and direction as to the path of duty. An earlier consultation by Urim would have led him right at the first, whereas in this perplexity and distress, he was reaping the fruits of inconsideration and neglect.

11. *Obed-edom the Gittite* — a Levite (^{<1358>}1 Chronicles 15:18,21,24 ^{<1365>}16:5 ^{<1301>}26:4). He is called a Gittite, either from his residence at Gath, or more probably from Gath-rimmon, one of the Levitical cities (^{<1321>}Joshua 21:24,25).

2 SAMUEL 6:12-19.

DAVID AFTERWARDS BRINGS THE ARK TO ZION.

12. *it was told king David, saying, The Lord hath blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the ark of God*

— The lapse of three months not only restored the agitated mind of the monarch to a tranquil and settled tone, but led him to a discovery of his former error. Having learned that the ark was kept in its temporary resting-place not only without inconvenience or danger, but with great advantage, he resolved forthwith to remove it to the capital, with the observance of all due form and solemnity (^{<1391>}1 Chronicles 15:1-13). It was transported now on the shoulders of the priests, who had been carefully prepared for the work, and the procession was distinguished by extraordinary solemnities and demonstrations of joy.

13. *when they that bare the ark ... had gone six paces* — Some think that four altars were hastily raised for the offering of sacrifices at the distance of every six paces (but see on ^{<1351>}1 Chronicles 15:26).

14. *David danced before the Lord* — The Hebrews, like other ancient people, had their sacred dances, which were performed on their solemn anniversaries and other great occasions of commemorating some special token of the divine goodness and favor.

with all his might — intimating violent efforts of leaping, and divested of his royal mantle (in a state of undress), conduct apparently unsuitable to the gravity of age or the dignity of a king. But it was unquestionably done as an act of religious homage, his attitudes and dress being symbolic, as they have always been in Oriental countries, of penitence, joy, thankfulness, and devotion. [See on ^{<1357>}1 Chronicles 15:27.]

17. *they brought in the ark of the Lord, and set it in his place, in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it* — The old tabernacle remained at Gibeon (^{<1361>}1 Chronicles 16:39 ^{<1372>}21:29 ^{<1402>}2 Chronicles 1:3). Probably it was not removed because it was too large for the temporary place the king had appropriated, and because he contemplated the building of a temple.

18. *he blessed the people* — in the double character of prophet and king (see ^{<1055>}1 Kings 8:55,56). [See on ^{<1342>}1 Chronicles 16:2.]

19. *cake of bread* — unleavened and slender.

a good piece of flesh — roast beef.

^{<1055>}2 SAMUEL 6:20-23.

MICHAL'S BARRENNESS.

20-22. *Michal ... came out to meet David*, etc. — Proud of her royal extraction, she upbraided her husband for lowering the dignity of the crown and acting more like a buffoon than a king. But her taunting sarcasm was repelled in a manner that could not be agreeable to her feelings while it indicated the warm piety and gratitude of David.

CHAPTER 7

<H2>2 SAMUEL 7:1-3.

NATHAN APPROVES THE PURPOSE OF DAVID TO BUILD GOD A HOUSE.

2. *the king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in an house of cedar* — The palace which Hiram had sent men and materials to build in Jerusalem had been finished. It was magnificent for that age, though made wholly of wood: houses in warm countries not being required to possess the solidity and thickness of walls which are requisite for dwellings in regions exposed to rain and cold. Cedar was the rarest and most valuable timber. The elegance and splendor of his own royal mansion, contrasted with the mean and temporary tabernacle in which the ark of God was placed, distressed the pious mind of David.

3. *Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in thine heart* — The piety of the design commended it to the prophet's mind, and he gave his hasty approval and encouragement to the royal plans. The prophets, when following the impulse of their own feelings, or forming conjectural opinions, fell into frequent mistakes. (See on <H2>1 Samuel 16:6 and <H2>2 Kings 4:27).

<H2>2 SAMUEL 7:4-17.

GOD APPOINTS HIS SUCCESSOR TO BUILD IT.

4-17. *it came to pass that night, that the word of the Lord came unto Nathan* — The command was given to the prophet on the night immediately following; that is, before David could either take any measures or incur any expenses.

11. *Also the Lord telleth thee that he will make thee an house* — As a reward for his pious purpose, God would increase and maintain the family of David and secure the succession of the throne to his dynasty. [See on ^{<370>}1 Chronicles 17:10].

12. *I will set up thy seed after thee*, etc. — It is customary for the *oldest son born after the father's succession to the throne* to succeed him in his dignity as king. David had several sons by Bath-sheba born after his removal to Jerusalem (^{<154>}2 Samuel 5:14-16; compare ^{<105>}1 Chronicles 3:5). But by a special ordinance and promise of God, his successor was to be a son born after this time; and the departure from the established usage of the East in fixing the succession, can be accounted for on no other known ground, except the fulfillment of the divine promise.

13. *He shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever* — This declaration referred, in its primary application, to Solomon, and to the temporal kingdom of David's family. But in a larger and sublimer sense, it was meant of David's Son of another nature (^{<308>}Hebrews 1:8). [See on ^{<374>}1 Chronicles 17:14.]

^{<1075>}2 SAMUEL 7:18-29.

DAVID'S PRAYER AND THANKSGIVING.

18. *Then went king David in, and sat before the Lord* — Sitting was anciently an attitude for worship (^{<1272>}Exodus 17:12 ^{<1043>}1 Samuel 4:13 ^{<1194>}1 Kings 19:4). As to the particular attitude David sat, most probably, *upon his heels*. It was the posture of the ancient Egyptians before the shrines; it is the posture of deepest respect before a superior in the East. Persons of highest dignity sit thus when they do sit in the presence of kings and it is the only sitting attitude assumed by the modern Mohammedans in their places and rites of devotion.

19. *is this the manner of man, O Lord God?* — that is, is it customary for men to show such condescension to persons so humble as I am? [See ^{<3772>}1 Chronicles 17:17.]

20. *what can David say more unto thee?* — that is, my obligations are greater than I can express.

CHAPTER 8

2 SAMUEL 8:1,2.

DAVID SUBDUES THE PHILISTINES, AND MAKES THE MOABITES TRIBUTARY.

1. *David took Metheg-ammah out of the hand of the Philistines* — that is, Gath and her suburban towns (^{
}1 Chronicles 18:1). That town had been “a bridle” by which the Philistines kept the people of Judah in check. David used it now as a barrier to repress that restless enemy.

2. *he smote Moab, and measured them with a line* — This refers to a well-known practice of Eastern kings, to command their prisoners of war, particularly those who, notorious for the atrocity of their crimes or distinguished by the indomitable spirit of their resistance, had greatly incensed the victors, to lie down on the ground. Then a certain portion of them, which was determined by lot, but most commonly by a measuring-line, were put to death. Our version makes him put two-thirds to death, and spare one-third. The *Septuagint* and *Vulgate* make one-half. This war usage was not, perhaps, usually practiced by the people of God; but Jewish writers assert that the cause of this particular severity against this people was their having massacred David’s parents and family, whom he had, during his exile, committed to the king of Moab.

2 SAMUEL 8:3-14.

HE SMITES HADADEZER AND THE SYRIANS.

3. *Zobah* — (^{
}1 Chronicles 18:3). This kingdom was bounded on the east by the Euphrates, and it extended westward from that river, perhaps as far north as Aleppo. It was long the chief among the petty kingdoms of Syria, and its king bore the hereditary title of “Hadadezer” or “Hadarezer” (“Hadad,” that is, “helped”).

as he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates — in accordance with the promises God made to Israel that He would give them all the country as far as the Euphrates (^{<0158>}Genesis 15:18 ^{<0247>}Numbers 24:17). In the first campaign David signally defeated Hadadezer. Besides a great number of foot prisoners, he took from him an immense amount of booty in chariots and horses. Reserving only a small number of the latter, he hamstrung the rest. The horses were thus mutilated because they were forbidden to the Hebrews, both in war and agriculture. So it was of no use to keep them. Besides, their neighbors placed much dependence on cavalry, but having, for want of a native breed, to procure them by purchase, the greatest damage that could be done to such enemies was to render their horses unserviceable in war. (See also ^{<0446>}Genesis 46:6 ^{<0446>}Joshua 11:6,9). A king of Damascene-Syria came to Hadadezer's succor; but David routed those auxiliary forces also, took possession of their country, put garrisons into their fortified towns, and made them tributary.

9. *Toi king of Hamath* — Coele-Syria; northwards, it extended to the city Hamath on the Orontes, which was the capital of the country. The Syrian prince, being delivered from the dread of a dangerous neighbor, sent his son with valuable presents to David to congratulate him on his victories, and solicit his alliance and protection.

10. *Joram* — or Hadoram (^{<1380>}1 Chronicles 18:10).

11. *Which also king David did dedicate unto the Lord* — Eastern princes have always been accustomed to hoard up vast quantities of gold. This is the first instance of a practice uniformly followed by David of reserving, after defraying expenses and bestowing suitable rewards upon his soldiers, the remainder of the spoil taken in war, to accumulate for the grand project of his life — the erection of a national temple at Jerusalem.

13. *David gat him a name when he returned from smiting of the Syrians* — Instead of Syrians, the *Septuagint* version reads “Edomites,” which is the true reading, as is evident from ^{<0084>}2 Samuel 8:14. This conquest, made by the army of David, was due to the skillful generalship and gallantry of Abishai and Joab. (^{<1382>}1 Chronicles 18:12; compare ^{<1301>}Psalms 60:1, title.) The valley was the ravine of salt (the Ghor), adjoining the Salt Mountain, at the southwestern extremity of the Dead Sea, separating the ancient territories of Judah and Edom [ROBINSON].

2 SAMUEL 8:15-18.

HIS REIGN.

15. *David executed judgment and justice unto all his people* — Though involved in foreign wars, he maintained an excellent system of government at home, the most eminent men of the age composing his cabinet of ministers.

16. *Joab ... was over the host* — by virtue of a special promise (^{<1085>}2 Samuel 5:8).

recorder — historiographer or daily annalist, an office of great trust and importance in Eastern countries.

17. *Zadok ... and Ahimelech ... were the priests* — On the massacre of the priests at Nob, [^{<1029>}1 Samuel 22:19], Saul conferred the priesthood on Zadok, of the family of Eleazar (^{<1181>}1 Chronicles 6:50), while David acknowledged Ahimelech, of Ithamar's family, who fled to him. The two high priests exercised their office under the respective princes to whom they were attached. But, on David's obtaining the kingdom over all Israel, they both retained their dignity; Ahimelech officiating at Jerusalem, and Zadok at Gibeon (^{<1369>}1 Chronicles 16:39).

18. *Cherethites* — that is, Philistines (^{<3117>}Zephaniah 2:5).

Pelethites — from Pelet (^{<1308>}1 Chronicles 12:3). They were the valiant men who, having accompanied David during his exile among the Philistines, were made his bodyguard.

CHAPTER 9

2 SAMUEL 9:1-12.

DAVID SENDS FOR MEPHIBOSHETH.

1-7. *David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul* — On inquiry, Saul's land steward was found, who gave information that there still survived Mephibosheth, a son of Jonathan who was five years old at his father's death, and whom David, then wandering in exile, had never seen. His lameness (¹⁰⁰¹2 Samuel 4:4) had prevented him from taking any part in the public contests of the time. Besides, according to Oriental notions, the younger son of a crowned monarch has a preferable claim to the succession over the son of a mere heir-apparent; and hence his name was never heard of as the rival of his uncle Ish-bosheth. His insignificance had led to his being lost sight of, and it was only through Ziba that David learned of his existence, and the retired life he passed with one of the great families in trans-jordanic Canaan who remained attached to the fallen dynasty. Mephibosheth was invited to court, and a place at the royal table on public days was assigned him, as is still the custom with Eastern monarchs. Saul's family estate, which had fallen to David in right of his wife (⁰²⁷⁸Numbers 27:8), or been forfeited to the crown by Ish-bosheth's rebellion (¹⁰¹⁸2 Samuel 12:8), was provided (¹⁰¹¹2 Samuel 9:11; also ¹⁰⁰⁸2 Samuel 19:28), for enabling Mephibosheth to maintain an establishment suitable to his rank, and Ziba appointed steward to manage it, on the condition of receiving one-half of the produce in remuneration for his labor and expense, while the other moiety was to be paid as rent to the owner of the land (¹⁰⁰⁹2 Samuel 19:29).

10. *Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants* — The mention of his sons and the slaves in his house was to show that Mephibosheth would be honored with an equipage "as one of the king's sons."

12. *Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name was Micah* — Whether born before or after his residence in Jerusalem, cannot be ascertained. But

through him the name and memory of the excellent Jonathan was preserved (see ~~1384~~ 1 Chronicles 8:34,35 ~~1390~~ 9:40,41).

CHAPTER 10

2 SAMUEL 10:1-5.

DAVID'S MESSENGERS, SENT TO COMFORT HANUN, ARE DISGRACEFULLY TREATED.

2. *Then said David, I will show kindness unto Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father showed kindness unto me* — It is probable that this was the Nahash against whom Saul waged war at Jabesh-gilead (⁽⁹¹¹⁾1 Samuel 11:11). David, on leaving Gath, where his life was exposed to danger, found an asylum with the king of Moab; and as Nahash, king of the Ammonites, was his nearest neighbor, it may be that during the feud between Saul and David, he, through enmity to the former, was kind and hospitable to David.

3. *the princes of the children of Ammon said unto Hanun* — Their suspicion was not warranted either by any overt act or by any cherished design of David: it must have originated in their knowledge of the denunciations of God's law against them (⁽⁹²³⁾Deuteronomy 23:3-6), and of David's policy in steadfastly adhering to it.

4. *Hanun took David's servants, and shaved off the one half of their beards* — From the long flowing dress of the Hebrews and other Orientals, the curtailment of their garments must have given them an aspect of gross indelicacy and ludicrousness. Besides, a knowledge of the extraordinary respect and value which has always been attached, and the gross insult that is implied in any indignity offered, to the beard in the East, will account for the shame which the deputies felt, and the determined spirit of revenge which burst out in all Israel on learning the outrage. Two instances are related in the modern history of Persia, of similar insults by kings of haughty and imperious temper, involving the nation in war; and we need not, therefore, be surprised that David vowed revenge for this wanton and public outrage.

5. *Tarry at Jericho* — or in the neighborhood, after crossing the fords of the Jordan.

2 SAMUEL 10:6-14.

THE AMMONITES OVERCOME.

6-14. *when the children of Ammon saw that they stank before David* — To chastise those insolent and inhospitable Ammonites, who had violated the common law of nations, David sent a large army under the command of Joab, while they, informed of the impending attack, made energetic preparations to repel it by engaging the services of an immense number of Syrian mercenaries.

Beth-rehob — the capital of the low-lying region between Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon.

Zoba — (see on ^{400B}2 Samuel 8:3).

of king Maacah — His territories lay on the other side of Jordan, near Gilead (^{483A}Deuteronomy 3:14).

Ish-tob — that is, “the men of Tob” — the place of Jephthah’s marauding adventures (see also ^{430B}1 Chronicles 19:6 ^{430B}Psalm 60:1, title). As the Israelite soldiers poured into the Ammonite territory, that people met them at the frontier town of Medeba (^{430B}1 Chronicles 19:7-9), the native troops covering the city, while the Syrian mercenaries lay at some distance encamped in the fields. In making the attack, Joab divided his forces into two separate detachments — the one of which, under the command of his brother, Abishai, was to concentrate its attack upon the city, while he himself marched against the overwhelming host of mercenary auxiliaries. It was a just and necessary war that had been forced on Israel, and they could hope for the blessing of God upon their arms. With great judgment the battle opened against the mercenaries, who could not stand against the furious onset of Joab, and not feeling the cause their own, consulted their safety by flight. The Ammonites, who had placed their chief dependence upon a foreign aid, then retreated to entrench themselves within the walls of the town.

14. *So Joab returned and came to Jerusalem* — Probably the season was too far advanced for entering on a siege.

2 SAMUEL 10:15-19.

THE SYRIANS DEFEATED.

16. *Hadarezer sent and brought out the Syrians that were beyond the river*

— This prince had enjoyed a breathing time after his defeat (^{10:8}2 Samuel 8:3). But alarmed at the increasing power and greatness of David, as well as being an ally of the Ammonites, he levied a vast army not only in Syria, but in Mesopotamia, to invade the Hebrew kingdom. Shobach, his general, in pursuance of this design, had marched his troops as far as Kelam, a border town of eastern Manasseh, when David, crossing the Jordan by forced marches, suddenly surprised, defeated, and dispersed them. As a result of this great and decisive victory, all the petty kingdoms of Syria submitted and became his tributaries (see on ^{19:1}1 Chronicles 19:1).

CHAPTER 11

2 SAMUEL 11:1.

JOAB BESIEGES RABBAH.

1. *at the time when kings go forth to battle* — The return of spring was the usual time of commencing military operations. This expedition took place the year following the war against the Syrians; and it was entered upon because the disaster of the former campaign having fallen chiefly upon the Syrian mercenaries, the Ammonites had not been punished for their insult to the ambassadors.

David sent Joab and his servants ... they destroyed the children of Ammon — The powerful army that Joab commanded ravaged the Ammonite country and committed great havoc both on the people and their property, until having reached the capital, they besieged Rabbah —

Rabbah denotes a great city. This metropolis of the Ammonites was situated in the mountainous tract of Gilead, not far from the source of the Arnon. Extensive ruins are still found on its site.

2 SAMUEL 11:2-12.

DAVID COMMITS ADULTERY WITH BATH-SHEBA.

2. *it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed* — The Hebrews, like other Orientals, rose at daybreak, and always took a nap during the heat of the day. Afterwards they lounged in the cool of the evening on their flat-roofed terraces. It is probable that David had ascended to enjoy the open-air refreshment earlier than usual.

3. *one said* — literally, “he said to himself,”

Is not this Bath-sheba? etc. — She seems to have been a celebrated beauty, whose renown had already reached the ears of David, as happens in the East, from reports carried by the women from harem to harem.

Bath-sheba, the daughter of Eliam — or Ammiel (^{<HB5>}1 Chronicles 3:5), one of David's worthies (^{<HB3>}2 Samuel 23:34), and son of Ahithophel.

4. *David sent messengers, and took her* — The despotic kings of the East, when they take a fancy for a woman, send an officer to the house where she lives, who announces it to be the royal pleasure she should remove to the palace. An apartment is there assigned to her; and if she is made queen, the monarch orders the announcement to be made that he has made choice of her to be queen. Many instances in modern Oriental history show the ease and despatch with which such secondary marriages are contracted, and a new beauty added to the royal seraglio. But David had to make a promise, or rather an express stipulation, to Bath-sheba, before she complied with the royal will (^{<HB3>}1 Kings 1:13,15,17,28); for in addition to her transcendent beauty, she appears to have been a woman of superior talents and address in obtaining the object of her ambition; in her securing that her son should succeed on the throne; in her promptitude to give notice of her pregnancy; in her activity in defeating Adonijah's natural expectation of succeeding to the crown; in her dignity as the king's mother — in all this we see very strong indications of the ascendancy she gained and maintained over David, who, perhaps, had ample leisure and opportunity to discover the punishment of this unhappy connection in more ways than one [TAYLOR, *Calmet*].

5. *the woman conceived, and sent and told David* — Some immediate measures of concealing their sin were necessary, as well for the king's honor as for her safety, for death was the punishment of an adulteress (^{<HB3>}Leviticus 20:10).

8. *David said to Uriah, Go down to thy house* — This sudden recall, the manner of the king, his frivolous questions (^{<HB3>}2 Samuel 11:7), and his urgency for Uriah to sleep in his own house, probably awakened suspicions of the cause of this procedure.

there followed him a mess of meat from the king — A portion of meat from the royal table, sent to one's own house or lodgings, is one of the greatest compliments which an Eastern prince can pay.

9. *But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house* — It is customary for servants to sleep in the porch or long gallery; and the guards of the Hebrew king did the same. Whatever his secret suspicions might have been, Uriah's refusal to indulge in the enjoyment of domestic pleasure, and his determination to sleep "at the door of the king's house," arose from a high and honorable sense of military duty and propriety (~~2~~2 Samuel 11:11). But, doubtless, the resolution of Uriah was overruled by that Providence which brings good out of evil, and which has recorded this sad episode for the warning of the church.

~~2~~2 SAMUEL 11:14-27.

URIAH SLAIN.

14, 15. *David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah ... Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle* — The various arts and stratagems by which the king tried to cajole Uriah, till at last he resorted to the horrid crime of murder — the cold-blooded cruelty of despatching the letter by the hands of the gallant but much-wronged soldier himself, the enlistment of Joab to be a partaker of his sin, the heartless affectation of mourning, and the indecent haste of his marriage with Bath-sheba — have left an indelible stain upon the character of David, and exhibit a painfully humiliating proof of the awful lengths to which the best of men may go when they forfeit the restraining grace of God.

CHAPTER 12

<121>2 SAMUEL 12:1-6.

NATHAN'S PARABLE.

1. *the Lord sent Nathan unto David* — The use of parables is a favorite style of speaking among Oriental people, especially in the conveyance of unwelcome truth. This exquisitely pathetic parable was founded on a common custom of pastoral people who have pet lambs, which they bring up with their children, and which they address in terms of endearment. The atrocity of the real, however, far exceeded that of the fictitious offense.

5. *the man that hath done this thing shall surely die* — This punishment was more severe than the case deserved, or than was warranted by the divine statute (<1221>Exodus 22:1). The sympathies of the king had been deeply enlisted, his indignation aroused, but his conscience was still asleep; and at the time when he was most fatally indulgent to his own sins, he was most ready to condemn the delinquencies and errors of others.

<1215>2 SAMUEL 12:7-23.

HE APPLIES IT TO DAVID, WHO CONFESSES HIS SIN, AND IS PARDONED.

7. *Nathan said to David, Thou art the man* — These awful words pierced his heart, aroused his conscience, and brought him to his knees. The sincerity and depth of his penitent sorrow are evinced by the Psalms he composed (<1231>Psalm 32:1-11 <1232>51:1-19 <1233>103:1-22). He was pardoned, so far as related to the restoration of the divine favor. But as from his high character for piety, and his eminent rank in society, his deplorable fall was calculated to do great injury to the cause of religion, it was necessary that God should testify His abhorrence of sin by leaving even His own servant

to reap the bitter temporal fruits. David was not himself doomed, according to his own view of what justice demanded (¹⁰¹⁵2 Samuel 12:5); but he had to suffer a quadruple expiation in the successive deaths of four sons, besides a lengthened train of other evils.

8. *I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives* — The phraseology means nothing more than that God in His providence had given David, as king of Israel, everything that was Saul's. The history furnishes conclusive evidence that he never actually married any of the wives of Saul. But the harem of the preceding king belongs, according to Oriental notions, as a part of the regalia to his successor.

11. *I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house*, etc. — The prophet speaks of God threatening to do what He only permitted to be done. The fact is, that David's loss of character by the discovery of his crimes, tended, in the natural course of things, to diminish the respect of his family, to weaken the authority of his government, and to encourage the prevalence of many disorders throughout his kingdom.

15-23. *the Lord struck the child ... and it was very sick* — The first visible chastisement inflicted on David appeared on the person of that child which was the evidence and monument of his guilt. His domestics were surprised at his conduct, and in explanation of its singularity, it is necessary to remark that the custom in the East is to leave the nearest relative of a deceased person to the full and undisturbed indulgence of his grief, till on the third or fourth day at farthest (¹⁰¹⁷John 11:17). Then the other relatives and friends visit him, invite him to eat, lead him to a bath, and bring him a change of dress, which is necessary from his having sat or lain on the ground. The surprise of David's servants, then, who had seen his bitter anguish while the child was sick, arose apparently from this, that when he found it was dead, he who had so deeply lamented arose of himself from the earth, without waiting for their coming to him, immediately bathed and anointed himself, instead of appearing as a mourner, and after worshiping God with solemnity, returned to his wonted repast, without any interposition of others.

2 SAMUEL 12:24,25.

SOLOMON IS BORN.

24, 25. *Bath-sheba ... bare a son, and he called his name Solomon* — that is, “peaceable.” But Nathan gave him the name of Jedediah, by command of God, or perhaps only as an expression of God’s love. This love and the noble gifts with which he was endowed, considering the criminality of the marriage from which he sprang, is a remarkable instance of divine goodness and grace.

2 SAMUEL 12:26-31.

RABBAH IS TAKEN.

26. *Joab fought against Rabbah* — The time during which this siege lasted, since the intercourse with Bath-sheba, and the birth of at least one child, if not two, occurred during the progress of it, probably extended over two years.

27. *the city of waters* — Rabbah, like Aroer, was divided into two parts — one the lower town, insulated by the winding course of the Jabbok, which flowed almost round it, and the upper and stronger town, called the royal city. “The first was taken by Joab, but the honor of capturing so strongly a fortified place as the other was an honor reserved for the king himself.”

28. *encamp against the city, and take it* — It has always been characteristic of Oriental despots to monopolize military honors; and as the ancient world knew nothing of the modern refinement of kings gaining victories by their generals, so Joab sent for David to command the final assault in person. A large force was levied for the purpose. David without much difficulty captured the royal city and obtained possession of its immense wealth.

lest I take the city, and it be called after my name — The circumstance of a city receiving a new name after some great person, as Alexandria,

Constantinople, Hyderabad, is of frequent occurrence in the ancient and modern history of the East.

30. *he took their king's crown from off his head* — While the treasures of the city were given as plunder to his soldiers, David reserved to himself the crown, which was of rarest value. Its great weight makes it probable that it was like many ancient crowns, not worn, but suspended over the head, or fixed on a canopy on the top of the throne.

the precious stones — *Hebrew*, “stone”; was a round ball composed of pearls and other jewels, which was in the crown, and probably taken out of it to be inserted in David's own crown.

31. *he brought forth the people ... and put them under saws*, etc. — This excessive severity and employment of tortures, which the Hebrews on no other occasion are recorded to have practiced, was an act of retributive justice on a people who were infamous for their cruelties (^{<BIB>}1 Samuel 11:2 ^{<END>}
^{<BIB>}Amos 1:13).

CHAPTER 13

2 SAMUEL 13:1-5.

AMNON LOVES TAMAR.

1. *Tamar* — daughter of David by Maachah (2 Samuel 3:3).
2. *for she was a virgin* — Unmarried daughters were kept in close seclusion from the company of men; no strangers, nor even their relatives of the other sex, being permitted to see them without the presence of witnesses. Of course, Amnon must have seen Tamar, for he had conceived a violent passion for her, which, though forbidden by the law (Leviticus 18:11), yet with the sanction of Abraham's example (Genesis 20:12), and the common practice in neighboring countries for princes to marry their half sisters, he seems not to have considered an improper connection. But he had no means of making it known to her, and the pain of that disappointment preying upon his mind produced a visible change in his appearance and health.
3. *Jonadab, the son of Shimeah* — or Shammah (1 Samuel 16:9). By the counsel and contrivance of this scheming cousin a plan was devised for obtaining an unrestricted interview with the object of his attachment.
4. *my brother Absalom's sister* — In Eastern countries, where polygamy prevails, the girls are considered to be under the special care and protection of their uterine brother, who is the guardian of their interests and their honor, even more than their father himself (see on Genesis 34:6-25).

2 SAMUEL 13:6-27.

HE DEFILES HER.

- 6-8. *Amnon lay down, and made himself sick* — The Orientals are great adepts in feigning sickness, whenever they have any object to accomplish.

let Tamar my sister come and make me a couple of cakes — To the king Amnon spoke of Tamar as “his sister,” a term artfully designed to hoodwink his father; and the request appeared so natural, the delicate appetite of a sick man requiring to be humored, that the king promised to send her. The cakes seem to have been a kind of fancy bread, in the preparation of which Oriental ladies take great delight. Tamar, flattered by the invitation, lost no time in rendering the required service in the house of her sick brother.

12-14. *do not force me* — The remonstrances and arguments of Tamar were so affecting and so strong, that had not Amnon been violently goaded on by the lustful passion of which he had become the slave, they must have prevailed with him to desist from his infamous purpose. In bidding him, however, “speak to the king, for he will not withhold me from thee,” it is probable that she urged this as her last resource, saying anything she thought would please him, in order to escape for the present out of his hands.

15. *Then Amnon hated her exceedingly* — It is not unusual for persons instigated by violent and irregular passions to go from one extreme to another. In Amnon’s case the sudden revulsion is easily accounted for; the atrocity of his conduct, with all the feelings of shame, remorse, and dread of exposure and punishment, now burst upon his mind, rendering the presence of Tamar intolerably painful to him.

17. *bolt the door after her* — The street door of houses in the East is always kept barred — the bolts being of wood. In the great mansions, where a porter stands at the outside, this precaution is dispensed with; and the circumstance, therefore, of a prince giving an order so unusual shows the vehement perturbation of Ammon’s mind.

18. *garment of divers colors* — As embroidery in ancient times was the occupation or pastime of ladies of the highest rank, the possession of these parti-colored garments was a mark of distinction; they were worn exclusively by young women of royal condition. Since the art of manufacturing cloth stuffs has made so great progress, dresses of this variegated description are now more common in the East.

19, 20. *Tamar put ashes on her head, and rent her garment of divers colors ... laid her hand on her head, and went on crying* — that is, sobbing. Oriental manners would probably see nothing beyond a strong sense of the injury she had sustained, if Tamar actually rent her garments. But, as her veil is not mentioned, it is probable that Amnon had turned her out of doors without it, and she raised her hand with the design to conceal her face. By these signs, especially the rending of her distinguishing robe, Absalom at once conjectured what had taken place. Recommending her to be silent about it and not publish her own and her family's dishonor, he gave no inkling of his angry feelings to Amnon. But all the while he was in secret "nursing his wrath to keep it warm," and only "biding his time" to avenge his sister's wrongs, and by the removal of the heir-apparent perhaps further also his ambitious designs.

20. *So Tamar remained desolate in her brother Absalom's house* — He was her natural protector, and the children of polygamists lived by themselves, as if they constituted different families.

23-27. *Absalom had sheep-shearers in Baal-hazor, which is beside Ephraim* — A sheep-shearing feast is a grand occasion in the East. Absalom proposed to give such an entertainment at his estate in Baal-hazor, about eight miles northeast of Jerusalem near a town called Ephraim (⁶¹¹⁷Joshua 11:10). He first invited the king and his court; but the king declining, on account of the heavy expense to which the reception of royalty would subject him (⁴¹³³2 Samuel 13:25), Absalom then limited the invitation to the king's sons (⁴¹³³2 Samuel 13:26), which David the more readily agreed to, in the hope that it might tend to the promotion of brotherly harmony and union.

~~1033~~ 2 SAMUEL 13:28-36.

AMNON IS SLAIN.

28. *Absalom had commanded his servants, saying ... when Amnon's heart is merry with wine ... kill him, fear not* — On a preconcerted signal from their master, the servants, rushing upon Amnon, slew him at the

table, while the rest of the brothers, horror-struck, and apprehending a general massacre, fled in affrighted haste to Jerusalem.

29. *every man gat him up upon his mule* — This had become the favorite equipage of the great. King David himself had a state mule (¹⁰¹³1 Kings 1:33). The Syrian mules are, in activity, strength, and capabilities, still far superior to ours.

30, 31. *tidings came to David, saying, Absalom hath slain all the king's sons* — It was natural that in the consternation and tumult caused by so atrocious a deed, an exaggerated report should reach the court, which was at once plunged into the depths of grief and despair. But the information of Jonadab, who seems to have been aware of the plan, and the arrival of the other princes, made known the real extent of the catastrophe.

~~1015~~ 2 SAMUEL 13:37-39.

ABSALOM FLEES TO TALMAI.

37. *Absalom fled, and went to Talmai* — The law as to premeditated murder (¹⁰¹⁵Numbers 35:21) gave him no hope of remaining with impunity in his own country. The cities of refuge could afford him no sanctuary, and he was compelled to leave the kingdom, taking refuge at the court of Geshur, with his maternal grandfather, who would, doubtless, approve of his conduct.

CHAPTER 14

2 SAMUEL 14:1-21.

JOAB INSTRUCTS A WOMAN OF TEKOAH.

2-21. *And Joab sent to Tekoah, and fetched thence a wise woman* — The king was strongly attached to Absalom; and having now got over his sorrow for the violent death of Amnon, he was desirous of again enjoying the society of his favorite son, who had now been three long years absent. But a dread of public opinion and a regard to the public interests made him hesitate about recalling or pardoning his guilty son; and Joab, whose discerning mind perceived this struggle between parental affection and royal duty, devised a plan for relieving the scruples, and, at the same time, gratifying the wishes, of his master. Having procured a countrywoman of superior intelligence and address, he directed her to seek an audience of the king, and by soliciting his royal interposition in the settlement of a domestic grievance, convinced him that the life of a murderer might in some cases be saved. Tekoah was about twelve miles south of Jerusalem, and six south of Beth-lehem; and the design of bringing a woman from such a distance was to prevent either the petitioner being known, or the truth of her story easily investigated. Her speech was in the form of a parable — the circumstances — the language — the manner — well suited to the occasion, represented a case as like David's as it was policy to make it, so as not to be prematurely discovered. Having got the king pledged, she avowed it to be her design to satisfy the royal conscience, that in pardoning Absalom he was doing nothing more than he would have done in the case of a stranger, where there could be no imputation of partiality. The device succeeded; David traced its origin to Joab; and, secretly pleased at obtaining the judgment of that rough, but generally sound-thinking soldier, he commissioned him to repair to Geshur and bring home his exiled son.

7. *they shall quench my coal which is left* — The life of man is compared in Scripture to a light. To quench the light of Israel (¹¹⁷2 Samuel 21:17) is

to destroy the king's life; to ordain a lamp for any one (^{<4217>}Psalm 132:17) is to grant him posterity; to quench a coal signifies here the extinction of this woman's only remaining hope that the name and family of her husband would be preserved. The figure is a beautiful one; a coal live, but lying under a heap of embers — all that she had to rekindle her fire — to light her lamp in Israel.

9. *the woman said ... O king, the iniquity be on me* — that is, the iniquity of arresting the course of justice and pardoning a homicide, whom the Goel was bound to slay wherever he might find him, unless in a city of refuge. This was exceeding the royal prerogative, and acting in the character of an absolute monarch. The woman's language refers to a common precaution taken by the Hebrew judges and magistrates, solemnly to transfer from themselves the responsibility of the blood they doomed to be shed, either to the accusers or the criminals (^{<4116>}2 Samuel 1:16 ^{<4118>}3:28); and sometimes the accusers took it upon themselves (^{<4172>}Matthew 27:25).

13-17. *Wherefore then hast thou thought such a thing against the people of God*, etc. — Her argument may be made clear in the following paraphrase: — You have granted me the pardon of a son who had slain his brother, and yet you will not grant to your subjects the restoration of Absalom, whose criminality is not greater than my son's, since he killed his brother in similar circumstances of provocation. Absalom has reason to complain that he is treated by his own father more sternly and severely than the meanest subject in the realm; and the whole nation will have cause for saying that the king shows more attention to the petition of a humble woman than to the wishes and desires of a whole kingdom. The death of my son is a private loss to my family, while the preservation of Absalom is the common interest of all Israel, who now look to him as your successor on the throne.

2 SAMUEL 14:22-33.

JOAB BRINGS ABSALOM TO JERUSALEM.

22. *To-day thy servant knoweth that I have found grace in thy sight* — Joab betrayed not a little selfishness amid his professions of joy at this act of grace to Absalom, and flattered himself that he now brought both father and son under lasting obligations. In considering this act of David, many extenuating circumstances may be urged in favor of it; the provocation given to Absalom; his being now in a country where justice could not overtake him; the risk of his imbibing a love for heathen principles and worship; the safety and interests of the Hebrew kingdom; together with the strong predilection of the Hebrew people for Absalom, as represented by the stratagem of Joab — these considerations form a plausible apology for David's grant of pardon to his bloodstained son. But, in granting this pardon, he was acting in the character of an Oriental despot rather than a constitutional king of Israel. The feelings of the father triumphed over the duty of the king, who, as the supreme magistrate, was bound to execute impartial justice on every murderer, by the express law of God (^{<0006>}Genesis 9:6 ^{<0051>}Numbers 35:30,31), which he had no power to dispense with (^{<0055>}Deuteronomy 18:18 ^{<0005>}Joshua 1:8 ^{<0025>}1 Samuel 10:25).

25, 26. *But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty* — This extraordinary popularity arose not only from his high spirit and courtly manners, but from his uncommonly handsome appearance. One distinguishing feature, seemingly an object of great admiration, was a profusion of beautiful hair. Its extraordinary luxuriance compelled him to cut it when it was found to weigh two hundred shekels — equal to one hundred twelve ounces troy; but as “the weight was after the king's shekel,” which was less than the common shekel, the rate has been reduced as low as three pounds, two ounces [BOCHART], and even less by others.

28. *So Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, and saw not the king's face* — Whatever error David committed in authorizing the recall of Absalom, he displayed great prudence and command over his feelings afterwards — for his son was not admitted into his father's presence but

was confined to his own house and the society of his own family. This slight severity was designed to bring him to sincere repentance, on perceiving that his father had not fully pardoned him, as well as to convince the people of David 's abhorrence of his crime. Not being allowed to appear at court, or to adopt any state, the courtiers kept aloof; even his cousin did not deem it prudent to go into his society. For two full years his liberty was more restricted, and his life more apart from his countrymen while living in Jerusalem, than in Geshur; and he might have continued in this disgrace longer, had he not, by a violent expedient, determined (¹¹⁴⁰2 Samuel 14:30) to force his case on the attention of Joab, through whose kind and powerful influence a full reconciliation was effected between him and his father.

CHAPTER 15

2 SAMUEL 15:1-9.

ABSALOM STEALS THE HEARTS OF ISRAEL.

1. *Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him* — This was assuming the state and equipage of a prince. The royal guards, called runners, avant couriers, amounted to fifty (¹⁰⁰⁵1 Kings 1:5). The chariot, as the Hebrew indicates, was of a magnificent style; and the horses, a novelty among the Hebrew people, only introduced in that age as an appendage of royalty (¹³¹¹Psalm 32:9 ¹³⁶²66:12), formed a splendid retinue, which would make him “the observed of all observers.”

2-6. *Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate* — Public business in the East is always transacted early in the morning — the kings sitting an hour or more to hear causes or receive petitions, in a court held anciently, and in many places still, in the open air at the city gateway; so that, as those whose circumstances led them to wait on King David required to be in attendance on his morning levees, Absalom had to rise up early and stand beside the way of the gate. Through the growing infirmities of age, or the occupation of his government with foreign wars, many private causes had long lain undecided, and a deep feeling of discontent prevailed among the people. This dissatisfaction was artfully fomented by Absalom, who addressed himself to the various suitors; and after briefly hearing their tale, he gratified everyone with a favorable opinion of his case. Studiously concealing his ambitious designs, he expressed a wish to be invested with official power, only that he might accelerate the course of justice and advance the public interests. His professions had an air of extraordinary generosity and disinterestedness, which, together with his fawning arts in lavishing civilities on all, made him a popular favorite. Thus, by forcing a contrast between his own display of public spirit and the dilatory proceedings of the court, he created a growing disgust with his father’s government, as weak, careless, or corrupt, and seduced the affections of the multitude, who neither penetrated the motive nor foresaw

the tendency of his conduct.

7-9. *after forty years* — It is generally admitted that an error has here crept into the text, and that instead of “forty,” we should read with the Syriac and Arabic versions, and JOSEPHUS, “four years” — that is, after Absalom’s return to Jerusalem, and his beginning to practice the base arts of gaining popularity.

my vow, which I have vowed unto the Lord — during his exile in Geshur. The purport of it was, that whenever God’s providence should pave the way for his re-establishment in Jerusalem, he would offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving. Hebron was the spot selected for the performance of this vow, ostensibly as being his native place (^{AKB}2 Samuel 3:3), and a famous high place, where sacrifices were frequently offered before the temple was built; but really as being in many respects the most suitable for the commencement of his rebellious enterprise. David, who always encouraged piety and desired to see religious engagements punctually performed, gave his consent and his blessing.

~~AKB~~ 2 SAMUEL 15:10-12.

HE FORMS A CONSPIRACY.

10. *Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel* — These emissaries were to sound the inclination of the people, to further interests of Absalom, and exhort all the adherents of his party to be in readiness to join his standard as soon as they should hear that he had been proclaimed king. As the summons was to be made by the sound of trumpets, it is probable that care had been taken to have trumpeters stationed on the heights, and at convenient stations — a mode of announcement that would soon spread the news over all the country of his inauguration to the throne.

11. *with Absalom went two hundred men ... that were called* — From their quality, reputation, and high standing, such as would create the impression that the king patronized the movement and, being aged and infirm, was willing to adopt his oldest and noblest son to divide with him the cares and honors of government.

12. *Absalom sent for Ahithophel* — who he knew was ready to join the revolt, through disgust and revenge, as Jewish writers assert, at David's conduct towards Bath-sheba, who was his granddaughter.

Giloh — near Hebron.

the conspiracy was strong — The rapid accession of one place after another in all parts of the kingdom to the party of the insurgents, shows that deep and general dissatisfaction existed at this time against the person and government of David. The remnant of Saul's partisans, the unhappy affair of Bath-sheba, the overbearing insolence and crimes of Joab, negligence and obstruction in the administration of justice — these were some of the principal causes that contributed to the success of this widespread insurrection.

~~<1013>~~ 2 SAMUEL 15:13-37.

DAVID FLEES FROM JERUSALEM.

14. *David said ... Arise, and let us flee* — David, anxious for the preservation of the city which he had beautified, and hopeful of a greater support throughout the country, wisely resolved on leaving Jerusalem.

18-20. *all the Gittites, six hundred men* — These were a body of foreign guards, natives of Gath, whom David, when in the country of the Philistines, had enlisted in his service, and kept around his person. Addressing their commander, Ittai, he made a searching trial of their fidelity in bidding them (~~<1015>~~ 2 Samuel 15:19) abide with the new king.

23. *the brook Kidron* — a winter torrent that flows through the valley between the city and the eastern side of the Mount of Olives.

24, 25. *Zadok also, and all the Levites ..., bearing the ark* — Knowing the strong religious feelings of the aged king, they brought it to accompany him in his distress. But as he could not doubt that both the ark and their sacred office would exempt them from the attacks of the rebels, he sent them back with it — not only that they might not be exposed to the perils of uncertain wandering, for he seems to place more confidence in the

symbol of the divine presence than in God Himself — but that, by remaining in Jerusalem, they might render him greater service by watching the enemy's movements.

30. *David went up by the ascent of mount Olivet* — The same pathway over that mount has been followed ever since that memorable day.

had his head covered — with a mourning wrapper. The humility and resignation of David marked strongly his sanctified spirit, induced by contrition for his transgressions. He had fallen, but it was the fall of the upright; and he rose again, submitting himself meekly in the meantime to the will of God [CHALMERS].

31. *David said, Turn, O Lord, ... the counsel of Ahithophel* — this senator being the mainstay of the conspiracy.

32. *when David was come to the top of the mount, where he worshipped* — looking towards Jerusalem, where were the ark and tabernacle.

Hushai the Archite — A native of Archi, on the frontiers of Benjamin and Ephraim (⁽¹⁶¹²⁾Joshua 16:2). Comparing the prayer against Ahithophel with the counsel to Hushai, we see how strongly a spirit of fervent piety was combined in his character with the devices of an active and far-seeing policy.

CHAPTER 16

2 SAMUEL 16:1-4.

ZIBA, BY FALSE SUGGESTIONS, CLAIMS HIS MASTER'S INHERITANCE.

1. *Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him* — This crafty man, anticipating the certain failure of Absalom's conspiracy, took steps to prepare for his future advancement on the restoration of the king.

a bottle of wine — a large goatskin vessel. Its size made the supply of wine proportioned to the rest of his present.

2. *The asses be for the king's household to ride on* — The royal fugitives were moving on foot, not from inability to procure conveyances, but as being suitable to their present state of humiliation and penitence.

3. *To-day shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father* — Such a hope might not unnaturally arise at this period of civil distraction, that the family of David would destroy themselves by their mutual broils, and the people reinstate the old dynasty. There was an air of plausibility in Ziba's story. Many, on whom the king had conferred favors, were now deserting him. No wonder, therefore, that in the excitement of momentary feeling, believing, on the report of a slanderer, Mephibosheth to be among the number, he pronounced a rash and unrighteous judgment by which a great injury was inflicted on the character and interests of a devoted friend.

2 SAMUEL 16:5-19.

SHIMEI CURSES DAVID.

5-12. *when king David came to Bahurim* — a city of Benjamin (¹⁰¹⁶2 Samuel 3:16 19:16). It is, however, only the confines of the district that are here meant.

Shimei, the son of Gera — The misfortune of his family, and the occupation by David of what they considered their rightful possessions, afforded a natural, if not a justifiable cause for this ebullition of rude insults and violence. He upbraided David as an ambitious usurper, and charged him, as one whose misdeeds had recoiled upon his own head, to surrender a throne to which he was not entitled. His language was that of a man incensed by the wrongs that he conceived had been done to his house. David was guiltless of the crime of which Shimei accused him; but his conscience reminded him of other flagrant iniquities; and he, therefore, regarded the cursing of this man as a chastisement from heaven. His answer to Abishai's proposal evinced the spirit of deep and humble resignation — the spirit of a man who watched the course of Providence, and acknowledged Shimei as the instrument of God's chastening hand. One thing is remarkable, that he acted more independently of the sons of Zeruah in this season of great distress than he could often muster courage to do in the days of his prosperity and power.

13. *went along on the hill's side over against him* — as he descended the rough road on the eastern side of the Mount of Olives, "went along on the hill's side" — literally, "the rib of the hill."

threw stones at him — as a mark of contempt and insult.

cast dust — As if to add insult to injury, clouds of dust were thrown by this disloyal subject in the path of his unfortunate sovereign.

14. *refreshed themselves there* — that is, in the city of Bahurim.

15-19. *Hushai said unto Absalom, God save the king* — Hushai's devotion to David was so well-known, that his presence in the camp of the conspirators excited great surprise. Professing, however, with great

address, to consider it his duty to support the cause which the course of Providence and the national will had seemingly decreed should triumph, and urging his friendship for the father as a ground of confidence in his fidelity to the son, he persuaded Absalom of his sincerity, and was admitted among the councillors of the new king.

2 SAMUEL 16:20-23.

AHITHOPHEL'S COUNSEL.

20. *Give counsel among you what we shall do* — This is the first cabinet council on record, although the deference paid to Ahithophel gave him the entire direction of the proceedings.

21. *Ahithophel said unto Absalom* — This councillor saw that now the die was cast; half measures would be inexpedient. To cut off all possibility of reconciliation between the king and his rebellious son, he gave this atrocious advice regarding the treatment of the royal women who had been left in charge of the palace. Women, being held sacred, are generally left inviolate in the casualties of war. The history of the East affords only one parallel to this infamous outrage of Absalom.

CHAPTER 17

2 SAMUEL 17:1-14.

AHITHOPHEL'S COUNSEL OVERTHROWN BY HUSHAI.

1-11. *Moreover Ahithophel said unto Absalom* — The recommendation to take prompt and decisive measures before the royalist forces could be collected and arranged, evinced the deep political sagacity of this councillor. The adoption of his advice would have extinguished the cause of David; and it affords a dreadful proof of the extremities to which the heartless prince was, to secure his ambitious objects, prepared to go, that the parricidal counsel “pleased Absalom well, and all the elders of Israel.” It was happily overruled, however, by the address of Hushai, who saw the imminent danger to which it would expose the king and the royal cause. He dwelt upon the warlike character and military experience of the old king — represented him and his adherents as mighty men, who would fight with desperation; and who, most probably, secure in some stronghold, would be beyond reach, while the smallest loss of Absalom’s men at the outset might be fatal to the success of the conspiracy. But his dexterity was chiefly displayed in that part of his counsel which recommended a general levy throughout the country; and that Absalom should take command of it in person — thereby flattering at once the pride and ambition of the usurper. The bait was caught by the vainglorious and wicked prince.

12. *we will light upon him as the dew falleth on the ground* — No image could have symbolized the sudden onset of an enemy so graphically to an Oriental mind as the silent, irresistible, and rapid descent of this natural moisture on every field and blade of grass.

13. *all Israel shall bring ropes to that city* — In besieging a town, hooks or cranes were often thrown upon the walls or turrets, by which, with ropes attached to them, the besiegers, uniting all their force, pulled down the fortifications in a mass of ruins.

14. *The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel* — The reasons specified being extremely plausible, and expressed in the strong hyperbolic language suited to dazzle an Oriental imagination, the council declared in favor of Hushai's advice; and their resolution was the immediate cause of the discomfiture of the rebellion, although the council itself was only a link in the chain of causation held by the controlling hand of the Lord.

2 SAMUEL 17:15-22.

SECRET INTELLIGENCE SENT TO DAVID.

16. *send quickly, and tell David* — Apparently doubting that his advice would be followed, Hushai ordered secret intelligence to be conveyed to David of all that transpired, with an urgent recommendation to cross the Jordan without a moment's delay, lest Ahithophel's address and influence might produce a change on the prince's mind, and an immediate pursuit be determined on.

17. *by En-rogel* — the fuller's well in the neighborhood of Jerusalem, below the junction of the valley of Hinnom with that of Jehoshaphat.

18. *and came to a man's house in Bahurim, which had a well in his court* — The court was that of the house, and the well an empty cistern. All the houses of the better class are furnished with such reservoirs. Nothing could more easily happen than that one of these wells, in consequence of a deficiency of water, should become dry and it would then answer as a place of retreat, such as David's friends found in the man's house at Bahurim. The spreading of a covering over the well's mouth for the drying of corn is a common practice.

2 SAMUEL 17:23-29.

AHITHOPHEL HANGS HIMSELF.

23. when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed — His vanity was wounded, his pride mortified on finding that his ascendancy was gone; but that chagrin was aggravated by other feelings — a painful conviction that through the delay which had been resolved on, the cause of Absalom was lost. Hastening home, therefore, he arranged his private affairs, and knowing that the storm of retributive vengeance would fall chiefly upon him as the instigator and prop of the rebellion, he hanged himself. It may be remarked that the Israelites did not, at that time, refuse the rites of sepulture even to those who died by their own hands. He had an imitator in Judas, who resembled him in his treason, as well as in his infamous end.

24. Then David came to Mahanaim — in the high eastern country of Gilead, the seat of Ish-bosheth's government.

Absalom passed over Jordan — It is not said how long an interval elapsed, but there must have been sufficient time to make the intended levy throughout the kingdom.

25. Amasa — By the genealogy it appears that this captain stood in the same relation to David as Joab, both being his nephews. Of course, Amasa was Absalom's cousin, and though himself an Israelite, his father was an Ishmaelite (⁴¹²⁷1 Chronicles 2:17).

Nahash — is thought by some to be another name of Jesse, or according to others, the name of Jesse's wife.

27-29. when David was come to Mahanaim — The necessities of the king and his followers were hospitably ministered to by three chiefs, whose generous loyalty is recorded with honor in the sacred narrative.

Shobi — must have been a brother of Hanun. Disapproving, probably, of that young king's outrage upon the Israelite ambassadors, he had been made governor of Ammon by David on the conquest of that country.

Machir — (See ¹⁰⁰⁰2 Samuel 9:4). Supposed by some to have been a brother of Bath-sheba, and

Barzillai — a wealthy old grandee, whose great age and infirmities made his loyal devotion to the distressed monarch peculiarly affecting. The supplies they brought, which (besides beds for the weary) consisted of the staple produce of their rich lands and pastures, may be classified as follows: eatables — wheat, barley, flour, beans, lentils, sheep, and cheese; drinkables — “honey and butter” or cream, which, being mixed together, form a thin, diluted beverage, light, cool, and refreshing. Being considered a luxurious refreshment (So 4:11), the supply of it shows the high respect that was paid to David by his loyal and faithful subjects at Mahanaim.

29. *in the wilderness* — spread out beyond the cultivated tablelands into the steppes of Hauran.

CHAPTER 18

18 2 SAMUEL 18:1-4.

DAVID REVIEWING THE ARMIES.

1, 2. *David numbered the people that were with him* — The hardy mountaineers of Gilead came in great numbers at the call of their chieftains, so that, although without money to pay any troops, David soon found himself at the head of a considerable army. A pitched battle was now inevitable. But so much depending on the life of the king, he was not allowed to take the field in person; and he therefore divided his forces into three detachments under Joab, Abishai, and Ittai, the commander of the foreign guards.

18 2 SAMUEL 18:5-13.

GIVES THEM CHARGE OF ABSALOM.

5. *Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom* — This affecting charge, which the king gave to his generals, proceeded not only from his overwhelming affection for his children, but from his consciousness that this rebellion was the chastisement of his own crimes, Absalom being merely an instrument in the hand of retributive Providence; — and also from his piety, lest the unhappy prince should die with his sins unrepented of.

6. *wood of Ephraim* — This wood, of course, was on the east of Jordan. Its name was derived, according to some, from the slaughter of the Ephraimites by Jephthah — according to others, from the connection of blood with the trans-jordanic Manasseh.

7. *the people of Israel were slain* — This designation, together with the immense slaughter mentioned later, shows the large extent to which the people were enlisted in this unhappy civil contest.

8. *the wood devoured more people than the sword* — The thick forest of oaks and terebinths, by obstructing the flight, greatly aided the victors in the pursuit.

9. *Absalom met the servants of David* — or was overtaken. “It is necessary to be continually on one’s guard against the branches of trees; and when the hair is worn in large locks floating down the back, as was the case with a young man of the party to which I belonged, any thick boughs interposing in the path might easily dislodge a rider from his seat, and catch hold of his flowing hair” [HARTLEY]. Some, however, think that the sacred historian points not so much to the hair, as to the *head* of Absalom, which, being caught while running between two branches, was enclosed so firmly that he could not disengage himself from the hold, nor make use of his hands.

the mule that was under him went away — The Orientals, not having saddles as we do, do not sit so firmly on the beasts they ride. Absalom quitting his hold of the bridle, apparently to release himself when caught in the oak, the mule escaped.

11, 12. *Joab said unto the man that told him, ... I would have given thee ten shekels of silver, and a girdle* — that is, would have raised him from the ranks to the status of a commissioned officer. Besides a sum of money, a girdle, curiously and richly wrought, was among the ancient Hebrews a mark of honor, and sometimes bestowed as a reward of military merit. This soldier, however, who may be taken as a fair sample of David’s faithful subjects, had so great a respect for the king’s wishes, that no prospect of reward would have tempted him to lay violent hands on Absalom. But Joab’s stern sense of public duty, which satisfied him that there could be neither safety to the king, nor peace to the kingdom, nor security to him and other loyal subjects, so long as that turbulent prince lived, overcame his sensibilities, and looking upon the charge given to the generals as more befitting a parent than a prince, he ventured to disobey it.

2 SAMUEL 18:14-32.

HE IS SLAIN BY JOAB.

14. *he took three darts ... and thrust them through the heart of Absalom*

— The deed, partially done by Joab, was completed by his bodyguard. Being a violation of the expressed wish, as well as of all the fond paternal feelings of David, it must have been deeply offensive to the king, nor was it ever forgotten (^{<1085>}1 Kings 2:5); and yet there is the strongest reason for believing that Joab, in doing it, was actuated by a sincere regard to the interests of David, both as a man and a monarch.

16. *Joab blew the trumpet, ... and held back the people* — Knowing that by the death of the usurper there was no occasion for further bloodshed, he put an end to the pursuit and thereby evinced the temperate policy of his conduct. However harsh and unfeeling to the king Joab may appear, there can be no doubt that he acted the part of a wise statesman in regarding the peace and welfare of the kingdom more than his master's private inclinations, which were opposed to strict justice as well as his own interests. Absalom deserved to die by the divine law (^{<1018>}Deuteronomy 21:18,21), as well as being an enemy to his king and country; and no time was more fitting than when he met that death in open battle.

17. *they took Absalom, and cast him into a great pit ... and laid a very great heap of stones upon him*

— The people of the East indicate their detestation of the memory of an infamous person by throwing stones at the place where he is buried. The heap is increased by the gradual accumulation of stones which passers-by add to it.

18. *Absalom in his lifetime had reared up for himself a pillar*

— literally, “hand.” In the valley of Jehoshaphat, on the east of Jerusalem, is a tomb or cenotaph, said to be this “pillar” or monument: it is twenty-four feet square, dome-topped, and reaches forty feet in height. This may occupy the spot, but cannot itself be the work of Absalom, as it evidently bears the style of a later architecture.

19. *Then said Ahimaaz ... Let me ... run and bear the king tidings* — The reasons why Joab declined to accept Ahimaaz' offer to bear intelligence of the victory to David, and afterwards let him go along with another, are variously stated by commentators — but they are of no importance. Yet the alacrity of the messengers, as well as the eager excitement of the expectants, is graphically described.

23. *by the way of the plain* — or *ciccar*, "circle." This word is only used elsewhere in connection with the valley of the Jordan. It is possible that there may have been a place or region so called on the tablelands of Gilead, as the *Septuagint* seems to indicate. Or Mahanaim may have been so situated, with the regard to the battlefield, as to be more easily accessible by a descent to the plain of the Jordan, than over the hills themselves. Or the word may signify (as EWALD explains) a manner of quick running [STANLEY].

24-32. *David sat between the two gates* — that is, in the tower-house on the wall that overhung the gate of Mahanaim. Near it was a watchtower, on which a sentinel was posted, as in times of war, to notify every occurrence. The delicacy of Ahimaaz' communication was made up by the unmistakable plainness of Cushis'. The death of Absalom was a heavy trial, and it is impossible not to sympathize with the outburst of feeling by which David showed that all thoughts of the victory he had won as a king were completely sunk in the painful loss he had sustained as a father. The extraordinary ardor and strength of his affection for this worthless son break out in the redundancy and vehemence of his mournful ejaculations.

CHAPTER 19

2 SAMUEL 19:1-8.

JOAB CAUSES THE KING TO CEASE MOURNING.

3. *the people gat them by stealth ... to the city* — The rumor of the king's disconsolate condition spread a universal and unseasonable gloom. His troops, instead of being welcomed back (as a victorious army always was) with music and other demonstrations of public joy, slunk secretly and silently into the city, as if ashamed after the commission of some crime.

4. *the king covered his face* — one of the usual signs of mourning (see on ~~1~~2 Samuel 15:30).

5. *Thou hast shamed ... the faces of all thy servants* — by withdrawing thyself to indulge in grief, as if their services were disagreeable and their devotion irksome to thee. Instead of hailing their return with joy and gratitude, thou hast refused them the small gratification of seeing thee. Joab's remonstrance was right and necessary, but it was made with harshness. He was one of those persons who spoil their important services by the insolence of their manners, and who always awaken a feeling of obligation in those to whom they render any services. He spoke to David in a tone of hauteur that ill became a subject to show towards his king.

7. *Now ... arise, go forth, and speak comfortably unto thy servants* — The king felt the truth of Joab's reprimand; but the threat by which it was enforced, grounded as it was on the general's unbounded popularity with the army, showed him to be a dangerous person; and that circumstance, together with the violation of an express order to deal gently for his sake with Absalom, produced in David's mind a settled hatred, which was strongly manifested in his last directions to Solomon.

8. *the king arose, and sat in the gate* — He appeared daily in the usual place for the hearing of causes.

all the people came before the king — that is, the loyal natives who had been faithful to his government, and fought in his cause.

Israel had fled — that is, the adherents of Absalom, who, on his defeat, had dispersed and saved themselves by flight.

~~1089~~ 2 SAMUEL 19:9-43.

THE ISRAELITES BRING THE KING BACK.

9-11. *all the people were at strife throughout all the tribes of Israel* — The kingdom was completely disorganized. The sentiments of three different parties are represented in ~~1089~~ 2 Samuel 19:9,10: the royalists, the adherents of Absalom who had been very numerous, and those who were indifferent to the Davidic dynasty. In these circumstances the king was right in not hastening back, as a conqueror, to reascend his throne. A re-election was, in some measure, necessary. He remained for some time on the other side of Jordan, in expectation of being invited back. That invitation was given without, however, the concurrence of Judah. David, disappointed and vexed by his own tribe's apparent lukewarmness, despatched the two high priests to rouse the Judahites to take a prominent interest in his cause. It was the act of a skillful politician. Hebron having been the seat of the rebellion, it was graceful on his part to encourage their return to allegiance and duty; it was an appeal to their honor not to be the last of the tribes. But this separate message, and the preference given to them, occasioned an outburst of jealousy among the other tribes that was nearly followed by fatal consequences [see ~~1090~~ 2 Samuel 19:40-43].

13. *And say ye to Amasa*, etc. — This also was a dextrous stroke of policy. David was fully alive to the importance, for extinguishing the rebellion, of withdrawing from that cause the only leader who could keep it alive; and he, therefore, secretly intimated his intention to raise Amasa to the command of the army in the place of Joab, whose overbearing haughtiness had become intolerable. The king justly reckoned, that from natural temper as well as gratitude for the royal pardon, he would prove a more tractable servant; and David, doubtless, intended in all sincerity to

fulfill this promise. But Joab managed to retain his high position (see on ^{<100>}2 Samuel 20:4-10).

14. *he bowed the heart of all the men of Judah* — that is, Amasa, who had been won over, used his great influence in re-attaching the whole tribe of Judah to the interest of David.

15. *Judah came to Gilgal* — the most convenient place where preparations could be made for bringing the king and court over the Jordan.

16-23. *Shemei ... a thousand men of Benjamin with him* — This display of [Shemei's] followers was to show what force he could raise against or in support of the king. Expressing the deepest regret for his former outrageous conduct, he was pardoned on the spot; and although the son of Zeruah urged the expediency of making this chief a public example, his officiousness was repulsed by David with magnanimity, and with the greater confidence that he felt himself now re-established in the kingdom (see on ^{<100>}1 Kings 2:8).

17. *Ziba, the servant of the house of Saul* — He had deceived his master; and when ordered to make ready the ass for the lame prince to go and meet the king, he slipped away by himself to pay court first; so that Mephibosheth, being lame, had to remain in Jerusalem till the king's arrival.

18. *ferry boat* — probably rafts, which are still used on that part of the river.

20. *I am come the first ... of all the house of Joseph* — that is, before all the rest of *Israel* (^{<970>}Psalms 77:15 ^{<980>}80:1 ^{<980>}81:5 ^{<980>}Zechariah 10:6).

24-30. *Mephibosheth ... came down to meet the king* — The reception given to Mephibosheth was less creditable to David. The sincerity of that prince's grief for the misfortunes of the king cannot be doubted.

He had neither dressed his feet — not taken the bath,

nor trimmed his beard — The Hebrews cut off the hair on the upper lip (see on ^{<980>}Leviticus 13:45), and cheeks, but carefully cherished it on the chin from ear to ear. Besides dyeing it black or red colors, which, however, is the exception, and not the rule in the East, there are various modes of

trimming it: they train it into a massy bushy form, swelling and round; or they terminate it like a pyramid, in a sharp point. Whatever the mode, it is always trimmed with the greatest care; and they usually carry a small comb for the purpose. The neglect of this attention to his beard was an undoubted proof of the depth of Mephibosheth's grief. The king seems to have received him upbraidingly, and not to have been altogether sure either of his guilt or innocence. It is impossible to commend the cavalier treatment, any more than to approve the partial award, of David in this case. If he were too hurried and distracted by the pressure of circumstances to inquire fully into the matter, he should have postponed his decision; for if by "dividing the land" (³¹⁰²⁹2 Samuel 19:29) he meant that the former arrangement should be continued by which Mephibosheth was acknowledged the proprietor, and Ziba the farmer, it was a hardship inflicted on the owner to fix him with a tenant who had so grossly slandered him. But if by "dividing the land," they were now to share alike, the injustice of the decision was greatly increased. In any view, the generous, disinterested spirit displayed by Mephibosheth was worthy a son of the noble-hearted Jonathan.

31-40. *Barzillai the Gileadite* — The rank, great age, and chivalrous devotion of this Gileadite chief wins our respect. His declining to go to court, his recommendation of his son, his convoy across the Jordan, and his parting scene with the king, are interesting incidents. What mark of royal favor was bestowed on Chimham has not been recorded; but it is probable that David gave a great part of his personal patrimony in Beth-lehem to Chimham and his heirs in perpetuity (³⁴¹¹⁷Jeremiah 41:17).

35. *the voice of singing men and singing women* — Bands of professional musicians form a prominent appendage to the courts of Oriental princes.

37. *buried by the grave of my father and of my mother* — This is an instance of the strong affection of people in the East towards the places of sepulture appropriated to their families.

40-43. *the king went on to Gilgal, ... and all the people of Judah conducted the king, and also half the people of Israel* — Whether from impatience to move on or from some other cause, David did not wait till all the tribes had arrived to conduct him on his return to the capital. The

procession began as soon as Amasa had brought the Judahite escort, and the preference given to this tribe produced a bitter jealousy, which was nearly kindling a civil war fiercer than that which had just ended. A war of words ensued between the tribes — Israel resting their argument on their superior numbers; “they had ten parts in the king,” whereas Judah had no more than one. Judah grounded their right to take the lead, on the ground of their nearer relationship to the king. This was a claim dangerous to the house of David; and it shows the seeds were already sown for that tribal dissension which, before long, led to the dismemberment of the kingdom.

CHAPTER 20

2 SAMUEL 20:1-9.

SHEBA MAKES A PARTY IN ISRAEL.

1. *Sheba ... a Benjamite* — Though nothing is known of this man, he must have been a person of considerable power and influence, before he could have raised so sudden and extensive a sedition. He belonged to the tribe of Benjamin, where the adherents of Saul's dynasty were still numerous; and perceiving the strong disgust of the other tribes with the part assumed by Judah in the restoration, his ill-designing heart resolved to turn it to the overthrow of David's authority in Israel.

every man to his tents — This proverbial expression may have had its foundation in the fact, that many of the Israelite peasantry adhered to the custom of the patriarchs who tilled land, and yet lived in tents, as Syrian peasants often do still. This was the usual watchword of national insurrection, and from the actual temper of the people, it was followed by effects beyond what he probably anticipated.

2. *from Jordan even to Jerusalem* — The quarrel had broken out shortly after the crossing of the Jordan, between Judah and the other tribes, who withdrew; so that Judah was left nearly alone to conduct the king to the metropolis.

3. *the king took the ten women his concubines* — Jewish writers say that the widowed queens of Hebrew monarchs were not allowed to marry again but were obliged to pass the rest of their lives in strict seclusion. David treated his concubines in the same manner after the outrage committed on them by Absalom. They were not divorced, for they were guiltless; but they were no longer publicly recognized as his wives; nor was their confinement to a sequestered life a very heavy doom, in a region where women have never been accustomed to go much abroad.

4. *Then said the king to Amasa, Assemble me the men of Judah within three days* — Amasa is now installed in the command which David had promised him. The revolt of the ten tribes, probably, hastened the public declaration of this appointment, which he hoped would be popular with them, and Amasa was ordered within three days to levy a force from Judah sufficient to put down the insurrection. The appointment was a blunder, and the king soon perceived his error. The specified time passed, but Amasa could not muster the men. Dreading the loss of time, the king gave the commission to Abishai, and not to Joab — a new affront, which, no doubt, wounded the pride of the stem and haughty old general. But he hastened with his attached soldiers to go as second to his brother, determined to take the first opportunity of wreaking his vengeance on his successful rival.

8. *Amasa went before them* — Having collected some forces, he by a rapid march overtook the expedition at Gibeon, and assumed the place of commander; in which capacity, he was saluted, among others, by Joab.

Joab's garment, that he had put on was girded unto him — in the fashion of travelers and soldiers.

a sword ... and as he went forth it fell out — that is, out of the scabbard. According to JOSEPHUS, he let it drop on purpose as he was accosting Amasa, that stooping, as it were accidentally, to pick it up, he might salute the new general with the naked sword in his hand, without exciting any suspicion of his design.

He went forth — in a ceremonious manner to meet Amasa, now commander-in-chief, in order to seem to render to that officer, whom he considered as usurping his post, a conspicuous honor and homage.

9. *took Amasa by the beard with the right hand to kiss him* — This act, common with two friends on meeting when one of them returns from a journey, indicates respect as well as kindness, and the performance of it evinced the deep hypocrisy of Joab, who thereby put Amasa off his guard. No wonder, then, that while this act of friendly gratulation after long absence occupied Amasa's attention, he did not perceive the sword that was in Joab's *left* hand. The action of Joab was indeed a high compliment, but neither suspicious nor unusual and to this compliment,

Amasa paying attention and no doubt returning it with suitable politeness, he could little expect the fatal event that Joab's perfidy produced.

2 SAMUEL 20:10-13.

AMASA IS SLAIN.

10. *smote him ... in the fifth rib* — the seat of the liver and bowels, where wounds are mortal.

struck him not again — that is, despatched him at the first blow.

11-13. *He that favoureth Joab, and he that is for David, let him go after Joab* — It is a striking proof of Joab's unrivalled influence over the army, that with this villainous murder perpetrated before their eyes they unanimously followed him as their leader in pursuit of Sheba. A soldier conjoined his name with David's, and such a magic spell was in the word "Joab," that all the people "went on" — Amasa's men as well as the rest. The conjunction of these two names is very significant. It shows that the one could not afford to do without the other — neither Joab to rebel against David, nor David to get rid of Joab, though hating him.

2 SAMUEL 20:14,15.

JOAB PURSUES SHEBA UNTO ABEL.

14. *he went through all the tribes of Israel unto Abel* — beating up for recruits. But there the prompt marches of Joab overtook and hemmed him in by a close siege of the place.

15. *Abel of Beth-maachah* — a verdant place — the addition of "Maachah" betokening that it belonged to the district Maachah, which lay far up the Jordan at the foot of Lebanon.

2 SAMUEL 20:16-22.

A WISE WOMAN SAVES THE CITY BY SHEBA'S HEAD.

16. *Then cried a wise woman* — The appeal of this woman, who, like Deborah, was probably a judge or governess of the place, was a strong one.

18-20. *They were wont to speak in old time* — The translation of the *Margin* gives a better meaning, which is to this effect: When the people saw thee lay siege to Abel, they said, Surely he will ask if we will have peace, for the law (^{TRIM}Deuteronomy 20:10) prescribes that he should offer peace to strangers, much more then to Israelitish cities; and if he do this, we shall soon bring things to an amicable agreement, for we are a peaceable people. The answer of Joab brings out the character of that ruthless veteran as a patriot at heart, who, on securing the author of this insurrection, was ready to put a stop to further bloodshed and release the peaceable inhabitants from all molestation.

2 SAMUEL 20:23-26.

DAVID'S GREAT OFFICERS.

23. *Now Joab was over all the host of Israel* — David, whatever his private wishes, found that he possessed not the power of removing Joab; so winking at the murder of Amasa, he re-established that officer in his former post of commander-in-chief. The enumeration of David's cabinet is here given to show that the government was re-established in its wonted course.

CHAPTER 21

2 SAMUEL 21:1-9.

THE THREE YEARS' FAMINE FOR THE GIBEONITES CEASE BY HANGING SEVEN OF SAUL'S SONS.

1. *the Lord answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites* — The sacred history has not recorded either the time or the reason of this massacre. Some think that they were sufferers in the atrocity perpetrated by Saul at Nob (¹²²⁹1 Samuel 22:19), where many of them may have resided as attendants of the priests; while others suppose it more probable that the attempt was made afterwards, with a view to regain the popularity he had lost throughout the nation by that execrable outrage.

2. *in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah* — Under pretense of a rigorous and faithful execution of the divine law regarding the extermination of the Canaanites, he set himself to expel or destroy those whom Joshua had been deceived into sparing. His real object seems to have been, that the possessions of the Gibeonites, being forfeited to the crown, might be divided among his own people (compare ¹²²⁷1 Samuel 22:7). At all events, his proceeding against this people was in violation of a solemn oath, and involving *national* guilt. The famine was, in the wise and just retribution of Providence, made a *national* punishment, since the Hebrews either assisted in the massacre, or did not interpose to prevent it; since they neither endeavored to repair the wrong, nor expressed any horror of it; and since a general protracted chastisement might have been indispensable to inspire a proper respect and protection to the Gibeonite remnant that survived.

6. *Let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them up unto the Lord in Gibeah of Saul* — The practice of the Hebrews, as of most Oriental nations, was to slay first, and afterwards to suspend on a gibbet, the body not being left hanging after sunset. The king could not

refuse this demand of the Gibeonites, who, in making it, were only exercising their right as blood-avengers; and, although through fear and a sense of weakness they had not hitherto claimed satisfaction, yet now that David had been apprised by the oracle of the cause of the long-prevailing calamity, he felt it his duty to give the Gibeonites full satisfaction — hence their specifying the number seven, which was reckoned full and complete. And if it should seem unjust to make the descendants suffer for a crime which, in all probability, originated with Saul himself, yet his sons and grandsons might be the instruments of his cruelty, the willing and zealous executors of this bloody *raid*.

the king said, I will give them — David cannot be charged with doing this as an indirect way or ridding himself of rival competitors for the throne, for those delivered up were only collateral branches of Saul's family, and never set up any claim to the sovereignty. Moreover, David was only granting the request of the Gibeonites as God had bidden him do.

8. *the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul, whom she brought up for Adriel* — Merab, Michal's sister, was the wife of Adriel; but Michal adopted and brought up the boys under her care.

9. *they hanged them in the hill before the Lord* — Deeming themselves not bound by the criminal law of Israel (⁽⁵¹²⁾Deuteronomy 21:22,23), their intention was to let the bodies hang until God, propitiated by this offering, should send rain upon the land, for the want of it had occasioned the famine. It was a heathen practice to gibbet men with a view of appeasing the anger of the gods in seasons of famine, and the Gibeonites, who were a remnant of the Amorites (⁽⁵¹³⁾2 Samuel 21:2), though brought to the knowledge of the true God, were not, it seems, free from this superstition. God, in His providence, suffered the Gibeonites to ask and inflict so barbarous a retaliation, in order that the oppressed Gibeonites might obtain justice and some reparation of their wrongs, especially that the scandal brought on the name of the true religion by the violation of a solemn national compact might be wiped away from Israel, and that a memorable lesson should be given to respect treaties and oaths.

2 SAMUEL 21:10,11.

RIZPAH'S KINDNESS UNTO THE DEAD.

10. *Rizpah ... took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock* — She erected a tent near the spot, in which she and her servants kept watch, as the relatives of executed persons were wont to do, day and night, to scare the birds and beasts of prey away from the remains exposed on the low-standing gibbets.

2 SAMUEL 21:12-22.

DAVID BURIES THE BONES OF SAUL AND JONATHAN IN THEIR FATHER'S SEPULCHER.

12. *David went and took the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son*, etc. — Before long, the descent of copious showers, or perhaps an order of the king, gave Rizpah the satisfaction of releasing the corpses from their ignominious exposure; and, incited by her pious example, David ordered the remains of Saul and his sons to be transferred from their obscure grave in Jabesh-gilead to an honorable interment in the family vault at Zelah or Zelzah (¹1 Samuel 10:2), now Beit-jala.

15-22. *Moreover the Philistines had yet war again with Israel* — Although the Philistines had completely succumbed to the army of David, yet the appearance of any gigantic champions among them revived their courage and stirred them up to renewed inroads on the Hebrew territory. Four successive contests they provoked during the latter period of David's reign, in the first of which the king ran so imminent a risk of his life that he was no longer allowed to encounter the perils of the battlefield.

CHAPTER 22

2 SAMUEL 22:1-51.

DAVID'S PSALM OF THANKSGIVING FOR GOD'S POWERFUL DELIVERANCE AND MANIFOLD BLESSINGS.

The song contained in this chapter is the same as the eighteenth Psalm, where the full commentary will be given [see on ^{<181>}Psalm 18:1, etc.]. It may be sufficient simply to remark that Jewish writers have noticed a great number of very minute variations in the language of the song as recorded here, from that embodied in the Book of Psalms — which may be accounted for by the fact that this, the first copy of the poem, was carefully revised and altered by David afterwards, when it was set to the music of the tabernacle. This inspired ode was manifestly the effusion of a mind glowing with the highest fervor of piety and gratitude, and it is full of the noblest imagery that is to be found within the range even of sacred poetry. It is David's grand tribute of thanksgiving for deliverance from his numerous and powerful enemies, and establishing him in the power and glory of the kingdom.

CHAPTER 23

2 SAMUEL 23:1-7.

DAVID PROFESSES HIS FAITH IN GOD'S PROMISES.

1. *Now these be the last words of David* — Various opinions are entertained as to the precise meaning of this statement, which, it is obvious, proceeded from the compiler or collector of the sacred canon. Some think that, as there is no division of chapters in the Hebrew Scriptures, this introduction was intended to show that what follows is no part of the king's poetical compositions; while still others consider it the last of his utterances as an inspired writer.

raised up on high — from an obscure family and condition to a throne.

the anointed of the God of Jacob — chosen to be king by the special appointment of that God, to whom, by virtue of an ancient covenant, the people of Israel owed all their peculiar destiny and distinguished privileges.

the sweet psalmist of Israel — that is, delightful, highly esteemed.

2. *The Spirit of the Lord spake by me* — Nothing can more clearly show that all that is excellent in spirit, beautiful in language, or grand in prophetic imagery, which the Psalms of David contain, were owing, not to his superiority in natural talents or acquired knowledge, but to the suggestion and dictates of God's Spirit.

3. *the Rock of Israel* — This metaphor, which is commonly applied by the sacred writers to the Almighty, was very expressive to the minds of the Hebrew people. Their national fortresses, in which they sought security in war, were built on high and inaccessible rocks.

spake to me — either preceptively, giving the following counsels respecting the character of an upright ruler in Israel, or prophetically, concerning David and his royal dynasty, and the great Messiah, of whom

many think this is a prophecy, rendering the words, “he that ruleth” — “there shall be a ruler over men.”

4. *as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain* — Little patches of grass are seen rapidly springing up in Palestine after rain; and even where the ground has been long parched and bare, within a few days or hours after the enriching showers begin to fall, the face of the earth is so renewed that it is covered over with a pure fresh mantle of green.

5. *Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure* — “the light of the morning,” that is, the beginning of David’s kingdom, was unlike the clear brilliant dawn of an Eastern day but was overcast by many black and threatening clouds; neither he nor his family had been like the tender grass springing up from the ground and flourishing by the united influences of the sun and rain; but rather like the grass that withereth and is prematurely cut down. The meaning is: although David’s house had not flourished in an uninterrupted course of worldly prosperity and greatness, according to his hopes; although great crimes and calamities had beclouded his family history; some of the most promising branches of the royal tree had been cut down in his lifetime and many of his successors should suffer in like manner for their personal sins; although many reverses and revolutions may overtake his race and his kingdom, yet it was to him a subject of the highest joy and thankfulness that God will inviolably maintain His covenant with his family, until the advent of his greatest Son, the Messiah, who was the special object of his desire, and the author of his salvation.

6. *But the sons of Belial shall be all of them as thorns* — that is, the wicked enemies and persecutors of this kingdom of righteousness. They resemble those prickly, thorny plants which are twisted together, whose spires point in every direction, and which are so sharp and strong that they cannot be touched or approached without danger; but hard instruments and violent means must be taken to destroy or uproot them. So God will remove or destroy all who are opposed to this kingdom.

2 SAMUEL 23:8-39.

A CATALOGUE OF HIS MIGHTY MEN.

8. *These be the names of the mighty men whom David had* — This verse should be translated thus: He who sits in the seat of the Tachmonite (that is, of Jashobeam the Hachmonite), who was chief among the captains, the same is Adino the Eznite; he lift up his spear against eight hundred, whom he slew at one time. The text is corrupt in this passage; the number eight hundred should be three hundred [DAVIDSON, *Hermeneutics*]. Under Joab he was chief or president of the council of war. The first or highest order was composed of him and his two colleagues, Eleazar and Shammah. Eleazar seems to have been left to fight the Philistines alone; and on his achieving the victory, they returned to the spoil. In like manner Shammah was left to stand alone in his glory, when the Lord, by him, wrought a great victory. It is not very easy to determine whether the exploits that are afterwards described were performed by the first or the second three.

15, 16. *the well of Beth-lehem* — An ancient cistern, with four or five holes in the solid rock, at about ten minutes distance to the north of the eastern corner of the hill of Beth-lehem, is pointed out by the natives as Bir-Daoud; that is, David's well. Dr. ROBINSON doubts the identity of the well; but others think that there are no good grounds for doing so. Certainly, considering this to be the ancient well, Beth-lehem must have once extended ten minutes further to the north, and must have lain in times of old, not as now, on the summit, but on the northern rise of the hill; for the well is *by* or (^{1310E}1 Chronicles 11:7) *at* the gate. I find in the description of travelers, that the common opinion is, that David's captains had come from the southeast, in order to obtain, at the risk of their lives, the so-much-longed-for water; while it is supposed that David himself was then in the great cave that is not far to the southeast of Beth-lehem; which cave is generally held to have been that of Adullam. But (^{0655J}Joshua 15:35) Adullam lay "in the valley"; that is, in the undulating plain at the western base of the mountains of Judea and consequently to the southwest of Beth-lehem. Be this as it may, David's *men* had in any case to break through the host of the Philistines, in order to reach the well; and the position of Bir-Daoud agrees well with this [VAN DE VELDE].

19-39. *the first three* — The mighty men or champions in David's military staff were divided into three classes — the highest, Jashobeam, Eleazar, and Shammah; the second class, Abishai, Benaiah, and Asahel; and the third class, the thirty, of which Asahel was the chief. There are thirty-one mentioned in the list, including Asahel; and these added to the two superior orders make thirty-seven. Two of them, we know, were already dead; namely, Asahel [^{<10130>}2 Samuel 3:30] and Uriah [^{<10117>}2 Samuel 11:17]; and if the dead, at the drawing up of the list, amounted to seven, then we might suppose a legion of honor, consisting of the definite number thirty, where the vacancies, when they occurred, were replaced by fresh appointments.

CHAPTER 24

2 SAMUEL 24:1-9.

DAVID NUMBERS THE PEOPLE.

1-4. *again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah* —

“Again” carries us back to the former tokens of His wrath in the three years’ famine [^{<1001>}2 Samuel 21:1]. God, though He cannot tempt any man (^{<3013>}James 1:13), is frequently described in Scripture as doing what He merely permits to be done; and so, in this case, He permitted Satan to tempt David. Satan was the active mover, while God only withdrew His supporting grace, and the great tempter prevailed against the king. (See ^{<0013>}Exodus 7:13 ^{<0019>}1 Samuel 26:19 ^{<0610>}2 Samuel 16:10 ^{<0452>}Psalm 105:25 ^{<0017>}Isaiah 7:17, etc.). The order was given to Joab, who, though not generally restrained by religious scruples, did not fail to present, in strong terms (see on ^{<3203>}1 Chronicles 21:3), the sin and danger of this measure. He used every argument to dissuade the king from his purpose. The sacred history has not mentioned the objections which he and other distinguished officers urged against it in the council of David. But it expressly states that they were all overruled by the inflexible resolution of the king.

5. *they passed over Jordan* — This census was taken first in the eastern parts of the Hebrew kingdom; and it would seem that Joab was accompanied by a military force, either to aid in this troublesome work, or to overawe the people who might display reluctance or opposition.

the river of Gad — “Wady” would be a better term. It extends over a course estimated at about sixty miles, which, though in summer almost constantly dry, exhibits very evident traces of being swept over by an impetuous torrent in winter (see ^{<0023>}Deuteronomy 2:36).

6. *the land of Tahtim-hodshi* — that is, the land lately acquired; namely, that of the Hagarites conquered by Saul (^{<3501>}1 Chronicles 5:10). The progress was northward. Thence they crossed the country, and,

proceeding along the western coast to the southern extremities of the country, they at length arrived in Jerusalem, having completed the enumeration of the whole kingdom in the space of nine months and twenty days.

9. *Joab gave up the sum of the number of the people unto the king* —

The amount here stated, compared with ^{<13715>}1 Chronicles 21:5, gives a difference of three hundred thousand. The discrepancy is only apparent, and admits of an easy reconciliation; thus (see ^{<13714>}1 Chronicles 27:1-15), there were twelve divisions of generals, who commanded monthly, and whose duty was to keep guard on the royal person, each having a body of troops consisting of twenty-four thousand men, which, together, formed an army of two hundred eighty-eight thousand; and as a separate detachment of twelve thousand was attendant on the twelve princes of the twelve tribes mentioned in the same chapter, so both are equal to three hundred thousand. These were not reckoned in this book, because they were in the actual service of the king as a regular militia. But ^{<13715>}1 Chronicles 21:5 joins them to the rest, saying, “all those of Israel were one million, one hundred thousand”; whereas the author of Samuel, who reckons only the eight hundred thousand, does not say, “all those of Israel,” but barely “and Israel were,” etc. It must also be observed that, exclusive of the troops before mentioned, there was an army of observation on the frontiers of the Philistines’ country, composed of thirty thousand men, as appears from ^{<1061>}2 Samuel 6:1; which, it seems, were included in the number of five hundred thousand of the people of Judah by the author of Samuel. But the author of Chronicles, who mentions only four hundred seventy thousand, gives the number of that tribe exclusive of those thirty thousand men, because they were not all of the tribe of Judah, and therefore he does not say, “all those of Judah,” as he had said, “all those of Israel,” but only, “and those of Judah.” Thus both accounts may be reconciled [DAVIDSON].

2 SAMUEL 24:10-14.

HE, HAVING THREE PLAGUES PROPOUNDED BY GAD, REPENTS, AND CHOOSES THREE DAYS' PESTILENCE.

10-13. *David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the Lord, I have sinned* — The act of numbering the people was not in itself sinful; for Moses did it by the express authority of God. But David acted not only independently of such order of sanction, but from motives unworthy of the delegated king of Israel; from pride and vainglory; from self-confidence and distrust of God; and, above all, from ambitious designs of conquest, in furtherance of which he was determined to force the people into military service, and to ascertain whether he could muster an army sufficient for the magnitude of the enterprises he contemplated. It was a breach of the constitution, an infringement of the liberties of the people, and opposed to that divine policy which required that Israel should continue a separate people. His eyes were not opened to the heinousness of his sin till God had spoken unto him by His commissioned prophet.

13. *Shall seven years of famine come unto thee* — that is, in addition to the three that had been already, with the current year included (see on [1 Chronicles 21:11](#)).

14. *David said, ... Let us fall now into the hand of the Lord* — His overwhelming sense of his sin led him to acquiesce in the punishment denounced, notwithstanding its apparent excess of severity. He proceeded on a good principle in choosing the pestilence. In pestilence he was equally exposed, as it was just and right he should be, to danger as his people, whereas, in war and famine, he possessed means of protection superior to them. Besides, he thereby showed his trust, founded on long experience, in the divine goodness.

2 SAMUEL 24:15-25.

HIS INTERCESSION TO GOD; THE PLAGUE CEASES.

15. *from the morning* — rather *that* morning when Gad came [¹²⁴⁸2 Samuel 24:18], till the end of the three days.

there died of the people ... seventy thousand men — Thus was the pride of the vainglorious monarch, confiding in the number of his population, deeply humbled.

16. *the Lord repented him of the evil* — God is often described in Scripture as repenting when He ceased to pursue a course He had begun.

17. *David ... said* — or, “had said,”

I have sinned ... but these sheep, what have they done? — The guilt of numbering the people lay exclusively with David. But in the body politic as well as natural, when the head suffers, all the members suffer along with it; and, besides, although David’s sin was the immediate cause, the great increase of national offenses at this time had (¹²⁴⁹2 Samuel 24:1) kindled the anger of the Lord.

18. *Araunah* — or Ornan (¹²⁵⁰1 Chronicles 21:18), the Jebusite, one of the ancient inhabitants, who, having become a convert to the true religion, retained his house and possessions. He resided on Mount Moriah, the spot on which the temple was afterwards built (¹²⁵¹2 Chronicles 3:1); but that mount was not then enclosed in the town.

21. *to build an altar unto the Lord, that the plague may be stayed* — It is evident that the plague was not stayed till after the altar was built, and the sacrifice offered, so that what is related (¹²⁵²2 Samuel 24:16) was by anticipation. Previous to the offering of this sacrifice, he had seen the destroying angel as well as offered the intercessory prayer (¹²⁵³2 Samuel 24:17). This was a sacrifice of expiation; and the reason why he was allowed to offer it on Mount Moriah was partly in gracious consideration to his fear of repairing to Gibeon (¹²⁵⁴1 Chronicles 21:29,30), and partly in anticipation of the removal of the tabernacle and the erection of the temple there (¹²⁵⁵2 Chronicles 3:1).

23. *All these things did Araunah, as a king, give* — Indicating, as the sense is, that this man had been anciently a heathen king or chief, but was now a proselyte who still retained great property and influence in Jerusalem, and whose piety was evinced by the liberality of his offers. The words, “as a king,” are taken by some to signify simply, “he gave with royal munificence.”

24. *Nay; ... I will ... buy it of thee at a price* — The sum mentioned here, about fifty dollars, was paid for the floor, oxen and wood instruments only, whereas the large sum (^{<13125>}1 Chronicles 21:25) was paid afterwards for the whole hill, on which David made preparations for building the temple.

25. *David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings* — There seem to have been two sacrifices; the first expiatory, the second a thanksgiving for the cessation of the pestilence (see on ^{<13126>}1 Chronicles 21:26).