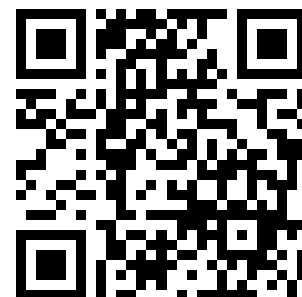


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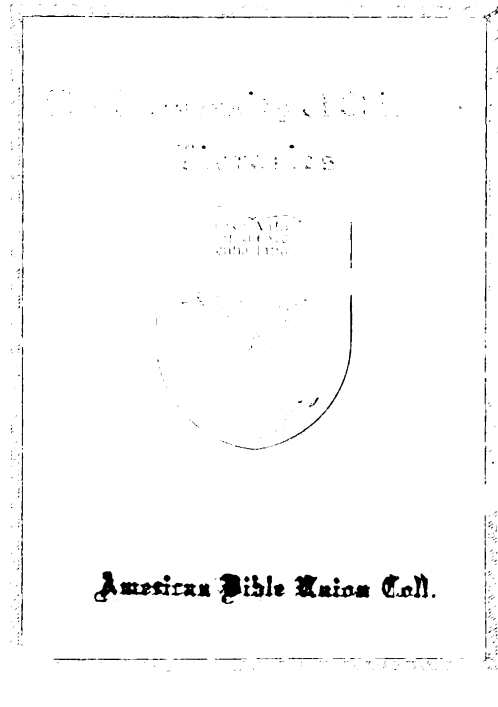
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ON THE

H O L Y B I B L E,

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By T H O M A S C O K E, LL.D. *1801*  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.

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THE  
BOOK of JOSHUA.

THE book of Joshua seems to have been written after the time of Joshua; because in chap. xvi. 10. it is said, they drove not out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer, but the Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites unto this day. But it was written before the time of Solomon; because 1 Kings, ix. 16. it is said, Pharaoh, king of Egypt, had taken Gezer, and burned it with fire, and slain the Canaanites that dwelt in the city, and given it for a present unto his daughter, Solomon's wife. This book, according to Abarbanel, was written by Samuel; and a further proof that it was written after Joshua's time, is chap. iv. 9. xix. 47. The allotment of the Danites, there mentioned, was after Joshua's time. See Judg. xviii. Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law, chap. xxiv. 26. is an addition. The book might very properly be called Joshua, from the hero of it, though it was not immediately penned by him; and there can arise no objection against it, whether it was written by Samuel, Ezra, or any other inspired writer. But for a full discussion of the question, we refer to Calmet's Preliminary Dissertation, and to Allix on the sacred Scriptures.

C H A P. I.

*God commands Joshua to introduce the people into Canaan, and to study the book of the law night and day. Joshua commands the people to prepare for their march, and the two tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, to go with them: the children of Israel promise obedience to Joshua.*

[Before Christ 1451.]

**N**OW after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that

the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying,

2 Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, *even* to the children of Israel.

3 ¶ Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.

C H A P. I.

*Ver. 1. Now after the death of Moses, &c.]* The Hebrew is, *and after, &c.* This conjunction points out the connection of this book with the foregoing, of which, indeed, it is a continuation. The book of Judges is connected with that of Joshua, and the book of Ruth with that of Judges, in the same plain manner. Thus too the LXX have joined the Lamentations of Jeremiah with the Prophecies of that prophet. This manner of writing is that of a just and exact mind, elevated above the vanity of making a shew of what he composes. He leads the understanding from events to events, without distracting the reader, and without even apprizing him that he who speaks is a new historian. The ancient manner of transcribing the sacred books was conformable to the taste of those who composed them. The works were not distinguished by chapters, and frequently the books had no title;

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they were written in continuation, those which followed being joined to the foregoing by a conjunction, as we see in this place: see Calmet. With respect to the time here specified by the words, *after the death of Moses*, it may very probably be placed immediately after the forty days mourning for that holy man were fully elapsed.

*The servant of the Lord]* Respecting this title, see Deut. xxxiv. 5.

*The Lord spake unto Joshua, &c.]* He gave him his orders. But whereas he spake to Moses familiarly *face to face, as a man speaketh with his friend*; he informed Joshua out of the sanctuary, and by the mouth of Eleazar the high-priest; who, being invested with the breast-plate, and presenting himself before the veil, over against the mercy-seat, whereon rested the divine presence, consulted God by the Urim and Thummim; and God answered him by an intelligible voice which issued from the mercy-seat.

B

Moses

4 From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast.

5 ¶ There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

6 Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an in-

heritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them.

7 Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.

8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do

*Moses' minister*] i. e. Who had been Moses' minister. The expression in the original gives the idea of an honourable minister, acting by no means in a servile capacity. See Exod. xxiv. 13. Deut. i. 38.

*Ver. 2. Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, &c.*] The camp of the Israelites rested at Shittim near Jordan, in sight of the land of Canaan, during all the time they were mourning for Moses. But at length, the funeral solemnities of that great legislator being accomplished, and his death having opened to them an entrance into the promised land, Joshua here receives orders to prepare for that event.

*Ver. 3. Every place—have I given unto you*] See the note on Deut. xi. 24.

*Ver. 4. From the wilderness and this Lebanon—shall be your coast*] That is, from all that desert which lies south of the place where you now are, to mount Lebanon, fronting you on the north; and from the Euphrates on the east, to the Mediterranean sea on the west. See Gen. xxv. 18. Deut. i. 7. *The Hittites*, part of whom were of the race of the giants, inhabited, with the Amorites, the mountainous country to the south of the land of Canaan, and were famous for their valour. To promise Joshua the conquest of their country, was to declare to him the utter defeat of the Canaanites; and this, doubtless, is the reason why they were here named in preference. Joshua drove them out of their country, but did not destroy them utterly; for mention is made of their kings a long time afterwards. See 2 Kings, vii. 6. *The great sea, toward the going down of the sun, i. e. the Mediterranean sea to the west.*

*Ver. 6. Be strong and of a good courage*] However courageous and valiant Joshua might be, it was, nevertheless, very necessary to animate him to the undertaking of so difficult an enterprise as was here entrusted to him; nothing less than such a divine assurance could indeed have supported his courage in so arduous a task. 'Tis true, he was now ninety-three years of age, and had been trained up under Moses at least one third part of that time; so that he wanted neither the experience nor the sagacity necessary to foresee all the difficulties he was to encounter. He saw himself too at the head of 600,000 fighting men: but, not to mention the prodigious number of old men, women, and children; not to reckon servants, cattle, and baggage, wherewith the army was incumbered; his first step was the crossing of a large river; in doing of which, he knew

himself equally exposed to the arms of those whom he went to attack, and of those whom he left behind. The nations that he was to subdue were naturally warlike, of a gigantic stature and strength; their towns well fortified by nature and art; their forces and interests united by the strongest ties and alliances: besides, they had all long ago taken the alarm, and had made the greatest preparations against him, determined either to obstruct his conquest of their country, or to lose their lives in its defence. See Univ. Hist. vol. iii.

*Ver. 7. Only be thou strong and very courageous, &c.*] God requires of Joshua fortitude and courage; which, indeed, ought necessarily to adorn the character of every person raised to the government of a nation; that so, being always faithful in the cause of religion, he may enforce its duties on his subjects, both by his injunctions and his example. Jehovah requires his observance of no other rule for his conduct, than that law which had been deposited with him. He forbids him in any thing to deviate from that law; and, on this condition, assures to him the most happy success.

*That thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest*] The sense given to this passage by the LXX, is very fine: *That thou mayest perform wisely whatsoever thou hast to do.* It is the greatest policy to be truly religious. Princes who govern by pretended reasons of state, in contempt of the commands of God, are strangers both to true wisdom and their real interest. Joshua was to entertain far other sentiments. It was essential to the success of his ministry and arms, that his whole disposition, from the very beginning, should display his fear of God. We should observe, however, that the expression in the original, which primarily signifies *to have intelligence*, signifies also, frequently, *to prosper*; inasmuch as prudence is the path to success.

*Ver. 8. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, &c.*] "This law, whose original is laid up in the sanctuary, shall never cease to be the subject of thy meditations and discourses, that so all thy conduct may be perfectly conformable thereto." By which it is evident, that Joshua had a copy of the law for his private use; and that it was the intention of God, that he should set an example to all kings and governors who should come after him, of a devout application to the study of its principles for their government. However weighty and numerous the occupations of Joshua might be, God means not that they should dispense him from reading, meditating, and digesting of his law: on the contrary, he requires him constantly

according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

9 Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

10 ¶ Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying,

11 Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which the LORD your God giveth you to possess it.

Itantly to derive from thence his rule of conduct, as well in his private transactions, as in his public administration. Happy the people who have Joshuas at their head! If ever they can rely on the prudence of their governors, and promise themselves advantage from their ministry, it must be under such a supposition.

*Ver. 9. Have not I commanded thee? &c.]* These are the grounds of that intrepid courage which was to animate the soul of Joshua; 1st, The calling wherewith God had dignified him. 2dly, The positive promise of a lasting protection.

**REFLECTIONS.**—Moses had been a faithful servant; but death is the common lot of man. By removing from the people this most useful minister, God will call them off from dependance on, and attachment to men. Joshua must arise; and, though conscious of great inferiority of abilities, yet at God's command he may comfortably address himself to the work, assured that he who sends will strengthen him. *Note;* (1.) It is a comfort to the people of God, that, though ministers die, Jesus their Lord for ever lives to provide for and direct them. (2.) Those whom God calls to succeed eminent ministers, though they may feel their own insufficiency, must not be discouraged, but rely upon his grace and strength who gives the mission. 1. Here is the work enjoined him, to pass Jordan, and to possess the land of Canaan. An arduous task! how shall he cross this deep river, without bridge or pontoons, especially now, when overflowing its banks? and how possess a land where all the inhabitants are mighty? here he must rely upon God: if he commands, he will make the way plain and easy. *Note;* Divine faith overcomes the greatest difficulties; and they can do all things, who have Christ strengthening them. 2. The promises made to him for his encouragement, [1.] The gift of the land is confirmed to the children of Israel. It was their own, as certainly as if they were in possession. The bounds are wide and extended; and had they been faithful to God, he had not suffered a tittle to have been unfulfilled: if they never occupied the whole, they must blame their own unbelief and disobedience. [2.] God assures Joshua, that his never-failing presence and blessing shall be with him, as they had been with Moses; and the consequence of these must be victory. He shall tread on the necks of his enemies, and divide the land, to be possessed in peace by the tribes of Israel. *Note;* They who have God's presence with them, may cheerfully and confidently go forth against a host of enemies. (3.) Victory over all the powers of evil is obtained for us by our divine Joshua, and we may triumph already in our glorious head over sin, and death, and hell, as vanquished enemies. (4.) He bids him be of

good courage, repeats it again and again, and urges it with renewed assurances that he would be with him: and need there was of such encouragement, though his valour had been tried and known, for his difficulties were now greater than ever. His own insufficiency for such an enterprise, the people's well-known rebellious spirit, his enemies' power and numbers, might shake the most confirmed constancy; but fear is banished, whilst he who supremely commands inspires him with strength and courage irresistible. *Note;* (1.) The strongest have need of daily support and encouragement from God, or their strength would quickly prove but weakness. (2.) When we go forth to fight the Lord's battles, as ministers, we should take with us that encouraging promise, *Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.* (3.) When God is pleased to work, none shall hinder: the mountains of difficulty shall, before our divine Zerubbabel, become a plain.

*Ver. 10. Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people]* Obedient to the divine injunction, Joshua hastens to take all those measures which human prudence could suggest to a pious mind in the present emergency. He commands the *schoterim*, i. e. the officers subordinate to the *schophetim*, or judges, whose sentences they published and put in execution.

*Ver. 11. Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals]* They were to make proclamation throughout the several tribes, in all the camps of Israel, to provide themselves with such victuals as the countries of Sihon and Og, which they had lately conquered, afforded. But to what purpose is this precaution, since the Israelites every morning found manna from heaven for their food? Without quoting all the answers given by interpreters to this question, we shall content ourselves with pointing out two or three. 1st, Joshua's order may be founded on his foreseeing that the Israelites would be obliged to decamp too early in the morning, to allow time for collecting manna, as usual; and therefore he judged it prudent to supply them with provisions before they began their march. 2dly, Though the manna daily fell for the accommodation of the poor, the feeble, and all who had no means of procuring themselves other food; yet those who could purchase flour and meat were not forbidden to use it. The Israelites actually had found great store of provisions in the land of the Amorites, which they had now for some time subdued. Calmet prefers this opinion. Le Clerc thinks, that Joshua issued this order, as conjecturing, or being miraculously informed, that the manna would cease so soon as they had passed the Jordan. 3dly, Nothing hinders our translating the words, *Prepare all necessary provisions;* without restraining them to victuals only,

12 ¶ And to the Reubenites, and to the Gadites, and to half the tribe of Manasseh, spake Joshua, saying,

13 Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, The LORD your God hath given you rest, and hath given you this land.

14 Your wives, your little ones, and your cattle, shall remain in the land which Moses gave you on this side Jordan; but ye shall pass before your brethren armed, all the mighty men of valour, and help them;

15 Until the LORD have given your brethren rest, as *he hath given you*, and they also have possessed the land which the LORD your God giveth them: then ye shall return unto the land of your possession, and enjoy it, which Moses the LORD's servant gave you on this side Jordan toward the sun-rising.

16 ¶ And they answered Joshua, saying,

All that thou commandest us we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us, we will go.

17 According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee: only the LORD thy God be with thee, as he was with Moses.

18 Whosoever *he be* that doth rebel against thy commandment, and will not hearken unto thy words in all that thou commandest him, he shall be put to death: only be strong and of a good courage.

## CHAP. II.

*Joshua sends two spies, whom Rahab receives and conceals: they give her an oath, that they will save her and her family: after three days' continuance in the mountains, they return to Joshua, and relate all that had happened to them.*

[Before Christ 1451.]

**A**ND Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying,

only. The expression, *for within three days*, occasions new difficulties, which will be removed by a reference to chap. iii. 1, 2. Joshua says, *ye shall pass over this Jordan*; as it was not so far from Shittim, where they now lay encamped, but that they could see it.

*Ver. 12—15. And to the Reubenites, &c. spake Joshua]* We have elsewhere remarked, that Moses had given to these two tribes and a half settlements on this side Jordan; but on condition, that when it became necessary to pass that river, they should furnish their quota of troops, and march at the head of the whole army into the land of Canaan, properly so called. Here, therefore, Joshua puts them again in mind of this engagement; and seems less to command them, than to remind them of the orders they had already received from Moses. See Numb. xxxii. 20, &c. Deut. iii. 18, &c. We find in ver. 14. the word *chanuschim*, translated *armed*: it properly signifies *girt*, as much as to say, *dressed and well equipped*. See Exod. xiii. 18. It is very evident, that Joshua did not require any but those who were able to bear arms in those two tribes and a half, to march in this expedition: nor did Moses mean otherwise; they only supplied about 40,000 men. See Patrick.

*Ver. 16, 17. And they answered Joshua, saying, All that thou commandest us, we will do, &c. according as we hearkened unto Moses]* This is a very express acknowledgment of the divinity of Joshua's mission, and an absolute submission to his commands: all the tribes evidently gave the like answer.

*Only the Lord thy God be with thee, as he was with Moses]* As if they had said, "May the Lord thy God grant to thee, as he did to Moses, the glory of a triumph over our enemies!" And so it is rendered by Menochius, Grotius, Calmet, &c.

10

*Ver. 18. Whosoever he be that doth rebel, &c. he shall be put to death]* He shall be treated as a criminal guilty of high treason: so the words are understood by Maimonides and most of the rabbis. We may further take notice, that Joshua was a king and a prophet, as Moses had been; and that, according to the law, he who transgressed the orders of Moses and of a prophet was worthy of death. The word *only* in the latter clause of the verse should rather be translated *therefore*, which is the plain signification of the particle *רק* *rak*. See chap. xiii. 6.

## CHAP. II.

*Ver. 1. And Joshua—sent—two men to spy, &c.]* Or *had sent*, as the Margin of our Bibles more properly renders it. Joshua had certainly sent the spies to Jericho before he issued in the camp the order mentioned ver. 10, 11. of the former chapter. This supposition removes every difficulty that can arise in this history with respect to the order of time, and clears up the 22d verse of the present chapter. Moses had succeeded so indifferently in sending spies before to discover the land of Canaan, that it is surprising, at first view, that Joshua should venture to recur to this method. But, not to mention that he might be determined to it of his own mind, or perhaps by the express commands of God, without any solicitation on the part of the people, it appears, that he sent these two spies *secretly*, and that to him only they reported the success of their commission. As an able general, prudence required that Joshua should gain a knowledge of the place which he purposed to attack: his confidence in the divine promises did not exclude a diligent and judicious employment of such second causes as might favour the success of his enterprize. We would, therefore, translate the beginning of

Go view the land, even Jericho. And they went, and came into an harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there.

2 And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, Behold, there came men in hither to-night of the children of Israel to search out the country.

3 And the king of Jericho sent unto Rahab,

saying, Bring forth the men that are come to thee, which are entered into thine house: for they be come to search out all the country.

4 And the woman took the two men, and hid them, and said thus, There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they were:

5 And it came to pass about the time of shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that

of the verse in this manner: *And Joshua, the son of Nun, had secretly sent out of Shittim two men to spy, and had said, &c.* See Houbigant. By the land which Joshua orders them to go and view, we are not to understand the whole land of Canaan, but the environs of Jericho: the city, its avenues, its situation, its fortifications, the troops defending it; in a word, every obstacle that he would have to surmount in order to make himself master of it. The city of Jericho, situated in a wide plain according to Josephus, was but about seven miles and a half distant from Jordan. Maundrel says, that he came from Jericho to the banks of Jordan in two hours; which answers pretty nearly to the former calculation.

*And they went, and came into an harlot's house, named Rahab*] The doubtfulness of the term used by the sacred writer, to signify Rahab's mode of life, has divided interpreters. It may equally signify a *hostess*, and a *prostitute*. Onkeios takes it in the former sense, making Rahab to be the keeper of a public house, who received, victualled, and lodged strangers. Josephus, and several rabbis, are of the same opinion, which has also its partizans among Christians. St. Chrysostom, in his second sermon upon Repentance, twice calls this woman a *hostess*. It does not appear by the text, say some, that she followed any other trade; and it is improbable, that Salmon, who was one of the chief heads of the house of Judah, and was one of the ancestors of the Messiah, would have married her had she been a *prostitute*. And yet it must be owned, the greatest probabilities, in this particular, are against Rahab. The Hebrew word *zonah* constantly implies a *prostitute*. Thus the LXX understood it, and two apostles have approved of their version; see Heb. xi. 31. Jam. ii. 25. which they would not have done, considering her as a woman whose memory they ought to hold venerable, had they not been constrained by the laws of truth. Besides, it is observable, that, in this relation, Rahab says not a word of her husband or children, when she begs the life of her kinsfolks; which, considering the trade she carried on, must naturally render her suspected. We may add with *Serrarius*, that, perhaps, Rahab was one of those young women, who, in a religious view, devoted herself to impurity in the idol temples. The same critic supposes the moon to have been the tutelary deity of Jericho. See Calmet, and Levit. xxi. 7.

*And lodged there*] Supposing Rahab to have actually lived in an irreproachable manner, it is nothing surprising to see the spies sent by Joshua on this discovery come by night to lodge at her inn. Whatever were her modes of life, her house was the most favourable place for the execution of their design. And it is sufficiently evident, from reading the sequel of this history, that God himself

conducted them thither by a special direction of his providence.

*Ver. 4. And the woman took the two men, and hid them*] Or rather, as some versions have it, *Now the woman had taken the two men, and had hidden them*; having, without doubt, perceived the king's officers coming, or being informed of the search which was made at the time when, being already instructed by the two spies, she had conferred with them and given them assurances of her fidelity.

*And said thus, There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they were*] As if she had said, "My house is open to all: two men did come to lodge here; but I was not obliged to inform myself who they were, or whence they came; nor was it my business to inquire."

*Ver. 5. And—about the time of shutting of the gate*] Rahab's house was evidently nigh to one of the gates of Jericho: she feigned, therefore, that, before the gate was shut, those whom they took for spies had gone out; and so had left her house but a very short time before. The spies arrived at the close of the day, and Rahab asserts that they went out in the dusk, just at the shutting of the gate.

*Whither the men went, I wot not: pursue after them quickly, for ye shall overtake them*] The argument was plausible: if the two men who came to Rahab, and who, as she said, had gone out of the city at the shutting of the gate, were emissaries from the camp of Israel, they had only to follow them with diligence, and overtake them before they had repassed the Jordan: but Rahab most certainly told a falsehood; and it cannot be said that this lie was merely officious, since she uttered it to the king's people, and in prejudice to the safety of her country: but the idea of saving the life of two innocent persons evidently prevailed in her mind, and she thought she might harmlessly employ a falsehood to effect her purpose. Some of the ancient fathers of the church have thought the same; and St. Augustin, though very rigid upon the subject, granted it to be a very difficult question. See cap. 15. *ad Consentinum*. But this is carrying matters certainly to an excess. The fathers before St. Augustin, and all the Jewish doctors, condemn the practice altogether. It may, indeed, be said, in palliation of Rahab's crime, that if she had heard of what had happened to Pharaoh, Sihon, and Og, the same events could not be unknown to the king of Jericho; so that it was as natural for her to be afraid, and to provide for her own security, as for him to defend himself courageously, or perish in the attempt. For we apprehend, that to reject peace offered by a formidable conqueror, at the hazard of being massacred, for the love of a king who might very probably have been only a petty tyrant, and to continue attached to a people whom



the men went out: whither the men went I wot not: pursue after them quickly; for ye shall overtake them.

6 But she had brought them up to the roof of the house, and hid them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order upon the roof.

7 And the men pursued after them the way to Jordan unto the fords: and as soon as they which pursued after them were gone out, they shut the gate.

8 ¶ And before they were laid down, she came up unto them upon the roof;

9 And she said unto the men, I know that

the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you.

10 For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that *were* on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed.

11 And as soon as we had heard *these things*, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he *is* God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.

whom fear had disabled from defending themselves; we apprehend, I say, that to reject peace under such circumstances, and even supposing that the king of Jericho lawfully swayed the sceptre, would have been an instance of love for one's country, or rather for truth, which there was hardly room to expect from a Canaanitish woman; much less from a hostess so young as Rahab must have been, since she brought forth Boaz above thirty years after, as Junius has fully proved, in *Jacob*. ii. 25. She did, upon the whole, what might be expected from her in such a case, an honest *action*, and conformable to the will of God, in joining the party of those whom His powerful arm supported, and in relinquishing the interests of a nation, whom so many reasons united to render worthy of an utter destruction. Still more fully to justify the reception which Rahab gave to the Israelitish spies, and the asylum she afforded, two things may reasonably be supposed; 1. That God had revealed to this woman the wonders he had wrought in favour of the children of Israel, and his design of giving them the land of Canaan. *By faith*, we read, *the harlot Rahab perished not*; Heb. xi. 31. This faith seems to suppose something more than persuasion founded on common report; it supposes some *divine warning*, a revelation. 2. It is natural to suppose, that God had summoned the king and people of Jericho to submit themselves to the Israelites on pain of utter destruction; and that, while Rahab's fellow-citizens refused to comply with that summons, this woman, more submissive to the divine commands, took part with the Israelites, and acted in consequence of her option. The words of St. Paul favour this conjecture. Instead of saying, according to our version, *by faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not*, τοῖς ἀπίστοις, he says, agreeably to the marginal rendering, *perished not with them who were disobedient*, τοῖς ἀπειθήσασι; i. e. disobedient to the orders which God had given them to submit to the Israelites. There was nothing, therefore, unfaithful, nothing criminal, in the asylum which Rahab afforded the spies; nothing which can be deemed treasonable in the care she took to screen them from the knowledge and search of the officers of the king of Jericho. Impressed with sentiments of true faith in the commands of God, that faith, that confidence in his word, was the principle of her whole

conduct in this emergency; though we acknowledge, that she sinned by having recourse to a lie. Again: Rahab testified her faith by her obedience, and for this only is she celebrated in Scripture. Let those who find themselves in like circumstances imitate her in that wherein she is imitable, her humble submission to orders undoubtedly issued by God, and her eagerness to comply therewith; to them also will then belong that fine eulogium of St. James: *Was not Rahab justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?—As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith, without works, is dead also*. Jam. ii. 25, 26. See *Waterland's Scripture vindicated*, part ii. p. 52.

*Ver. 6. But she had brought them up to the roof of the house*] We have elsewhere remarked in what manner the roofs of houses in this country were constructed. See Deut. xxii. 8. They were flat, or rather terraces, on which men might either lie or walk.

*And hid them, &c.*] All this had passed before the arrival of the king of Jericho's officers, and upon a report of the search that they were ordered to make.

*Stalks of flax*] *Hemp-wood,—line-stalks*. See Ulpian. Digest. lib. xxxii. cap. 55. sect. 5.

*Ver. 9. She said unto the men, I know that the Lord hath given you the land, &c.*] As if she had thus addressed them. "Be not surprised at the care I take for your security. I, as well as you, believe in the one true God, absolute master of the fate of nations. I know that he hath resolved to give this country to the people of Israel; and I can already sensibly perceive the effect of his sovereign decree, in the terror which has seized on all the inhabitants of this land," &c. This *terror* is here painted by two very strong expressions. First, It was a *terror fallen* upon the inhabitants of the country; i. e. a sudden terror, which had struck them like thunder. Secondly, They *fainted*, or, as the Hebrew imports, they *melted*; as wax is made to melt in the fire: they were bereft of their strength and courage.

*Ver. 11. For the Lord your God, he is God, &c.*] "Is a God whose power, far different from that of the idols, who only preside over certain places of which they are considered as the tutelary deities, extends through all nature, and hath no bounds." This fine

confession

12 Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the LORD, since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token :

13 And *that* ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death.

14 And the men answered her, Our life for your's, if ye utter not this our business. And it shall be, when the LORD hath given us the

land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee.

15 Then she let them down by a cord through the window: for her house *was* upon the town-wall, and she dwelt upon the wall.

16 And she said unto them, Get you to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you; and hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers be returned: and afterward may ye go your way.

confession of Rahab is a convincing proof of the purity of her sentiments. We are not to be surpris'd, after this, at the apostle's celebrating the faith of this memorable Canaanite; much less, that, animated by a faith so judicious and noble, she should receive as she did the spies sent by Joshua.

*Ver. 12. Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the Lord*] In acknowledgment, of the signal service which Rahab had done the two spies, she requests of them a favour, which is, that, at the taking of Jericho, not only herself and her parents, but all those also of her family who were found in her house, should be exempted from the general destruction. And she desires that it may be assured to her by an oath: this was the greatest security she could have; an oath is the most respectable and sacred tie of fidelity in all discourses and promises. All nations have so deemed it. All have believed, that the gods, avengers of sin, were particularly so of perjury; and, doubtless, the worshippers of the true God should be the most religious of all mortals in their observance of an oath. But how lively must the faith of this woman have been, that could excite her to act as she did! She speaks of Jericho, rather as a city already taken, than as barely threatened; and behaves as if she actually beheld the accomplishment of God's awful decree. Hence the precautions that she takes, and the oath which she requires, are so many proofs of the confidence wherewith she received the word of God, and of her perfect acquiescence in his will.

*And give me a true token*] That is, a sign, which might serve her as a safeguard, and put her house in perfect security against the violence of the soldiery. *Houbigant* renders it, *and that you will give me a true token.*

*Ver. 13. That ye will save alive my father, &c.*] We here see what Rahab means in the foregoing verse by her *father's house*;—namely, his family: her enumeration of which demonstrates that she had neither husband nor children. By *all that they have*, she meant the children of her brethren and sisters, *and all her kindred.* See chap. vi. 23.

*Ver. 14. And the men answered her, Our life for yours*] i. e. We will perish rather than suffer you to receive the least injury; or, May we perish, if your demand be not complied with! They engaged themselves by oath, (see *ver. 17.*) so far as in them lay, in a firm persuasion that Joshua would not fail to ratify what they had promised solely for the public good.

*If ye utter not this our business*] Or, as the Hebrew signifies, *this our word*;—in the engagement we make with you. Persuaded that their oath must be kept, these prudent Israelites did not think proper to give it rashly; they specify the condition upon which they undertake it, namely, that Rahab should keep secret what had passed between her and them. Without this, others than those of her family might have taken shelter in her house, or other houses than her's might have imitated the token, by which the latter was to be known; and thus have deceived the vigilance of those, who, as executioners of God's commands, were to spare none but herself, and those who belonged to her.

*We will deal kindly, &c.*] That is, "We will exercise mercy towards you, and will keep our promise." The Scripture often makes use of these expressions to denote the favours of God towards his children, and the faithfulness wherewith he performs the promises he has made them.

*Ver. 15. Then she let them down, &c.*] Having thus mutually given their word to each other, she took advantage of the darkness of the night, to let them down by means of a cord, through a window of her house which opened to the country. This house was built *upon the wall*, or in the wall itself of the city, very near the gate. One of the fronts looked into the city; the other out of it.

*Ver. 16. And she said unto them, &c.*] It is not probable that the conversation which begins at this, and ends at the 22d verse, was held under Rahab's window. Nothing could have been more imprudent. She certainly gave them this excellent advice on dismissing them, immediately before she let them down. We should therefore translate, *and she had said unto them, Get you, &c.* that is, "Take care not to keep the road to Jordan, for you will be discovered: first, retire to the mountains on the borders of this territory; conceal yourselves in some cave, and do not make your appearance till after three days; at the end of that time, the king's people will certainly not think of any further search for you, and you will easily escape." But why (it may be asked) does Rahab suppose that three days will be spent in searching for the spies, since it is but two leagues, or two and a half, from Jericho to Jordan? To which it may be answered, that by *three days* she meant, properly speaking, but one day and two nights, apprehending that the officers of the court, who went out by night, would spend all the next day in looking for them, and return early on the third day.

17 And the men said unto her, We *will be* blameless of this thine oath which thou hast made us swear.

18 Behold, *when* we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee.

19 And it shall be, *that* whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood *shall be* upon his head, and we *will be* guiltless: and whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood *shall be* on our head, if *any* hand be upon him.

20 And if thou utter this our business, then we will be quit of thine oath which thou hast made us to swear.

21 And she said, According unto your words, so *be* it. And she sent them away, and they departed: and she bound the scarlet line in the window.

22 And they went, and came unto the

mountain, and abode there three days, until the pursuers were returned: and the pursuers sought *them* throughout all the way, but found *them* not.

23 ¶ So the two men returned, and descended from the mountain, and passed over, and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and told him all *things* that befel them:

24 And they said unto Joshua, Truly the LORD hath delivered into our hands all the land; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us.

### C H A P. III.

*Joshua and the people come to Jordan: the priests go before, bearing the ark; which standing on the bank of Jordan, the waters are divided, and all the people pass through the river as on dry ground.*

[Before Christ 1451.]

**A**ND Joshua rose early in the morning; and they removed from Shittim, and came to Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before they passed over.

day. Or, perhaps, she had learned that they would go about on all sides for three days together, in order to discover the spies; and, reasoning from this conjecture, she counsels the spies to hide themselves closely for three days; because that, after so long a time, it was evident the king's people, being tired with their fruitless search, would think no more about them.

*Ver. 17—20. And the men said unto her, &c.]* Before they left her house, they had answered her request with respect to her security; as they not only engaged themselves to perform it, but also settled with her about the token which was to be her safeguard, and to assist them in keeping their word. This token was a *line of scarlet thread*, according to our version. But it is not quite clear that שני *shani* specifies the colour of this line. The word comes from שנה *shanah*, i. e. *to double*; so that it may signify in this place, a *double, strong, well-twisted line*, the same as the spies made use of to descend from Rahab's window. Gataker is of this opinion. However, setting one conjecture against another, it must be confessed, that that founded on the most common signification of the word שני *sheni*, according to the ancient versions, seems to deserve the preference. It is certain that the LXX, Chaldee and Syriac, understand by *sheni*, the colour of scarlet, or, at least, *red*; and we may suppose that these ancient interpreters understood the language of the Old Testament a little better than our modern critics. The Hebrew word תיקוּת *tikuath*, rather signifies a *riband*, or a *web*, than a *line*. We may judge of this by the analogy of the expression with others similar to it. *Kevai*, in the Chaldee, is a *web: kevai, cobwebs*; and *mikweb*, 1 Kings, x. 28. seems to signify

*cloth*. Besides, a *scarlet line* would not have been remarkable enough to serve as a safe-guard to Rahab. It is more natural to suppose, that there was in the apartment, where she communed with the spies, some piece of stuff of a red colour; and that it was this which they directed her to hang at the window for her security. See Le Clerc and Calmet.

*Ver. 21. And she bound the scarlet line in the window]* It is pretty generally supposed, that Rahab bound it there immediately, and there left it till Joshua made himself master of Jericho. But, as this affectation might have made her suspected by the people of the city, it has seemed most reasonable to others to suppose, that Rahab did not place this token at the window till the army of Israel had approached the city.

*Ver. 22, &c. And they went, &c.]* The risk they had run took from them the desire of making fresh inquiries, which might have been as dangerous as useless, having already received sufficient information from Rahab at Jericho. Supplied with provisions, therefore, they concealed themselves in the neighbouring mountains; and on the third day after their departure from that city, having repassed the Jordan, returned to the camp of Joshua, and gave him an account of their enterprize; who, doubtless, could not but be extremely rejoiced at having met with better success in his choice of emissaries, than Moses had before done on a like occasion.

### C H A P. III.

*Ver. 1. And Joshua rose early in the morning, &c.]* Early the next morning, after he had ordered the army to make all

2 ¶ And it came to pass after three days, that the officers went through the host;

3 And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it.

4 Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed *this* way heretofore.

5 ¶ And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves: for to-morrow the LORD will do wonders among you.

6 And Joshua spake unto the priests, saying, Take up the ark of the covenant, and pass over before the people. And they took up the ark of the covenant, and went before the people.

7 ¶ And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee.

all necessary provision for speedily entering the enemy's country, (chap. i. 10, 11.) he raised the camp; and the Israelites, who were at Shittim from the fifth day of the eleventh month of the fortieth year after their departure out of Ægypt, advanced to the banks of the Jordan.

*And lodged there before they passed over]* The French version renders this, *and lodged there that night*; and the Vulgate, *they came to Jordan, where they tarried three days*. The truth is, that the Hebrew word *jalinu*, signifies not only to *pass the night*, but also to *tarry* some time; to *stop*. Every one agrees, that God chose that the miraculous passage of the Jordan should be performed in the day-time, either that the prodigy might be more incontestable, or that it might spread more terror among the Canaanites.

*Ver. 2. And—after three days—the officers went through the host]* Not that they passed through it after the people had continued three days on the banks of the Jordan, but at the end of the three days mentioned chap. i. 10, 11. in which we follow Usher's calculation. Immediately on Joshua's taking upon him the conduct of Israel, he sent spies to make a discovery of Jericho and its environs: after which, he proclaimed in the camp, that they were to prepare themselves for marching at the first notice; and three days after this proclamation, he issued a second, which is that now in question.

*Ver. 3. When ye see the ark—and the priests the Levites bearing it]* See Numb. iv. 15. The Levites of the family of Kohath were appointed to the office of carrying the ark of the covenant; but, in extraordinary cases, this care was committed to the priests, who are here called the Levites, for a reason given in a former place. See Deut. xvii. 9.

*Then ye shall remove, &c.]* Whereas in common marches the ark was carried in the middle of the camps, as we read Numb. ii. 17. God on this occasion would have it carried in the front, or at the head of the whole army, as it had been at the first march which was made on leaving mount Sinai. Numb. x. 33.

*Ver. 4. There shall be a space, &c.]* The ark here supplying, in some measure, the place of the miraculous cloud which had guided the Israelites in their several encampments, and which, for that purpose, had always marched before them; it was necessary that it should be carried at the head of the people. But, on the other hand, whereas in the common marches there was little space between the ark and the body of the army, God, on this occasion, re-

quired the Israelites to leave betwixt it and the head of their camp a distance of about 2000 cubits, i. e. 3500 feet, more or less; for, in a great army, the marshalling can hardly be perfect. But wherefore this disposition? Why this distance between the ark and the camp of the Israelites? The reason is evident from the words immediately following: it was in order that the Israelites *might know the way*, &c. in order that it might serve as a signal to the whole army, instead of the miraculous pillar, which then probably ceased to conduct the Israelites in their marches. We may also add two other reasons: First, That God was desirous it should appear in a sensible manner to all Israel, that the sacred symbol of his presence had no need of a guard; that it could run no risk from enemies, at what distance soever from the army; and, consequently, that the Israelites themselves had nothing to apprehend under so high a protection. Secondly, That, by this arrangement, God chose to remove from the Israelites every pretence for looking closely into this sacred ark, which, most probably, was uncovered in the passage over Jordan; whereas in common marches it was covered with several veils. Calmet observes, that the words, *come not near unto it*, are not in the Hebrew; and he confines the sense of the words addressed by Joshua to the Israelites to this: "Be cautious of approaching the ark; follow it afar off, without deviating from the way which it will shew you: for it goes before to open you a new and extraordinary road," &c.

*Ver. 5. And Joshua said unto the people]* He also spake to the people the night before their passage over the Jordan; and as the matter was important, it is very evident that he went himself from tribe to tribe to give the orders in question.

*Sanctify yourselves]* Though the sacred historian does not say in what this sanctification was to consist, there is scarcely room to doubt that it was in the same things as God had already required on similar occasions; Gen. xxxv. 2. Exod. xix. 10, 11. Numb. ix. 18. But to these purifications we are to add the purification of the mind and heart, of which the former were but symbols and assistants. The essential point was, to prepare themselves, by recollection and prayer, to behold the marvellous effects of the divine power with becoming respect, fear, gratitude, confidence, and devotion; without which, in vain had the Israelites washed their clothes, and shunned all kinds

8 And thou shalt command the priests that bear the ark of the covenant, saying, When ye are come to the brink of the water of Jordan, ye shall stand still in Jordan.

9 ¶ And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, Come hither, and hear the words of the LORD your God.

10 And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God *is* among you, and *that* he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites.

11 Behold, the ark of the covenant of the LORD of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan.

12 Now therefore take ye twelve men out of the tribes of Israel, out of every tribe a man.

13 And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, *that* the waters of Jordan shall be cut off *from* the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand upon an heap.

kinds of corporeal impurities: so that there is no doubt that the purification of the soul was what Joshua principally required of them.

*Ver. 7. And the Lord said unto Joshua]* It was not merely of himself that Joshua gave to the priests the orders mentioned in the foregoing verse. Immediately on the priests' approaching the sanctuary, a voice issued from it, and spake to Joshua as in this and the subsequent verse. *This day*, viz. the 10th of the first month, called *Nisan*, was the day on which the law enjoined the paschal lamb to be fet apart from the flock, to be offered four days after.

*Will I begin, &c.]* "This day, after having raised thee to the rank which Moses occupied, I proceed to signalize the first-fruits of thy ministry by prodigies, which shall convince all Israel that thou art the lawful inter-preter of my commands, the respectable executor of my counsels; and that they are to place no less confidence in thee, than they did in Moses." It is remarkable, that from the time of Moses to that of Saul, God always signified to the people by some miracle the choice he had made of the person who was to govern them.

*Ver. 8. When ye are come to the brink, &c.]* The Hebrew is, *so soon as ye are come to the extremity of the water*: by which we are certainly to understand the eastern limit of the river, whose waters were now out beyond the banks; just as if Joshua had said to the priests, "Without waiting till you are entered into the common bed of Jordan, as soon as your feet are wetted with its waters, stop, and there rest, till you see what the divine power will effect." Some able interpreters understand here, by the *extremity of the water*, the western bank of the river; supposing, that the priests had order to cross the river immediately, without stopping till they came to the other side of the land: while others conjecture, that the priests remained upon the eastern bank of the Jordan till all the people were gone over. We prefer, however, the opinion of those, who say, that the priests, having first wetted their feet in the waters of the Jordan, stopped there some time, till, one part of the waters having run off, they advanced into the middle of the channel, and did not go from thence till the whole people had passed over. This explanation seems to be the most simple, and the best adapted to the words of this verse, compared with those of ver. 15.

*Ver. 9, 10. And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, &c.]* After giving God's orders to the priests, Joshua communicated them to the Israelites at the door of the tabernacle, making them sensible of their felicity in a dependence upon a Deity who was the *living God*, in opposition to the idols of the heathen, who were as impotent as lifeless; whereas the LORD, the Sovereign of heaven and earth, did whatever pleased him. He insists on this great God's being *among them*; that is, that he protected them in a singular manner, and that the miracles which he was about to perform in their sight, to facilitate their passage over the Jordan, would be a sure warrant for the accomplishment of the promises he had given them, of subduing to their arms the seven nations which inhabited the land of Canaan.

*Ver. 12. Now, therefore, take ye twelve men, &c.]* Whenever the Scripture speaks of the twelve tribes, that of Levi is comprised in them, except in those places which respect the division of the territories of the land of Canaan; in which last case the tribe of Levi is excluded, but that of Joseph makes two, viz. Manasseh and Ephraim. This taking a man out of each tribe was to do what we shall observe afterwards, ch. iv. 2, &c.

*Ver. 13. The waters of Jordan shall be cut off, &c.]* "The moment that the priests, bearing the ark, shall set foot in the waters of Jordan, that river shall open a wide passage over against the place where they enter on your right, towards the head or springs of the flood: the course of the waters being suspended, they shall accumulate, and form, as it were, a wall, not a drop being suffered to run down; while, on your left, they shall flow on to the Dead Sea, and thus leave dry a considerable extent of the river's channel."

"With respect to the rivers, (says Dr. Shaw, in his Travels,) the Jordan is not only the most considerable in the Holy Land, but, next to the Nile, is by far the largest I have seen either in the Levant or Barbary. I could not, however, compute it to be more than thirty yards broad; but this is made up by its depth, which even at the brink I found to be nine feet. If then we take this, during the whole year, for the mean depth of the stream, which runs about two miles an hour, the Jordan will daily discharge into the Dead Sea about

14 ¶ And it came to pass, when the people removed from their tents, to pass over Jordan, and the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people;

15 And as they that bare the ark were

come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest,)

16 That the waters which came down from

“ 6,090,000 tuns of water. Such a quantity of water daily received without increasing the limits of that sea or lake, has made some conjecture, that it is absorbed by the burning sands; and others, that it is carried off through subterraneous cavities; or that it has a communication with the Serbonic Lake. But if the Dead Sea is, according to the general computation, 72 miles long, and 18 broad, by allowing, according to Mr. Halley’s observation, 6914 tons of vapour for every square mile, there will be daily drawn up in clouds to refresh the earth with rain or dew 8,960,000 tons, which is near one third more than is brought into it by this river.

“ As to the bitumen for which this lake has been always remarkable, I was told, that it is raised at certain times from the bottom in large hemispheres, which, on their touching the surface, and being acted on by the external air, burst with great smoke and noise, and disperse themselves in a thousand pieces. This, however, only happens near the shore; for in greater depths the eruptions are supposed to discover themselves only in the columns of smoke that are sometimes observed to arise from the lake. This bitumen is probably accompanied, on its rising, with sulphur; as both are found promiscuously on the shore. The latter exactly resembles common native sulphur; and the former is brittle, yielding, upon friction, or being set on fire, a fetid smell; it is also as black as jet, and exactly of the same shining appearance.”

REFLECTIONS.—God, being now about to bring his people into the land of promise under their new general, is pleased,

1. To put a mark of distinguished honour upon him, by speaking to him from the mercy-seat, before the ark was removed; assuring him publicly of his presence with him at the banks of Jordan, as distinguishably as it had been with Moses at the Red Sea; and the priests themselves are to be under his direction, and receive their orders from him. *Note;* (1.) Those who honour God, he will honour. (2.) It was at Bethabara, the place where Joshua passed, that Jesus was baptized, and entered upon his ministry of bringing God’s Israel to their rest in glory. (3.) It is the duty of magistrates to stir up ministers to their work, as it should be their delight to be ready to execute every plan proposed for the good of immortal souls.

2. Joshua communicates to the people God’s design of dividing the waters of Jordan, and, from such a miraculous instance of God’s favour to them, infers the certain victory which they should gain over all their enemies. He, who went before them down into Jordan, would go up before them utterly to expel the nations of Canaan; and when they had seen with their eyes the waters dried up, they

might no more doubt their possessing the land whither they were thus led. *Note;* The wondrous preservations and the repeated mercies that every believer is daily receiving from God, should be improved as a comfortable ground of confidence in futurity. He who leads us through the dangers of to-day will preserve us amid the trials of to-morrow; and as we have found him our support in life, we shall also find him our strength and comfort in death.

*Ver. 14—16.* And it came to pass, when the people removed from their tents, &c.] This was on Friday the 10th of the first month of *Abib*, or *Nisan*, which answers to our 30th of April. On this great day we see the people of Israel, preceded by the priests bearing the ark, begin their march towards Jordan, and every thing that Joshua had foretold accomplished in the most marvellous manner. See Univ. Hist. and Bedford’s Scripture Chronology.

*Ver. 15.* (Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest)] The Jordan overflows at the time of barley harvest, (1 Chron. xii. 15.) at the beginning of the summer, contrary to other rivers, which are never higher than in winter, those rivers in Europe excepted, whose source being in high mountains, covered for a long time with snow, they are never more swelled than in summer. The melting of the snows on Lebanon, at the foot of which are the springs of the Jordan, causes this increase of its waters. It does not, however, always happen at the beginning of the summer. Maundrell, who was upon the banks of the river on the 30th of March 1697, found it no way swelled; but, as he says, perhaps the force of its current, which is very rapid, may have rendered the channel deeper; or the Jordan may now diffuse its streams into some other place than that where this accurate and learned traveller crossed it. See Travels, p. 82. Doubdan, who was there in 1652, about the latter end of April, saw its waters disturbed, and ready to overflow. We can neither contest the fact, therefore, nor elude the consequence of it; viz. that the miracle of the passage through this river dry-shod was so much the greater, as it happened not at a time when its waters were low, and in a narrow channel, but, on the contrary, when, swelled by the melting of the snows, they rose above its banks. Besides, what Maundrell observes of the great rapidity and width of the Jordan, is confirmed by various credible travellers. Its channel is no less than sixty feet wide in the narrowest parts. It is not surprizing, therefore, that the Scripture, and profane authors, speak of it always as of a great river; and though it should be much smaller now than anciently, this is nothing to be wondered at, when we consider how many other changes have happened upon the surface of the globe. We cannot conclude this note without remarking, that what we before said respecting the *Jordan*, on Gen. xiii. 11. needs a supplement. The celebrated Reland derives its name from

above stood *and* rose up upon an heap very far from the city Adam, that *is* beside Zaretan: and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, *even* the salt sea, failed, *and* were

cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho.

17 And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry

*Jadar*, which signifies to *descend*, to *flow*; and he gives it but one source, namely, the lake *Phiala*; asserting this to be the opinion of Josephus, *Antiq. lib. iii. c. 18. lib. viii. c. 3.* though the matter is much disputed; and Mr. Roque, in his *Travels to Syria and mount Lebanon*, seems to have solidly confuted that opinion, shewing that Josephus commonly speaks of the origin of the Jordan under the name of *Fountains*, in the plural number; *Antiq. lib. v. c. 1, 2. lib. xv. c. 13. and lib. xviii. c. 3.* to which he adds the testimony of several modern travellers respecting the two sources of the Jordan. The Arabs, at this time, call the river *Arden* and *Ordonnon*; and the Persians *Herdum*. In the geographical account of Nubia, it goes by the name of *Zaccar*, which, in Arabic, signifies *full* and *swelled*; epithets which perfectly agree with this river.

*Ver. 16. The waters which came down from above, stood, &c.]* Instead of continuing their course, being arrested by the divine hand, they accumulated, and formed as it were a mountain, which is the rendering of the Vulgate. Or else, as we may plainly conceive, being obliged to go back towards their source, they *rose up in heaps* for a vast way backward, *very far*, as the text expresses it, *from the city of Adam, which is beside Zaretan*. This city of Adam is not known; and the situation of Zaretan is in dispute. Perhaps the most probable account that can be given, is, that Zaretan was placed to the west of the Jordan, a little below Bethsan, or Scythopolis, which stood opposite to Succoth; *1 Kings, iv. 12. vii. 46.* Now Succoth lay on the other side of the river, (see *Gen. xxxiii. 17. Josh. xiii. 27.*) not far from the lake of Gennezareth; consequently, Adam was on the east side, but more northerly than Succoth. Now, as the Israelites crossed the Jordan, as it is supposed, by the borders of Bethabara, where St. John afterwards baptized, (see on *ver. 17.*) the waters must have gone back the whole computed distance from Bethabara to Zaretan.

*And these that came down toward the sea of the plain—failed]* That is, the waters which were below the place where the Israelites passed, continued to flow, and lost themselves in the sea of the plain, otherwise called the Salt or Dead Sea; thus leaving dry a great part of the river's channel. From the place where the waters stopped, down to the Dead Sea, is reckoned sixteen or eighteen miles. Such, therefore, was the breadth of the passage which opened to the Israelites, opposite to, and in the face of the city of Jericho.

*Ver. 17. And the priests—stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, &c.]* Being come to the middle of the channel, they remained there till the whole of the people were gone over, and waited the orders of Joshua to rejoin the army. We apprehend that the passage was effected thus: The priests, bearing the ark at two thousand cubits distance from the camp, being arrived at the river's side, its waters divided from one shore to the other. While the miracle was performing, they stopped; and then the di-

vision of the waters being finished, those above to their right being filled up, and those below having run off, the priests again moved forward, entered the channel of the river, and confidently posted themselves in the midst, at a nearly equal distance from the two shores, where they remained till the tribes, who filed off about two thousand cubits below, had entirely crossed over, and gained the other bank: so that the ark kept between the heaped-up waters and the people, as if to preserve the latter, and confirm them against the fear of their unexpected return. Some authors represent the whole people as divided into two columns, and so passing on each side the ark, at two thousand cubits distance. But this is entirely without proof. The constancy of the priests, on this occasion, bears very honourable testimony to their faith: for we may suppose that it took up a considerable time for the passage of six hundred thousand fighting men, beside the numerous people that accompanied them, with their baggage and provisions. The place where the Israelites crossed, has since gone by the before-mentioned name of *Bethabara*, which signifies *house of the passage*. It is spoken of *John, i. 28.*

Thus then was accomplished that memorable event, the circumstances of which we have endeavoured to explain, and the same whereof in every respect merited a transmission to posterity. I. The truth of the fact cannot be disputed by those who believe the Scriptures. To deny that the Israelites crossed the Jordan dry-shod, as Joshua relates it, would be to belie the authenticity of the sacred records. Much less, II. can one help remarking in this event divers miraculous circumstances. The waters of the river suspended and forced to go back in part toward their source; its channel instantly dried up, and none of the neighbouring towns appearing to have been immersed by the inundations of the floods, repulsed as they were to so considerable a distance; the time which God chose for the working of this miracle, when, by the melting of the snows, the river was swelled beyond its banks; the prediction of Joshua respecting the event; the supernatural terror which hindered the inhabitants of Jericho from laying the least obstacle in the way of the Israelites' passage through the river, which served them as a bulwark: all these circumstances, and others which concurred, allow us not to overlook the infinite power of the Lord of the whole earth; of that same hand, which, forty years before, had opened to the Israelites a passage through the very depths of the Red Sea. In vain is the attempt to depreciate this miracle, by comparing it with some events recorded in profane history. Who knows not that winds, and other natural causes, have frequently turned rivers backward to their source? But not to mention that history says nothing of any winds stopping the waters of Jordan, what wind could have retained them so long? retained one part, and let the other part flow off; and displayed this power at a fixed time, foreseen and foretold? Have then the worshippers of the true God less reason to believe his power great

ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan.

CHAP. IV.

*Twelve stones are taken for a memorial out of Jordan: twelve other stones are set up in the midst thereof: the people pass through the river, and Joshua erects in Gilgal the twelve stones taken out of Jordan.*

[Before Christ 1451.]

**A**ND it came to pass, when all the people were clean passed over Jordan, that the LORD spake unto Joshua, saying,

2 Take you twelve men out of the people, out of every tribe a man,

3 And command ye them, saying, Take you hence out of the midst of Jordan, out of the place where the priests' feet stood firm,

twelve stones, and ye shall carry them over with you, and leave them in the lodging-place, where ye shall lodge this night.

4 Then Joshua called the twelve men, whom he had prepared of the children of Israel, out of every tribe a man:

5 And Joshua said unto them, Pass over before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of Jordan, and take ye up every man of you a stone upon his shoulder, according unto the number of the tribes of the children of Israel:

6 That this may be a sign among you, *that* when your children ask *their fathers* in time to come, saying, What *mean* ye by these stones?

7 Then ye shall answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark

great enough for the performance of such a miracle, than the heathens had to attribute to their gods miracles entirely similar? The latter were mistaken in the facts, and ascribed to their idols a power of which they were incapable: but what difficulty can there be for the God of heaven and earth to suspend the course of those laws of nature whereof he is the author? III. To conclude: It cannot be said, that we here suppose a miracle unnecessarily. On the passage of the Jordan depended, in a great measure, the conquest of the land of Canaan. The people of that country apprehended themselves perfectly secure behind that deep and rapid flood; and the use of pontoons, or bridges of boats, which we now employ for crossing of rivers, being then unknown, there was no probability that three millions of souls should venture to undertake to ford it. This sudden opening of a passage to the Israelites through the channel of the river, therefore, was a decisive stroke; it was to inspire them with courage for every attempt; it was, on the other hand, to throw their enemies into a terror and fright, of which it was easy to foresee the consequences. At the report of the waters of Jordan being miraculously separated, to facilitate the passage of God's people, *their hearts melted, neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel*; chap. v. 1. See Scheuchzer, *Physique sacrée* in loc. and Grew's *Cosmol. Sacr.* lib. iv. c. 5.

REFLECTIONS.—Now was the glorious power of God to be magnified for his Israel. Advancing under his orders, though no way appeared, the priests reached the bank of the river, which was at this time much wider and deeper than usual. But no sooner had their feet touched the waters, than they fled before them; part rolled backward to their source, part ran down into the lake of Sodom, and left a space of sixteen or eighteen miles dry, for the ransomed of the Lord to pass over. *Note*; (1.) The greatness of our difficulties shall only the more magnify the power of God in overcoming

them for us. (2.) When we have an interest in a covenant God, and follow in simplicity the ark Christ, we shall find the passage of death as easy, as to Israel it was to pass through the bed of the river when the waters were dried up. To assure the people of the safety of the passage, God's ark stands in the midst till all are passed over: to encourage them to venture through, God's priests, as they entered first, stay till the last man has gained the opposite shore. *Note*; God's ministers must be the first to brave danger, and the last to regard their own safety. The place of their passage was opposite to Jericho, and not a man was lost by the way. It could not but strike terror and confusion into their enemies to see such a miracle; it could not fail at the same time to inspire themselves with confidence of success. What city could stand before those to whom the very elements ministered, and whom the omnipotent God led as their captain! *Note*; Nothing can withstand the faithful believer in his passage to glory: in vain the world, or sin, or death, obstruct the way; God will cleave before him the deep waters, and make him more than conqueror.

CHAP. IV.

*Ver. 5. And Joshua said unto them, Pass over before the ark*] Or, *Pass back again directly unto the ark.* These twelve men re-entered the channel of the Jordan, and, being dispensed from the prohibition to approach the ark, came near the place where the priests stood, and each loaded himself with a stone as big as he could carry, and such as might afterwards attest to each several tribe that he had seen the bed of the river dry, and the miracle prolonged till the entire execution of the commands of God.

*Ver. 7. Then ye shall answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off*] "You shall seize this opportunity to inform them of the wonderful things which God has done for the opening to you an entrance into the land of Canaan;



of the covenant of the LORD; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever.

8 And the children of Israel did so as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones out of the midst of Jordan, as the LORD spake unto Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, and carried them over with them unto the place where they lodged, and laid them down there.

9 ¶ And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests which bare the ark of the covenant stood: and they are there unto this day.

10 ¶ For the priests which bare the ark stood in the midst of Jordan, until every thing was finished that the LORD commanded Joshua to speak unto the people, according to all that Moses commanded Joshua: and the people hastened and passed over.

11 And it came to pass, when all the people were clean passed over, that the ark of the LORD passed over, and the priests, in the presence of the people.

12 And the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh, passed over armed before the children of Israel, as Moses spake unto them:

13 About forty thousand prepared for war

“Canaan; and you shall endeavour to transmit to them, together with the particular facts, those sentiments wherewith I presume you are animated. So long as the nation shall subsist, these stones shall be a perpetual monument to it of your miraculous passage through Jordan, as on this solemn day.” We have elsewhere remarked, that it was the custom of all antiquity to erect stones as a monument of covenants, victories, and other important events, whose memory they wished to perpetuate. And though there was no inscription upon these stones, yet the number of them, and their position, was sufficient to denote some memorable thing; for they were evidently placed in a sandy spot, where there were no others of that magnitude.

*Ver. 9. And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan.]* Beside the monument which was erected in the lodging-place or camp, Joshua caused other twelve large stones to be placed in the channel of the river, exactly on the spot where the ark had stopped while the people crossed over; and the design of this was the same as of that in the camp. It may be asked, To what purpose was this invisible monument, for ever concealed under the waters of Jordan? We answer, perhaps these twelve stones were larger than the twelve former. It is no where said of these last, that they were carried upon men's shoulders. Perhaps they were heaped one upon the other, and thus formed a monument, visible when the waters were very low; though it may be a question, whether the rapidity of the flood would allow them to remain long in that position. Perhaps, too, these waters were so transparent, that the stones might be discerned, if not on the shore, at least in crossing the river by boat. And, lastly, it was not absolutely necessary that this monument should be visible. See Houbigant's note on the place.

*And they are there unto this day.]* Hobbes, and those who think like him, are not the only persons who have concluded from these words, that Joshua was not the author of this book, but that it was written long after his time; Masius and Grotius have thought the same. We do not see, however, why Joshua might not have added these words, on revising his book in the latter part of his life;

which he probably did (see on Deut. x. 5. xi. 4. and the learned Huet's *Demonstr. Evang. prop. iv. c. 24.*; or, indeed, the words in question might have been added by some author equally inspired by God. With respect to the fact itself, both the monuments set up by Joshua in memory of the passage through Jordan, if we may believe Eusebius and others, existed for many centuries after their erection.

*Ver. 10. According to all that Moses commanded Joshua.]* Some interpreters are of opinion from these words, that Moses, before his death, gave some intimation and orders to Joshua respecting the passage of the Jordan, and the erection of the monuments destined to perpetuate the memory of that event. But the whole meaning of the expression seems to be, that Joshua behaved on this occasion with all that prudence, confidence in God, fidelity and courage, wherewith Moses had wished to inspire him. See Deut. iii. 28.

*And the people hastened and passed over.]* This may be understood of a certain number of Israelites, who stayed behind to attend the motions of the ark; or of those twelve men who had reared the twelve stones in the bottom of the river. But where is the difficulty of supposing with some, that the Israelites hastened, either to complete their passage before night came on, or because the sight of the waters, suspended on their right, struck them with terror? In so numerous a multitude, it is not credible that all hearts were animated with the same confidence. We should apprehend, therefore, that these words insinuate, that fear really did hasten the Israelites' march; while the priests, on the contrary, who bare the ark, continued unshaken in their post, till, there remaining no one upon the eastern shore, nor in the bed of the river, they moved on also to cross it in sight of all Israel, who, from the western bank, beheld them with admiration.

*Ver. 12, 13. And the children of Reuben, &c.]* In conformity to their engagement, (Numb. xxxii. 20, 21. 27. and chap. i. 13.) these two tribes and a half supplied a body which passed over the Jordan, marching into the enemy's country at the head of all the people. This was evidently a chosen troop; for in the numbering, which had

passed over before the LORD unto battle, to the plains of Jericho.

14 ¶ On that day the LORD magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him, as they feared Moses, all the days of his life.

15 ¶ And the LORD spake unto Joshua, saying,

16 Command the priests that bear the ark of the testimony, that they come up out of Jordan.

17 Joshua therefore commanded the priests, saying, Come ye up out of Jordan.

18 And it came to pass, when the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD were come up out of the midst of Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up unto

the dry land, that the waters of Jordan returned unto their place, and flowed over all his banks, as *they did* before.

19 ¶ And the people came up out of Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and encamped in Gilgal, in the east border of Jericho.

20 ¶ And those twelve stones, which they took out of Jordan, did Joshua pitch in Gilgal.

21 And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What *mean* these stones?

22 Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land.

23 For the LORD your God dried up the

had been made a year before, of the soldiers which each tribe could furnish, 43,730 were found in the single tribe of Reuben, 40,500 in that of Gad, and 26,350 in the half tribe of Manasseh; in all 110,580 fighting men. See Numb. xxvi. 7. 18. 34. Most of them, therefore, remained on this side the Jordan, to guard the country which those tribes had conquered, and which had been given to them.

*Armed*] Or, *Ready-girt*.

*Passed over—to the plains of Jericho*] These 40,000 men formed the vanguard of the army, and took their march across the plains which lay betwixt Jordan and Jericho, in the place where the enemy's army should naturally have posted itself, either to dispute the passage of the Israelites through the river, or to defend the country. Thus they went on in order of battle *before the ark*, and, as it seems, at 2000 cubits from it.

*Ver. 14. On that day the Lord magnified Joshua, &c.*] By the miracle which had just given happy success to that general's first enterprize, and which acquired to him the same confidence and respect from the Israelites, that Moses had before acquired from the miraculous passage of the Red Sea. Thus the Lord gloriously fulfilled his word, and accomplished his promise made to Joshua in the foregoing chapter, ver. 7.

*Ver. 15—18. And the Lord spake unto Joshua, &c.*] Before the people advanced into the country, Joshua had commanded the priests, who bare the ark, to quit the channel of the river, and come to the western bank; and as soon as they had gained this side, and their feet were beyond the place to which the waters had formerly reached, we see that the waters gradually resumed their wonted course, and flowed, as before, over the two shores. Thus every thing in this memorable event was miraculous.

*Ver. 19. And the people came up out of Jordan on the tenth day, &c.*] On the fifteenth of this same month the people had departed from Ægypt; so that forty years, wanting five days, had elapsed from the first of these events to the

second. Gilgal was situate between Jordan and Jericho, ten furlongs from the city, and fifty from the river, according to Josephus's calculation. We shall see in the subsequent chapter, ver. 9. what occasioned the giving the name of *Gilgal* to this first encampment of the Israelites in the land of Canaan, and consequently to the city afterwards built there. Joshua had there his camp, or, as we now express it, his quarters, during all the time that the war lasted, and till the division of the country among the tribes. There the Israelites were circumcised; there they celebrated, for the first time, in the land of Canaan, the passover; and there the tabernacle was fixed and erected, till Palestine being subdued by the victorious arms of the Hebrews, they placed it at Shilo. Gilgal, however, always continued to be a town of importance, as we may see from divers passages of Scripture, particularly Judg. ii. 1. 1 Sam. xi. 14, 15. xiii. 12, &c.

*Ver. 20. And those twelve stones—did Joshua pitch in Gilgal*] Josephus relates the matter as if the Israelites had reared these stones in the form of an altar. It is more probable, that, in order to represent the number of the tribes, they were pitched each upon its basis, as so many small pillars, perhaps in three lines, and probably on an elevation.

*Ver. 23. For the Lord your God dried up the waters of Jordan*] Joshua, considering the people of God here morally, as one person, speaks to them as if they had been of the number of those who had crossed the Red Sea on dry land. He wishes, by the miracle that God had just wrought for them, to recal to their minds that which had been wrought for their fathers, that by entertaining just sentiments of gratitude, as well for the favour they had so lately received, as that of which they still reaped the blessings, though granted to their fathers, they might entirely devote themselves to their nations' perpetual benefactor. So that hence we learn, that nothing is more reasonable and just than to see among a people children celebrating with gratitude the deliverances and blessings of heaven towards

waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up from before us, until we were gone over :

24 That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the LORD, that it is mighty : that ye might fear the LORD your God for ever.

### CHAP. V.

*Joshua, at the command of God, circumcises the Israelites. They celebrate the passover at Gilgal. The captain of the Lord's host appeareth to Joshua.*

[Before Christ 1451.]

**A**ND it came to pass, when all the kings of the Amorites, which were on the

side of Jordan westward, and all the kings of the Canaanites, which were by the sea, heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel, until we were passed over, that their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel.

2 ¶ At that time the LORD said unto Joshua, Make thee sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time.

3 And Joshua made him sharp knives, and circumcised the children of Israel at the hill of the foreskins.

4 And this is the cause why Joshua did cir-

towards their forefathers ; inasmuch as they themselves gather the fruits derived from them, either by their continuance as a body of people, or by the peculiar privileges they enjoy, and which they could not enjoy without that continuance.

*Ver. 24. That all the people of the earth might know, &c.]* " That all the nations in this country and its adjacencies, " to which the fame of this prodigy shall spread itself, " may learn the infinite power of the Lord, the only true " God, to whom you peculiarly belong ; and that you, " O Israelites, especially, for whom that God hath per- " formed so many miracles, may inviolably persevere to " render him that worship and obedience which he requires " at your hands." To fear God, it is well known, has all the energy that we apply to it in this paraphrase ; and therefore the LXX have rendered the latter clause of the verse, *that ye may worship the Lord your God in every thing you do, i. e. in your whole conduct.*

### CHAP. V.

*Ver. 1. And it came to pass when all the kings of the Amorites]* We have before remarked, that these were the most valiant of all the Canaanites. The next clause seems added to shew, that besides the two kings of the Amorites, Sihon and Og, whom the Israelites had already subdued, on the east of Jordan, there were other kings of the same nation on the west side of the river, where the Israelites now were. And it is not improbable, that these kings commanded the Hittites, Hivites, and Jebusites, as well as the Amorites.

*Ver. 2. At that time the Lord said unto Joshua]* This was the morning after the passage, the 11th day of the first month, as the learned Usher and others have very probably conjectured.

*Make thee sharp knives]* Or, as in the Margin of our Bibles, *knives of flints* ; which stones might be found in great plenty on the adjacent mountains : and, as Theodoret observes, perhaps, after a pilgrimage of forty years in the solitary wilderness of Arabia, the Hebrews might not be

provided with knives of iron or steel, such as we now use. 'Tis very evident, that Joshua here commands them to provide knives, and it is by no means improbable that they were made of flint. The Jews acknowledge in the Talmud, that flints, glass, or quills of reed, might be used for killing of beasts. Whence Hackspan apprehends, that as knives of stone were sufficient for killing of animals, they might be employed in circumcision. He adds, however, that the rabbis forbade the use of reeds in this operation, because there was danger lest they might hurt the part. They at present circumcise in the east with knives made of stone, in imitation of Zipporah, who is said to have set the example in the circumcision of her son ; see Exod. iv. 25. but this matter is very uncertain : Be it as it may, we cannot doubt that the use of knives and axes of stone were common among the ancients. The Americans commonly make use of stones for knives, razors, and lancets. Thus every thing tends to give the Hebrew word *צור* *tzur* its natural signification, and to confirm Maimonides's translation, who renders it, not *sharp knives*, but *knives of stone*. Justin Martyr and Theodoret, who likewise give this version, think there was something mysterious in the use of these knives ; something emblematical of the spiritual circumcision of Christians ; because Jesus Christ is called a rock in 1 Cor. x. 4. See Scheuchzer on the place.

*And circumcise again the children of Israel the second time]* This badly-translated passage has given room for strange notions, both among the Jews, and with several Christian interpreters. It does not imply that they were now to be circumcised, who had already undergone that operation. Indeed, the rabbis pretend that this was the case ; and St. Augustine informs us, that some ancient doctors, on this supposition, founded a necessity of repeating baptism. But, whatever the Jews may advance respecting the imperfect manner in which circumcision was administered in the wilderness, it has no foundation but in their fancy. All that God here commands, is, " to resume the custom " of circumcision, which, generally speaking, was neglected in the desert." But if it be asked, When was this injunction to revive circumcision first given ? We answer,

cumcise: All the people that came out of Egypt, *that were* males, *even* all the men of war, died in the wilderness by the way, after they came out of Egypt.

5 Now all the people that came out were circumcised: but all the people *that were* born in the wilderness by the way as they came forth out of Egypt, *them* they had not circumcised.

6 For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people *that were* men of war, which came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD: unto whom the LORD swore that he would not shew them the land, which the LORD swore unto their fathers that he would give us, a land that floweth with milk and honey.

answer, probably at the foot of mount Sinai, in the first month of the second year after the departure from Ægypt. Some are of opinion, that the expression, *a second time*, refers to the circumcision of Abraham and his family. It is well known, that, on the 14th day of the first month, the Israelites were called to the solemn celebration of the passover; and that, according to the law, no one could share in the solemnities of that feast if uncircumcised, or even if any one of his family or household was so. Certainly then, Moses took care to have all those circumcised who had neglected in Ægypt to assume this token of the covenant: and though it be nowhere said that circumcision was so neglected in Ægypt, especially during the year in which the Israelites left it, we may easily conceive, that in their servitude, wherein they groaned under the cruel yoke of the Ægyptians, and afterwards in the long and toilsome marches which they had to make till their arrival at mount Sinai, several of them had dispensed with the performance of their duty. Perhaps, even, the frequent absence of Moses at the beginning of their stay in the neighbourhood of Sinai favoured this negligence of the parents towards their children; so that, on the eve of celebrating the passover, Moses was obliged to rectify this evil, by ordering, without delay, those to be circumcised who had neglected that sacrament. Here Joshua receives orders to require the same thing; and as this is the second time of giving that command, it is expressed in those terms which specify the repetition of it, and amounts to this, namely, *let the ceremony of circumcision, which has been so long discontinued, be renewed.*

Ver. 3. *And Joshua—circumcised the children of Israel*] He caused the commands of God to be performed by all the people, whether on this or on the other side of Jordan, and, as it appears, by all on the same day, that every Israelite might be enabled to celebrate the passover. The matter was no way difficult, as it did not signify by what hand it was effected. Father, mother, relations, friends, might all perform the operation, as well as the priests and Levites. *The bill of the foreskin* is, in the Hebrew, *Gibeath-haaraloth*, which some take to be the name of a place, as it probably was, but a place deriving its name from that ceremony.

Ver. 4—7. *And this is the cause, &c.*] The reason is clearly expressed in the text. Excepting Joshua and Caleb, all the six hundred thousand fighting men, who came out of Ægypt, had died during the forty years that the people had dwelt in the deserts of Arabia; and during this interval of time they had neglected to circumcise the male children

which were born there. But whence this negligence? It was not out of contempt, since the Scripture nowhere reproaches the Israelites on that account. But the learned have given us the following reasons for this long interruption of circumcision.

I. That the end of the ceremonial laws, especially circumcision, being to distinguish the Jews from the idolatrous nations, it was unnecessary to circumcise them in the desert, where it was not possible for them to mix with other people. This was the opinion of Theodoret and St. Jerome among the ancients; as it was of Grotius, Episcopius, and Le Clerc, among the moderns: we find it also espoused by Mr. Pyle.

II. The second and most generally received reason is, that the almost incessant motions of the Israelites, the uncertainty of the times of decamping, the barrenness of the places where they sojourned, and the inconveniences of travelling, rendering the operation very dangerous for children, God willingly dispensed with it. Some judicious rabbis have adopted this opinion; and it has been countenanced by several able commentators among us.

III. But these reasons do not seem equally satisfactory to every body. The marches of the Israelites were very far from being frequent during the last thirty-eight years of their stay in the wilderness. Besides, it would have been better to make some alteration with respect to time, and to refer this ceremony to the first encampment, instead of fixing it to the eighth day, rather than to omit it entirely; seeing that certain blessings were annexed to it. So that, in this respect, the practice of circumcision was indispensable, though the primary end of the institution was to prevent the children of Israel from forming connections with foreign nations. Add to this, that the latter consideration could not excuse them from the observation of a positive precept, even though circumcision had not been in use among any of the nations; which was by no means the case, this ceremony being practised by the Idumeans, and perhaps even by the Midianites. These, and other reflections, have determined some judicious critics to say, that circumcision was interrupted during the time that the Israelites travelled in the desert, because they did not esteem the precept of circumcision obligatory till they saw themselves settled in the land of Canaan; and so much the rather, as there was nothing in this respect prescribed on the renewing of the covenant which was made at the foot of mount Sinai. Hence we may conclude, that circumcision was not so necessary to salvation as some writers, as well Christians as Jews, have thought; particularly

7. And their children, *whom* he raised up in their stead, them Joshua circumcised: for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them by the way.

8 And it came to pass, when they had done circumcising all the people, that they

abode in their places in the camp, till they were whole.

9 And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal unto this day.

the latter, among whom some have carried their superstition so far, as to circumcise their children even dead, when they could not do it while they lived.

Lastly, a writer of great reputation has advanced a conjecture, that the *mixed multitude* of the Egyptians which followed the Israelites being an image of the calling of the Gentiles, it became necessary, that as the ceremonies, and particularly circumcision, were to be abolished; so, to take away the distinction which was between their posterity, the use of circumcision should be then suspended. Besides, God was unwilling that the suspension of this ceremony should continue till the Israelites took possession of the land of Canaan: 1st, For fear it might give room for the intrusion of Canaanites among the Hebrews: 2dly, That those who entered into the land of Canaan, being uncircumcised, as well as the children of the Egyptians, and afterwards becoming equal by circumcision, might have no opportunity to reproach them for their different original. See Allix on the Pentateuch.

Whatever may be the truth, or the different degrees of probability or strength of these reflections; it is certain, that God did not condemn the interruption of circumcision, or impute any crime to the Israelites on that account: and we may easily conceive, that the precept not being founded in nature, but merely positive and ceremonial, the argument drawn from the inconveniences of travelling was alone sufficient for dispensing with it under the divine approbation. The Israelites then only followed a maxim which they have generally followed; namely, that the administration of this sacrament may be deferred when it cannot be received without danger.

*Ver. 7. And their children—Joshua circumcised*] Putting together the chief arguments for the renewal of this ceremony, God may be said to have subjected the Israelites to it, 1. To take from them the reproach of Egypt, as it is expressed, ver. 9. 2. To enable them to celebrate the passover. 3. To confirm to them the near accomplishment of the promises made to Abraham, by that operation which was to be the seal of those promises. 4. To try the faith of the Israelites, by their submission to a command, the performance of which exposed them to be treated by their enemies as the Schechemites had been formerly by Levi and Simeon in a similar circumstance, and, perhaps, also, 5. To shew them, by his permission to administer this rite to their children, that the time of his anger had elapsed, and that he permitted them to enter into his rest.

*Ver. 8. And—the people—abode in their places—till they were whole*] They kept quiet in their tents, undisturbed by any one, till after their entire cure. The ceremony was performed the 11th of Nisan; the 13th the fore was at the worst, and on the 14th began the solemnities of the passover. As they circumcised with sharp stones, this

might contribute to hasten their cure, inasmuch as those instruments occasion less inflammation than knives or razors made of metal.

*Ver. 9. And the Lord said unto Joshua, This day, &c.]* Among many conjectures respecting the sense of these words, most interpreters have agreed to understand by *the reproach of Egypt*, uncircumcision, which rendered the Israelites like the Egyptians, and had rendered the Egyptians abominable in their sight while they were under their yoke. Spencer gives the words another meaning; understanding by *the reproach of Egypt*, that slavery which had subjected the Israelites to the Egyptians; and he thinks that circumcision took away this reproach, because it shewed, that those to whom it was administered were the children of Abraham, and the lawful heirs of that patriarch to whom the land of Canaan had been promised. But, says Mr. Saurin, however ingenious this thought may be, we must not be dazzled by it. The Israelites, who had been slaves in Egypt, were there circumcised. If, therefore, we are to understand, by *the reproach of Egypt*, the slavery under which the Israelites groaned in Egypt, and if circumcision had had the power to take away that reproach, it might have been said they were out of slavery in Egypt while in bondage there, since they were then circumcised; which implies a contradiction. Theodoret, who thinks that the Israelites had neglected circumcision in Egypt, entertains an idea nearly similar to Spencer's. He says, that the Hebrews, formerly slaves in Egypt, became lords of the country of Canaan, when, by receiving circumcision, they took upon them the mark by which they might be known as the posterity of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to whom God had given that country. Other interpreters incline to the opinion of Rabbi Levi Ben Gershom, who supposes, that the Israelites were a laughing-stock to the Egyptians, who mocked them on seeing them wander and perish in the dry deserts of Arabia, without being able to enter the land of Canaan, the possession of which they had boasted was assured to them; and that God removed this opprobrium by making them resume the token of his covenant, as a declaration of their taking possession of that country. But, considering every thing, we incline to the first explanation as the most simple. Some learned writers, by *the reproach of Egypt*, seem principally to understand indifference for religion, a propensity to idolatry, and a neglect of circumcision, which the Israelites had contracted in Egypt. The authors of the Universal History give this general elucidation of the subject: "This mark of their (the Israelites) obedience was so pleasing to God, that he told them he had now removed, or rolled away from them the reproach of Egypt; i. e. that he did no longer look upon them as uncircumcised Egyptians, but as his own people." The Israelites considered

10 ¶ And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho.

11 And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched corn in the self-same day.

considered uncircumcision as a disgrace; they found and they left the Egyptians uncircumcised; so that uncircumcision could not be better described, than by calling it *the reproach of Egypt*. But, say some, why is not uncircumcision called *the reproach of Canaan*, as well as of *Egypt*, since the Canaanites were uncircumcised as well as the Egyptians? To this we may reply: I. That the neighbouring nations mixed among the Canaanites, being the seed of Abraham by his concubines, had probably the rite of circumcision; whereas the Egyptians had it not, since they knew a child to be a Hebrew because he was circumcised. Exod. ii. 6. II. The Israelites came from Egypt; uncircumcision was a blot which they seem to have brought from thence; they might be looked upon as uncircumcised Egyptians, inasmuch as they did not apply the seal of the covenant made with their fathers, and, as it were, the voucher for their right to the land of Canaan. III. It was evidently in Egypt that their forefathers had begun to neglect circumcision, which they continued to do during their stay in the desert.

*The name of the place is called Gilgal*] Which signifies, *to roll away, cut off, remove*. There is no doubt respecting it. Josephus, however, who is followed by Theodoret, translates Gilgal, not a *rolling away, but liberty*; (Hist. Jud. l. v. c. 1.) as if this place had been so named because when the Israelites arrived there they might look upon themselves as perfectly delivered from the servitude of Egypt, and freed from the troubles they had undergone in Arabia. As to the expression, *unto this day*, see note on ch. iv. 9. Le Clerc explains it, "till the day that this book was written."

REFLECTIONS.—Safely arrived at last within the borders of the promised land, the divided waters of Jordan close, and nothing remains, but to cast out the inhabitants and possess the country. In order to which we are told, 1. What terror and dismay seized on the neighbouring kings. Who can stand before those from whose presence the swellings of affrighted Jordan retire and open a safe way for their march! Their hearts melted therefore like wax, and they gave themselves up for lost. Note; God often makes his enemies know how vain it is to contend with him; and by his secret terrors, even in the midst of life and health, brings them into the pangs of death. 2. The people halted at their first station, and Joshua, at the divine command, issues orders for a general circumcision of the people. Now, when God's goodness has triumphed over their perverseness, on admitting them into the land, he commands them to receive the seal of the covenant in token of the fulfilment of the promises made to Abraham. 3. The people readily consent; they had seen so much of God's interposition, that they were not afraid of their enemies, and were happy to lay themselves under the bonds of the covenant, that, with God's promises thus sealed to

them, they might go forth more confidently to vanquish their foes. They were owned of God, as his covenant-children, and no longer to be branded as wanderers in a wilderness; but now are entered as possessors into the long-expected inheritance. Note; (1.) The reproaches cast on God's people shall shortly be wiped away, and confusion cover their enemies. (2.) The Israel of God must circumcise the foreskin of their hearts, and cut off every corrupt and vile affection. (3.) Nothing can so infallibly assure us of inheriting the kingdom of glory, as the experience of the mortification of sin in our souls, through the work of our divine Joshua.

*Ver. 10. And the children of Israel—kept the passover*] This was the third time they had celebrated this feast: the first time was on their departure from Egypt, and the second the year following, when the tabernacle was reared at the foot of mount Sinai; so that for thirty-nine years they had not celebrated it, nor dared they so to do, being uncircumcised. Besides, this feast was established only for the time of their peaceable possession of the land of Canaan.

*In the plains of Jericho*] For this purpose, the tabernacle was set up in the middle of the camp, for sacrificing the lamb according to the law, and that those who were beyond Jordan might come to it with less difficulty than they afterwards did to Jerusalem from various parts of the Holy Land.

*Ver. 11. And they did eat of the old corn of the land, &c.*] i. e. of the corn of the preceding year, which they found in divers places, abandoned by the people on retiring to Jericho. However, the matter is not very certain, and several interpreters do not thus understand the Hebrew. They are of opinion, that it means as well the new corn as that of the foregoing year. See Poole's Synopsis. In the Hebrew it is, *they ate of the produce of the land*; and because the word עֶבֶר *abur*, which signifies the *profits*, or *produce*, comes from a root which signifies to *pass away*, we apprehend it should be translated, *produce*, or *corn of the past year*. But besides that the word עֶבֶר *abur*, which occurs here only, is for that reason of a doubtful signification, the text clearly imports, that the Israelites ate of the *produce of the ground*, עֶבֶר, the same day that they ate of *corn roasted*. They could eat roasted corn only on the 16th of the month, after the offering of the sheaf; so that it is more than probable, that their unleavened cakes were made of new corn, the same as that of which they parched the ears: it should be translated, therefore, *and they did eat of the corn of the country* (viz. of unleavened cakes, and roasted corn) *after the passover*. Though, strictly speaking, מָחָר *machar*, signifies *on the morrow*, it may also signify a more extensive term, *some one of the following days*. Had the Israelites made their unleavened cakes of the old corn, we cannot see why Joshua should have remarked their eating of it after the passover. There was nothing

12 ¶ And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.

13 ¶ And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him,

*Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?*

14 And he said, Nay; but *as* captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What faith my Lord unto his servant?

15 And the captain of the LORD's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so.

so extraordinary in that: whereas, supposing him to speak of the new corn, the reason immediately strikes one, namely, that it could not be eaten till after the passover, when the sheaf was offered. 2. Josephus starts the same supposition. 3. The ancient versions countenance it, and say simply *the corn of the country*, without distinguishing old or new.

*And parched corn*] Taken from the ears they found standing, and some of which they roasted in the fire, after offering the sheaf, or handful, which the law prescribed should be presented to the Lord.

*Ver. 12. And the manna ceased*] The Israelites having no more need of this miraculous food, by reason of the plenty of corn and other provisions which they found in the land of Canaan, God, who never works a miracle unnecessarily, ceased to shower it down from heaven. Hence we see clearly, that the manna, of which the Israelites had hitherto eaten, was an extraordinary food, and that the divine hand which had given it them for so long a time had sent it in a miraculous manner for their subsistence.

*On the morrow, &c.*] On the 14th of Nisan, they sacrificed the paschal lamb; on the 15th, i. e. according to our calculation, the same day, after sun-set, they disposed themselves for eating it, and actually did eat it. On the morrow, the 16th, after having offered to God the *homer*, they began eating the corn of the country; and the 17th, the manna ceased to fall from heaven. What supports this calculation is, that the *gomer*, or sheaf, was offered the 16th of Nisan, in broad day-light, though pretty late. Now the manna did not fall till night, or very early in the morning; so that it cannot be said to have ceased falling the same day that the Israelites began to eat of the produce of the country. This, however, seems to us to be most probable; for nothing certain can be said upon the subject.

REFLECTIONS.—The people, being prepared by circumcision, might now partake of the other grand ordinance of God; accordingly we find, that before they entered upon action they kept the passover, as prescribed, on the fourteenth day of the month, exactly forty years from their departure from *Ægypt*. *Note*; (1.) They, who would go forth with courage to fight the Lord's battles, should first solemnly devote themselves to him, and shew faith in him by the use of his sacraments. (2.) We must not expect to be fed by miracle when God puts ordinary means into our hand. (3.) Sweet and strengthening as

manna are the ordinances of grace now to the militant believer; but when they have answered their design they will cease; when we come to the presence of God and the possession of glory, prayer, the word, and sacraments, will be no longer needful.

*Ver. 13. And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho*] The solemnities of the passover being ended, and Joshua being come nigh to Jericho to reconnoitre the city, and judge of the dispositions to be made in order to lay siege to it with success, was greatly surprised, after having been but for a moment alone, to see before him all on a sudden something which he took for a man, with a sword in his hand, and all the appearance of a warrior. The general of Israel approached this unknown, and, suspecting he came from the enemy, boldly demanded of him who he was.

*Ver. 14, 15. And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord, &c.*] "No," replied the Unknown to Joshua, "I am no hostile visitant; I am the chief of the army of the Lord." Joshua, on these words, threw himself to the earth, and, adoring the sacred personage, respectfully inquired what were his commands: the angel, however, first of all requires him to put off his shoes from his feet, thereby to appear with more reverence in a place rendered holy by his august presence. All this is easily understood; but it has been asked, Who was this angel that appeared to Joshua? I. Divers interpreters insist, that it was literally an angel, perhaps the angel Michael, who is elsewhere called the *prince of the people of G.d.* Dan. x. 13. xii. 1. The Jews are not the only people who have thought there were angels commissioned over every nation. Without, however, adopting this supposition, we think it might be presumed, that God made use of one of his angels to carry to Joshua his instructions upon this occasion. II. But most interpreters, both ancient and modern, hold, that this person was the uncreated angel, the eternal Word, the Son of God, chief of the host of heaven, 1 Kings, xxii. 19. Luke, ii. 13. or conductor of the army of Israel, Exod. xii. 41. and several reasons concur to support this opinion. We shall content ourselves with pointing out the principal ones. 1. The angel who speaks here uses the same language with HIM who spoke in the bush to Moses, and certainly spoke to him as God. 2. Joshua worships him, which he would not have done, or which at least the angel would not have suffered, had he been only a created angel. 3. The homage which he requires of Joshua, by ordering him to take off his shoes, is the most

## C H A P. VI.

*Joshua, by the divine command, orders the city of Jericho to be surrounded seven days, the priests blowing with seven trumpets: on the seventh day, at Joshua's word, the people shout, while the trumpets blow, and the walls of Jericho fall down; the city is devoted, Rahab only, with her house, being saved alive.*

[Before Christ 1451.]

**N**OW Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in.

2 ¶ And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour.

3 And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days.

4 And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets.

most solemn and most profound ever paid to the Deity.

4. This angel, in ver. 2. of the following chapter, is called the LORD. The learned Allix, in his *Judgment of the ancient Jewish Church*, p. 233. asserts the opinion of that church to be, that it was actually God himself who appeared to Joshua. See Bedford's Sermons at Lady Moyer's Lectures, p. 148.

REFLECTIONS.—When Joshua and the people had been thus waiting upon God, he comes to manifest himself to them for their encouragement. They who draw near to God will ever find God near to hear and help them. *Note*; If Jesus draws the sword to defend us, not all the powers of sin, death, or hell shall be able to hurt us. Joshua, as a valiant leader, boldly advances, and bids him declare whether he came as friend or foe. *Note*; We need courage when we are fighting for God, and especially not to fear the faces of men. He does not disdain to answer the question; but quickly resolves him concerning his character and design. As captain of the Lord's hosts he is come, to guide them with his counsel, and strengthen them with his power. And what can stand before those who fight under such a leader? Joshua now plainly perceived the presence of the Deity: the same Jehovah that appeared to Abraham as a traveller, now comes as a man of war; and therefore at his feet he falls to make supplication before him, and receive his orders from him. It is no disparagement to the greatest general to be found often on his knees before the God of hosts, and there is no surer way to obtain the necks of his enemies. To impress Joshua's mind with deeper reverence and awe, and to intimate to him that it was the same divine Majesty which spake to Moses in the bush, the Angel commands him to loose his shoe, as a mark of respect and obedience; which he instantly performs, and stands attentive to the commands which the Lord should be pleased to lay upon him. *Note*; (1.) Christ is the captain of our salvation, fully qualified to subdue all our spiritual enemies, and ever standing ready to help and defend all who fly to him for succour. (2.) If we take him for our Lord, we must shew ourselves his servants, by a ready obedience to his will and pleasure.

## C H A P. VI.

*Ver. 1. Now Jericho was straitly shut up]* While every necessary preparation was making in the camp of Joshua.

for the attack of Jericho, the king of that city, on his part, took all possible precautions for his security. Having refused the offers of peace, which were doubtless made him by the Hebrew general, (see Deut. xx. 10.) and resolved to defend himself to the last extremity, he had shut himself in Jericho, and set so good a guard there, that Joshua, who kept the place blocked up, could carry on no intelligence with, nor know what passed in it. *The city, according to Onkelos, was shut up with gates of iron, and bars of brass; so that no one could issue out either to fight, or to talk of peace.* The adventure of the spies, who had crept into Rahab's house, was a sufficient caution not to be satisfied with keeping the place shut by night only. We may further observe, that the division of the Bible into chapters and verses is not always very exact, and may frequently mislead readers. This chapter should not naturally have begun till the 6th verse; for the five first verses are a continuation of the discourse addressed by the *Captain of the Lord's hosts* to Joshua, on shewing himself to him: or the foregoing chapter should have ended at ver. 12. as the account of the appearance of the angel and of the conference begins at ver. 13. It is certain, that the words in ver. 1. in this chapter, are properly only a parenthesis of the sacred historian, prudently added to shew the necessity of the miracle.

*Ver. 2. And the Lord said unto Joshua, See, &c.]* The same person, who in the preceding chapter is called the *Captain of the host of the Lord*, is here named the LORD. There is no doubt, therefore, that this was a divine personage, the angel of the covenant, the Son of God.

*Ver. 4. And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns]* Some have observed, that rams' horns cannot be bored, and made so as to give any thing of a strong sound; and therefore by *rams' horns* here, they would understand trumpets made in the shape of rams' horns. But this supposed difficulty, of making such an instrument of a ram's horn as may give a pretty strong sound, is not well founded; it being certain, that the inside of these horns is no way hard, and may easily be taken out, excepting a space at the point, of about four or five inches, part of which is sawed off, in order to proportion the aperture to the mouth; after which, the reit is easily pierced. We can assure our readers, say the authors of the *Universal History*, that we have seen some of these trumpets, thus made, used by shepherds in the southern parts of Germany.

*And*



5 And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long *blast* with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him.

6 ¶ And Joshua the son of Nun called the priests, and said unto them, Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD.

7 And he said unto the people, Pass on, and compass the city, and let him that is armed pass on before the ark of the LORD.

8 ¶ And it came to pass, when Joshua had spoken unto the people, that the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns

passed on before the LORD, and blew with the trumpets: and the ark of the covenant of the LORD followed them.

9 And the armed men went before the priests that blew with the trumpets, and the rereward came after the ark, *the priests* going on, and blowing with the trumpets.

10 And Joshua had commanded the people, saying, Ye shall not shout, nor make any noise with your voice, neither shall *any* word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I bid you shout; then shall ye shout.

11 So the ark of the LORD compassed the city, going about *it* once: and they came into the camp, and lodged in the camp.

12 And Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the LORD.

*And the seventh day you shall compass the city, &c.]* Grotius very properly observes, that the number *seven* is suited or appropriated to things sacred: it is evidently so in this place. We shall not, however, insist upon it. The reader may consult a variety of authors respecting the facts; particularly Drusus on the passage, and on Lev. iv. 6.

*Ver. 5. The wall of the city shall fall down flat]* The Hebrew literally is, *shall fall under itself*. The LXX render it, *the walls shall fall down of themselves*; and Onkelos has it, *the wall shall fall, and be swallowed up under itself*. If we are to believe the Jews, the walls of Jericho sunk entirely into the earth, without leaving the least outward trace of them; so that the Jews entered into the city on plain ground. But the text only says, that the walls fell down upon their foundations. The latter clause, *and the people shall ascend up, &c.* is explained two different ways. 1. Some are of opinion, that the walls of Jericho fell down only in particular places, where wide breaches were made, through which the Israelites might pass with ease; and this they suppose, because otherwise Rahab's house, which was annexed to the city-wall, must have been overturned. 2. But others think, that the whole wall was beaten down, and the house of Rahab only preserved; still more apparently to display the irresistibility of that Power, which, while it overthrows, can yet exempt from destruction: *He killeth, and He saveth alive*.

REFLECTIONS.—Jericho was now close besieged without, and close shut up and guarded within, by the strength of the fortifications and the number of the inhabitants; but the captain of the Lord's hosts assures Joshua that the place is his own: and, to try the obedience of the people, as well as to spread the terror of such a scene wide through the land, he issues a strange order. No military attack need be made, no engines drawn to the walls, but only the ark of God be carried in solemn procession six days round the city, by the priests, blowing with rams' horns,

accompanied by all the people; on the seventh day the city must be compassed seven times, when, at the signal given of a long blast of the trumpets, the people must shout together, and the walls shall fall down flat; so that every man may go up instantly, and smite the inhabitants surprised and defenceless. *Note*; Though the sinner's heart be walled and barred as fast as Jericho, the word of God, spoken by his ministers, has mighty power to cast down the strong-holds of Satan; and though the instruments seem weak as these rams' horns, yet that Divine power is with them which nothing can resist.

*Ver. 7—9. And he said unto the people, Pass on]* We apprehend, that it was not only the soldiers who formed this procession, but that all the people joined in it; that the armed men went before the ark; and that after it came the rest of the people, making as it were the *rearward*. It is certain, however, that Onkelos, and the Rabbis Solomon, Jarchi, and Kimchi, understand by the *rearward*, the single tribe of Dan, which was thus appointed, Numb. x. 25.; and they suppose, that before the ark went armed only the troops of the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and of the half tribe of Manasseh. But we keep to our version, which follows the LXX and Vulgate. The Hebrew word *חֲרֹמֵי* *measeph*, which we translate *rearward*, signifies, literally, *gathered up*; i. e. that company which closed the march, and collected together all that belonged to the procession. We might translate it, *the gathered multitude*. On the contrary, however, it must be owned, that it seems a little improbable to suppose, that three millions of souls should every day have gone in procession round Jericho for a week together, and on the last day seven times. On this supposition, the city must have been very small. Perhaps, therefore, this procession was composed only of the *fighting men*; and by *the people* we are to understand, throughout the whole narration, only those who were armed.

*Ver.*

13 And seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD went on continually, and blew with the trumpets: and the armed men went before them; but the reeward came after the ark of the LORD, *the priests* going on, and blowing with the trumpets.

14 And the second day they compassed the city once, and returned into the camp: so they did six days.

15 And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times: only on that day they compassed the city seven times.

16 And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets,

Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the LORD hath given you the city.

17 ¶ And the city shall be accursed, *even* it, and all that *are* therein, to the LORD: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that *are* with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent.

18 And ye, in any wise keep *yourselves* from the accursed thing, lest ye make *yourselves* accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it.

19 But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, *are* consecrated unto the LORD: they shall come into the treasury of the LORD.

20 ¶ So the people shouted when *the*

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*Ver. 13—15. And seven priests, &c.]* Whether Jericho was taken on a sabbath-day, as the Jews pretend, or on another day of the week, it is very certain, that the procession was made on the sabbath round about the city; and, consequently, that the rest of that solemn day was then infringed. *He, says Kimchi, who had ordained the observation of the sabbath, commanded the sabbath to be broken for the destruction of Jericho:* so that, according to the principles of this learned Jew, we are perfectly established in ours, namely, that the Angel who shewed himself to Joshua was that Almighty Angel who issued the law of the sabbath from mount Sinai; and that, as our Saviour remarked afterwards to the Pharisees, He who enjoined the sabbath is always the Lord and disposer of it. *Note;* 1. We must patiently persevere in the use of the means of grace, though we see not their immediate good effects. 2. Wherever the ark goes, and the word of God leads, we must follow it. 3. They who do so will surely succeed at last, and see the great salvation of God.

*Ver. 16. And—at the seventh time—Joshua said unto the people, Shout, &c.]* This shouting might be made in a two-fold view. It might be designed to terrify the enemy, and to animate at the same time the Israelitish soldiery; and, doubtless, it was also to express the faith of the whole people, and the confidence wherewith they relied upon the divine promises. *By faith, says St. Paul, the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been compassed about seven days.* Heb. xi. 30.

*Ver. 17. The city shall be accursed,—and all that are therein, to the Lord]* That is, Jericho, and whatever it contains, shall be devoted to utter destruction, save what is expressly excepted in this and the 19th verse. Respecting the *Cberem*, we refer to the *Reflections* at the end of Deut. ch. xx. It is necessary, however, to add here, that if God used the utmost severity towards Jericho, even to the forbidding to spare the wives and children, or to keep any spoil, which he had allowed on other occasions, it was for reasons well worthy his supreme wisdom. On the other hand, he ordered all the inhabitants of this city to

be put to the sword, in order to intimidate the rest of the Canaanites, and to determine them, by this act of justice, to prevent, by accepting peace, or by flight, a punishment which their enormous and wilful crimes rendered unavoidable. But then he forbid the Israelites keeping any booty to themselves, that, on their entering into the land of Canaan, they might the better understand that they had no right to the riches of that country but what he gave them; and that he would ever continue to himself the power of restraining that right as he should think proper.

*Ver. 18. In any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, &c.]* “Be sure not to carry off for your private emolument any of the spoil of your enemy: ye are to consider it as a thing devoted to the Lord, and which you are not to touch, on pain of being yourselves devoted to death; of drawing down upon you the immediate curse of God, and of stopping the progress of your victories.”

*Ver. 19. But all the silver, and gold,—are consecrated unto the Lord]* God requires, that all the silver, gold, brass, iron, and all other metal found in Jericho, should be consecrated to the use of his sanctuary, and carried into his tabernacle, to supply the wants of that sacred house; but, doubtless, first to be purified by passing through the fire, according to the law, Numb. xxxi. 22, 23. and excepting the idols, which were to be absolutely destroyed. Deut. vii. 25, 26. The Jews say, that all these riches belonged to God, inasmuch as Jericho was taken on a sabbath-day; but, as we before remarked, God required them as a tribute and homage, by which the Israelites acknowledged that to his power and goodness they owed the victory which now opened to them the entrance and possession of the country.

*Ver. 20. And—when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and—shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down—[But]* When therefore the priests blew the trumpets, the people, hearing the sound thereof, shouted with a great shout, and the walls, &c. *Houb.* The miraculous nature of this event

*priests* blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so

that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city.

21 And they utterly destroyed all that *was*

is so palpable, that one cannot conceive how it could come into the minds of any to contest it, or even to endeavour to assign natural reasons for it. The horrid art of war was in its infancy at the time of Joshua; and it does not appear that any of the means found out in subsequent ages for overthrowing the walls of cities, or making breaches in them, were then in use. The invention of the battering ram is much later. Pliny seems to attribute it to Epeus during the siege of Troy; but, in all probability, Ezekiel is the oldest author who has mentioned this formidable machine, and Nebuchadnezzar the first person who used it, in the siege of Jerusalem, many ages after the Trojan war. See Ezek. iv. 1, 2. xxi. 27. As to gunpowder, every one knows that that fatal composition was not found out till the 14th century of the Christian æra; and even could we suppose the Israelites to have known any thing bordering on the art of undermining the walls and ramparts of a city, and blowing them up by means of any ingredient like gunpowder, would any one venture to say, upon mere conjecture, that such was the practice before Jericho? Could they, in the little time that had elapsed since they passed over the Jordan and invested Jericho, have undermined that city? Besides, what are the steps they take there? What can we find out in them that has the appearance of a siege? And who, on the contrary, sees not in the promises of the general, and the processions of the soldiery, that a miracle was expected? It is God who orders, God who directs every thing. The city is attacked afar off: at the sound of the trumpets, and at the cries of the people, the walls fall down. What machines, what warlike instruments, what a way of besieging and taking a strong place! But, say some, Is it not possible for the walls of Jericho to have fallen without any extraordinary operation of Divine power, and by the mere sound of the voices and trumpets of the Hebrews? The rabbi, Levi Ben-Gershom, hath started such a conjecture, though, notwithstanding, he acknowledges here the miracle in the way we see it. Amongst the moderns too this opinion hath been strongly defended, particularly by the learned father Merfenne and Morhoff. They observe, that a violent noise is sufficient to break to pieces the most solid bodies, or to agitate them at a considerable distance; and they have collected together some curious particulars to prove it: insisting, among others, on that related by Borelli, a celebrated mathematician, as an eyewitness, that being at Taormina, a city in Sicily, about thirty miles from mount Aetna, that volcano made an eruption, the noise of which shook every house in the city, with circumstances which would not allow him to doubt that this agitation proceeded from the mere trembling of the air, which communicated itself to the houses. To facts these writers have added suppositions; they have represented all the priests sounding the horns, and all the people blowing the trumpets before the walls of Jericho; they have remarked upon the situation of the city, placed

in the midst of mountains, where the sound must consequently have a greater effect than in plains: in a word, they have collected whatever might give any colour to the paradox which they chose to maintain; and then they have themselves concluded, that nothing of all this could satisfy them, and that they were, at all events, obliged to acknowledge the Divine hand in the falling of the walls of Jericho. How, indeed, the case being properly stated, can the fact be denied? The question is not, whether walls may fall down by reason of *sound*, whatever it be; but whether those of Jericho were overturned by the sound of the *horns*, by the *priests*, and by the *shouts* of the people, as from a natural cause. We do not ask, whether God could beat down these walls by the concurrent sounds of the horns and voices of the Israelites, but whether the event so happened: and the Scripture says nothing like it. Besides, divers reasons destroy the conjectures of Merfenne and Morhoff: 1. However powerful we may suppose the noise made by the Israelites before Jericho; yet, that city being so far distant as to be out of the reach of arrows and stones (as interpreters reasonably presume they were), that noise could not but have lost much of its force, and have considerably decreased on reaching the walls. 2. It must have lost so much more of its strength, as it bursts into the open air; for Jericho was situated, not in a narrow valley, but in a plain, overlooked by a mountain. See Joseph. Bell. Jud. l. v. c. 4. 3. For the noise of the horns and voices of the Israelites to overturn the walls of this city, it was necessary that it should be exactly proportioned to the situation of those walls, and the matter of which they were composed. Now, the precise knowledge of this exact proportion, and the issuing of a noise well adapted thereto, though effected by the concurrence of never so many instruments, and never so many voices, would alone be a great miracle. Nay, 4. could this noise alone have been able to overturn the walls of Jericho; yet it is much more difficult to conceive why the *trees* in the neighbourhood, the *tents* of the Israelites, and even all the *people*, should not have been thrown down in like manner. 5. Can it only appear probable to ingenious men, that things so wonderful should be effected by a violent sound, and without a miracle, though we see at this day, when the art of war is brought to so high a pitch of perfection, how much money, labour, and blood it costs, to attack and master well-defended places? Is it in the least probable, that so much pains would be taken, so many skirmishes held, so many risks run, if, by the noise of trumpets in a numerous army, the walls of the cities they attacked could be thrown down. 6. And to conclude, How comes it to pass, that we never see the frightful clamour of so many cannons, mortars, guns, which swallow up the sound of the loudest instruments, and whose horrible din shakes the air as with thunder round the besieged city,—how happens it, I ask, that we never see this noise alone open breaches to the besiegers,

in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword.

22 ¶ But Joshua had said unto the two men that had spied out the country, Go into the harlot's house, and bring out thence the woman, and all that she hath, as ye sware unto her.

23 And the young men that were spies went in, and brought out Rahab, and her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had; and they brought out all her kindred, and left them without the camp of Israel:

24 And they burnt the city with fire, and

all that *was* therein: only the silver, and the gold, and the vessels of brass and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD.

25 And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had; and she dwelleth in Israel *even* unto this day; because she hid the messengers, which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

26 ¶ And Joshua adjured *them* at that time, saying, Cursed *be* the man before the LORD, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his first-born, and in his youngest *son* shall he set up the gates of it.

besiegers, and spare them the trouble of trenches, mines, and assaults? But it is too much to stop to confute a supposition, which has engaged the notice of the learned, merely because *they* are learned who have ventured to advance it. We add but one word more: if any of the ancient fathers seem to have attributed the falling of the walls of Jericho to the sound of the instruments and voices of the people of Israel, it was from a supposition, that God had given to that sound a supernatural and miraculous power. See Scheuchzer, vol. iv. p. 102.

*Ver. 23. And left them without the camp*] They were brought out of the house, because that was to be burned with the rest of the city; but being unclean they could not be received into the camp, as being a holy place, till they had abjured paganism, embraced the religion of the true God, and been admitted into the body of the republic of Israel by circumcision, and perhaps by baptism; though we cannot say whether the use of this latter ceremony be so ancient.

*Ver. 25. And she dwelleth in Israel even unto this day*] Rahab, incorporated with the people of God, was still living there when this was written. See ch. iv. 9. Her family, doubtless, were initiated in like manner; and all who belonged to her embraced the religion of Israel, or at least, renouncing idolatry, without ever receiving circumcision, became profelytes of the gate. As to Rahab herself, she married Salmon, the son of Naasson, a prince of the tribe of Judah, and one of the ancestors of CHRIST. Genebrand, in his Chronol. p. 13: following the authority of some rabbis, says, that Joshua married Rahab; whence Mr. Berryer concludes, that it was a grand-daughter of that name who was afterwards married to Salmon. See his Hist. du Peuple de Dieu, tom. iii. p. 41. But as all this is without proof, we hold, with Usher, that it was Rahab the harlot whom Salmon espoused. However, as it was prohibited to marry Canaanitish women, (Deut. vii. 1.) Rahab might, very probably, be a stranger settled at Jericho, as divers rabbis inform us was the case.

*Ver. 26. And Joshua adjured them at that time, saying, &c.*] As soon as the city of Jericho was razed and de-

stroyed, Joshua convened the chiefs and elders of the tribes, to signify to them the divine intention that this idolatrous city should never be rebuilt. Accordingly, he engaged them by oath never to raise it again; and these, certainly, bound the people in like manner, on pain of the divine malediction. This prudent general thought himself unable to erect a monument better adapted to the greatness of God, than to leave Jericho for ever buried in its ruins, thereby to announce to posterity his justice against wicked and incorrigible idolaters, and his beneficent power in favour of his people, whom he had caused to triumph over the inhabitants of Jericho in the most miraculous manner.

*Cursed be the man before the Lord, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho!*] It is not of himself, but in the name and by the order of Jehovah, that Joshua here pronounces an anathema upon whoever shall dare to raise again the walls of Jericho. The view in which we have placed this command was pointed out by Maimonides. Joshua, says he, pronounced a curse against those who should build up Jericho, that the remembrance of the miracle which God had wrought by destroying it might never be effaced; for all who looked on these ruins thus sunk into the earth, clearly saw them to be the ruins of a city destroyed by a miracle, and not by the hand of men. More Nev. p. ii. c. 5. We may see from this passage, that Maimonides thought the walls of Jericho were swallowed up by the earth, rather than overthrown. In ancient history we meet with repeated instances of like imprecations and prohibitions to rebuild cities, whose perfidy or violence it was intended to punish, and whose power it was feared should be again revived. Thus Agamemnon cursed every one who should dare to build again the walls of Troy, Strabo, lib. xiii. p. 898; Croesus those who should rebuild Sidena. Ibid. and Scipio Africanus those who should attempt to repair Carthage. Zonar. Annal. lib. ix. p. 149. Cicero de Leg. Agr. Orat. 2.

*He shall lay the foundation, &c.] i. e.* "All the children of such a man, from the greatest even to the least, shall be smitten with a premature death before the enterprise be finished; his first-born shall die when he begins to rear up the walls of this city, and his youngest when

27 So the LORD was with Joshua; and his fame was *noised* throughout all the country.

C H A P. VII.

*The Israelites are put to flight near Ai: the Lord raises up the prostrate Joshua, and tells him, that some of the accursed thing had been taken; commands him to inquire for the guilty person, and to condemn him when found; Achan is found guilty, is stoned, and all belonging to him burnt in the fire.*

[Before Christ 1451.]

**B**UT the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan,

the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel.

2 ¶ And Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Beth-aven, on the east side of Beth-el, and spake unto them, saying, Go up and view the country. And the men went up and viewed Ai.

3 And they returned to Joshua, and said unto him, Let not all the people go up; but

“he setteth up the gates thereof!” This prophetic malediction was literally accomplished about five hundred and fifty years after, in the person of *Hiel, the Beth-elite*, who, under the reign of Ahaz, laid the foundation of Jericho, in *Abiram his first-born; and set up the gates thereof, in his youngest son Segub.* When, tempted by the situation of the territory in which Jericho lay, Hiel had ventured, through a criminal ignorance, of Joshua’s prediction, or rather through unbelief, to rebuild this city at a small distance from the spot where it was originally placed, no one made any scruple of settling there; and the design of God seemed not to have been for prohibiting it. We see there a college of prophets; Elijah and Elisha frequented it (2 Kings, ii. 15—18.); and after that our Saviour honoured it with his presence and miracles. Luke, xix. 1, &c. Long before Hiel’s time, some one had already raised some of the ruins of Jericho. We should at least apprehend so, if Jericho was the same as *the city of palm-trees*; for this last subsisted in the time of Eglon, Judg. iii. 13.; and it was at Jericho that David ordered his ambassadors to remain till their beards, which had been cut off by the command of king Hanun, were grown again; 2 Sam. x. 4, 5. Jericho, at present, is almost entirely deserted; having but thirty or forty little houses in it, which serve as a retreat for some poor Moors and Arabs who live there like the beasts. The plain of Jericho produces hardly any thing more than some few wild trees, and bad fruit, which grow spontaneously without cultivation. We must not, however, pass over the *roses* of Jericho, or its *oil*, so excellent for wounds, which they extract from a fruit called by the Arabs *za-cho-ne*.

REFLECTIONS.—Now is the hour of Jericho’s destruction come. At Joshua’s command, the hosts of Israel shout aloud; at the signal given by the trumpet’s long blast, and according to their faith, this proud city’s walls fall down before them. Such will be the triumphant shout of the Israel of God, when, under the conduct of the divine Joshua, they shall, in the last hour of their warfare, see all their foes laid low before them, and with their expiring breath triumph over death, their last enemy, and march through the breaches of the grave to the possession of the city of the living God.

C H A P. VII.

*Ver. 1. But the children of Israel*] Though there was but one guilty, the historian attributes to the whole

society, whereof Achan was a member, the criminal action which he had committed. This is the style of Scripture, and it is the language of reason. See Calmet. A people, properly speaking, is only one moral person. The common interest, which connects all the members of it together, warrants the imputing to the whole nation what is done by the individuals who compose it, unless it be expressly disavowed.

*Committed a trespass in the accursed thing*] They committed a trespass, by keeping back somewhat desecrated; or, as the LXX has it, *by setting apart something of the curse*; of the booty which was made in the sacking of Jericho; though this was forbidden under pain of incurring the most rigorous effects of the divine malediction.

*For Achan, the son of Carmi, &c.*] He is called *Achar*, 1 Chron. ii. 7. This latter name, which signifies *trouble*, was evidently given him in allusion to the reproof that Joshua gave him previous to his being stoned, of having troubled Israel, ver. 25. *Zabdi* is the same who, in 1 Chron. ii. 6. is called *Zimri*. *Zerah*, the son of Judah, came into Egypt with his father very young. It is not said that he had any children there; and we cannot suppose him to be less than seventy years old when he became father of Zabdi. If, as Bonfrere thinks, Zabdi was as old when Carmi was born, and Carmi as old when he begat Achan, the latter must have been above fifty at the taking of Jericho; an age at which many men begin to be over-attached to the things of the world, and set too high a value upon them.

*And the anger of the Lord was kindled, &c.*] The crime of one member of this body drew down marks of the divine indignation on all the Israelites, (who in other respects, doubtless, deserved it,) in order to stir them up to search out the guilty, and inflict upon him the just punishment of the danger to which he had exposed them. We may further observe, 1. That there were, perhaps, many Israelites guilty, in their desires, of the crime of Achan, and who would actually have committed it, had they dared; and others who knew it, but had given themselves no concern on that account, and had not even deigned to inform Joshua of it. 2. That by chastising the whole body for the faults of one, or of several individuals, God proposed to render all the Israelites more circumspect, more attentive to each other’s conduct, and more careful to remove from sinners every occasion of doing evil. 3. That by this severity he designed to render sin more odious to the whole nation.

let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labour thither; for they *are but few*.

4 So there went up thither of the people about three thousand men: and they fled before the men of Ai.

5 And the men of Ai smote of them about thirty and six men: for they chased them

from before the gate *even* unto Shebarim, and smote them in the going down: wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water.

6 ¶ And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the LORD until the even-tide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads.

*Ver. 2. Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai.*] To forward the conquest of the land of Canaan, Joshua made the fertile plain of Jericho the centre of his camp, whence he sent detachments to seize upon the neighbouring towns, till the Israelites should see themselves masters of an extent of country sufficient to be divided among the tribes: the event, however, did not take place till about six years after. See Usher's Annals. As soon as he had established the best order he could in his camp, he immediately detached two or three thousand men against the king of Ai, whose capital was about ten or twelve miles distant from Jericho. *Ai* or *Hai* has been already spoken of in the history of Abraham. On comparing what Joshua here says of it, with what is mentioned Gen. xii. 8. it appears to have been on the north of Jericho, and east of Beth-el, which lay at but a very small distance. Masius places *Ai* three leagues from Jericho, and one league from Beth-el. It was situated upon a hill, ver. 5. and belonged to the Amorites, ver. 7.

*Beside Beth-aven, on the east side of Beth-el.*] This town, not far from Beth-el, gave its name to a neighbouring desert. It was certainly, as well as Beth-el, upon the confines of the tribe of Benjamin, toward the north. See chap. xviii. 12. The prophet Hosea gives Beth-el itself the name of *Beth-aven*, in an allegorical sense, because Beth-aven signifies *a house of iniquity*; and Beth-el well deserved this odious appellation when the impious Jeroboam placed there his golden calves. This puts it beyond doubt, that these two towns have been confounded together, and that Beth-el was the same as Beth-aven.

*Ver. 3. Let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai*] There was a little presumption in this counsel; *Ai* was well situated, strong, and guarded by twelve thousand men; so that there was no probability (humanly speaking) of carrying it with two or three thousand men. God, nevertheless, permitted Joshua to listen to this bold piece of advice, and he followed it. Had not this been the case, either the inhabitants of *Ai* would not have ventured to sally from their city; or if, in going out against the Israelites, they had beaten a more considerable detachment of them, the crime of Achan would have cost the nation too many citizens, and his punishment would have thrown it into too great a consternation.

*Ver. 4, 5. And they fled, &c.*] The garrison of *Ai*, observing the Israelites to be so few in number, made a sally. The latter, left by God, immediately lost courage, took flight, and left thirty-six of their comrades on the spot. The enemy pursued and beat them as far as to *Shebarim*. Some think this was a place betwixt *Ai* and Jericho; for *shebarim* in the Hebrew signifies, *people defeated, broken, routed*; while others, following the LXX,

and taking the word in an appellative sense, translate, *they pursued them from before the gate, till they were entirely routed, &c.* It is certain, that the runaways carried the alarm into the camp of Israel, and the consternation there was general. The historian describes it in very strong and lively terms.

REFLECTIONS.—The last chapter left Israel triumphant, and Joshua's name great and glorious: this begins with a dire *But*, which stops the current of their victories, and casts them into the deepest distress; the cause of which always is sin. 1. We have an account of the sin committed; Achan the son of Carmi, of the house of Judah, had transgressed the divine command, and secretly taken of the devoted things, and thereby had brought the host under the displeasure of God. One sinner thus destroys much good; the community he belonged to are defiled by him, and suffer for him. *Note*; (1.) Covetousness is among the most rooted evil tempers of the fallen mind. (2.) We must separate ourselves from sinners, if we would not share their judgments. 2. The effects of God's displeasure quickly appeared: though the sin was committed so secretly that no eye saw him, it was not hid from God; and he takes such ways to bring the crime to light, as shall shew his just indignation against it. Let not the guilty think of being concealed or excused; God will find them out, and visit them to their confusion. Confident now of success, those who were sent to view the city of *Ai* report the conquest easy, and that the people need not to be fatigued by a general march: a detached party of two or three thousand men being thought sufficient, these are accordingly sent; but, seized with a panic at the gate of the city, they fly before their pursuers, and, with the loss of six and thirty men, escape to the camp, and fill it with terror and confusion. God had evidently forsaken them; and, though the loss was small, justly were they alarmed at a defeat which portended more dreadful consequences. *Note*; (1.) Though the greatest difficulties vanish when God is our helper, the least attempt will prevail the moment he leaves us to ourselves. (2.) Whenever we provoke God, we may expect to suffer for it. (3.) Fear and terror of conscience are the natural consequences of guilt, and the present wages of sin.

*Ver. 6. And Joshua rent his clothes*] All the outward marks of sorrow exhibited by Joshua and the elders on this occasion are well known; they were customary, and have been so in much later times. The history of the Patriarchs supplies frequent instances of the custom of rending the clothes on the receipt of bad news. At this day, it is usual among the Jews, in the feast of expiations, to cast themselves on the ground before the chest which

7 And Joshua said, Alas! O Lord God, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan!

8 O LORD, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies!

9 For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?

10 ¶ And the LORD said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?

11 Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the ac-

curfed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff.

12 Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you.

13 Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against to-morrow: for thus saith the LORD God of Israel, There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you.

14 In the morning therefore ye shall be brought according to your tribes: and it shall be, that the tribe which the LORD taketh

contains the book of the law; and, in memory of what Joshua did on the present occasion, the reader of the synagogue still prostrates himself every year on the same day before this same chest. See Buxtorf. Syntag. Jud. c. xxxi. With respect to the custom of putting dust upon the head, we know that it was one of the greatest signs of affliction amongst the Jews, in which the Gentiles imitated them, as might be easily shewn in the history of the Ninevites, and divers passages taken from prophane antiquity; among others, from Virgil, where king Latinus, using the same marks of mourning with Joshua, appears tearing his clothes, and covering his head with dust. See Æneid. xii. ver. 609, &c.

Ver. 7. And Joshua said, Alas! O Lord God, wherefore, &c.] The heart-felt emotion and humiliation in which Joshua appears, thus prostrate on the ground, with his face directed towards the sanctuary, and addressing God in the following prayer, are no way unbecoming of his high character. The greatest men are the most susceptible of the feelings of humanity and compassion. Without attempting to deny absolutely that Joshua testified some weakness, and too much dejection, in the prayer which he addresses to God, his sentiments seem capable of a very noble turn: his expressions are not the bursts of complaint; the Scriptures nowhere reproach him with any thing like it; they are an acknowledgment of his ignorance respecting the causes of that fatal blow which struck the whole camp of Israel with terror; as much as if he had said, that he knew not what to think of the event which astonished the people, and therefore instantly ventured to beg of God to discover to him the reason of it. Let us hear himself speak, and we shall better explain our idea on the subject. "O Lord, I am astonished, confounded, and dismayed at what I see; unable to comprehend why, after miraculously opening the passage of the Jordan to thy people, and giving them an entrance

into this Promised Land, thou permittest them to be overpowered by the devoted Canaanites: better, as it seems, had we, contented with our former conquests, remained on the other side of the flood. What shall I say to the insults of the enemy? How henceforth shall I persuade the defeated Israelites to depend upon victory? Inflated by their success, the Canaanites will fall upon us from every quarter, will encompass us round, and hew us in pieces: still more deeply afflicting, the glory of thy great name will be obscured in the sight of these faithless nations, who will triumph to see our expectations deceived, and the miraculous displays of thy mighty power rendered useless." In all this discourse, as we see, it is a concern for God's glory that most nearly affects Joshua. He speaks as Moses had spoken on similar occasions; or, to express it more properly, he forms his own language on that of God himself. Deut. xxxii. 26, 27. Note; A gracious soul is ever more solicitous about God's glory than his own interests; let them stand or fall, if God be exalted, he asks no more.

Ver. 10. And the Lord said unto Joshua] This answer, full of gentleness, justifies what we have just been observing, that there was no asperity or murmuring in Joshua's remonstrance; "Arise," saith the Lord, "cease to afflict thyself: I am about to discover to thee this mystery of the flight of the Israelites; and thy fears shall subside." Le Clerc, and the authors of the Universal History, are of opinion, that God answered Joshua by Eleazar, invested with the Urim and Thummim.

Ver. 14. In the morning, therefore, ye shall be brought, &c.] "Persons deputed from each tribe to represent it, shall successively come, to appear before me, and to receive my orders."

And—the tribe which the Lord taketh, shall come, &c.] We see clearly from these things what was to happen; first,

shall come according to the families *thereof*; and the family which the LORD shall take shall come by households; and the household which the LORD shall take shall come man by man.

15 And it shall be, *that* he that is taken with the accursed thing shall be burnt with fire, he and all that he hath: because he hath transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he hath wrought folly in Israel.

16 ¶ So Joshua rose up early in the morning, and brought Israel by their tribes; and the tribe of Judah was taken:

17 And he brought the family of Judah; and he took the family of the Zarahites: and he brought the family of the Zarahites man by man; and Zabdi was taken:

18 And he brought his household man by

man; and Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken.

19 ¶ And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide *it* not from me.

20 And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done:

21 When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they *are* hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it.

first, that God would make known the tribe, then the family of that tribe, then the house or branch of that family, and, lastly, the particular person of that branch, in whose hands was the accursed thing. But it is not so easy to determine how this designation was to be made; that is to say, how the *taking* was to be. There are only conjectures respecting it, and those of the rabbis are commonly the least probable. We shall not stop to quote them. Josephus, Rabbi Levi Ben Gersom, and almost all the Christian interpreters, presume that, upon this occasion, the tribe, family, house, and particular offender, were determined by lot. It matters little how it was cast. What Masius observes of it is very clear, who thinks that twelve tickets were first put into an urn, on each of which was the name of a tribe; that then they cast as many tickets as there were families in the tribe whose name was drawn, then as many as there were houses in that family; and, lastly, as many as there were heads in that house. However this matter may be, it cannot be denied, either that the method of discovering hidden things by lot was in use among the Jews (1 Sam. xx. 21.) and Pagans, (Jonas, i. 7.) or that it was very lawful; having been ordained by God in more cases than one, (1 Chron. xxiv. 5. 7, &c. Lev. xvi. 8.) and practised by the apostles; Acts, i. 24. 26.

Ver. 16. *So Joshua rose up early in the morning, and brought, &c.*] Interpreters here ask, How was it possible that Achan should dare to extend his audacity so far as not to confess his crime as soon as he knew the orders which God had given to Joshua?—And they answer, that sin had blinded him, and that a proud shame withheld him. But, waving the discussion of these replies, we apprehend that the following will be considered as very sufficient; namely, that Achan knew nothing of the orders which God had given to Joshua, inasmuch as that general communicated them to no one, and limited himself to hasten the execution of them.

Ver. 19. *And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, &c.*] Compassion and clemency are the portion of great souls.

As soon as the criminal was known, and brought before Joshua, that merciful and generous leader exhorted him, before all things, and with all the moderation befitting a judge, whose decrees passion and malice should never dictate, to *give glory to God*; i. e. to use the expression of the Samaritan Chronicle, *to raise his eyes to the King of heaven and earth; and to confess, that nothing is hidden from him, and that he knoweth the most profound secrets.* To *give glory to God*, and to *confess one's fault*, was the same thing; for Achan could not confess it without paying homage to the omniscience, the power, and the justice of the Lord.

Ver. 21. *When I saw among the spoils*] The Samaritan Chronicle makes Achan here say, that it was in a temple of Jericho that he saw the things which tempted him; among which was a *goodly Babylonish garment*. Bochart with his usual erudition observes, that clothes of divers colours were made at Babylon, adorned with figures, in the taste of the Turkey carpets, very shining, rich, and much sought after in all the eastern world. The Babylonians had invented these sorts of works, made in the loom with the needle and of several colours. Phaleg, lib. i. c. 6. p. 25. Tempted, therefore, by the sight of one of these garments, (which the LXX here call *fine mantles of divers colours*;) Achan took one of them, either to use it afterwards, or to sell it; for they were of great price.

*Two hundred shekels of silver*] About thirty pounds sterling. See Calmet. *And a wedge of gold, &c.* The Hebrew signifies a *tongue of gold*, which is the same thing: thereby is meant a piece of gold in a bar, and nearly in the shape of a tongue. This wedge, at the rate of fifty shekels of gold, might be worth upwards of ninety pounds sterling. It should be remembered, that in the time of Joshua they had no silver money.

*Fifty shekels*] *Twelve ounces and a half.*  
*Then I coveted them, and took them*] This fully justifies that saying of St. James: *When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin.* ch. i. 15. Achan ardently desired the garment, the silver, and the gold, which displayed themselves



22 So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent; and, behold, it *was* hid in his tent, and the silver under it.

23 And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the LORD.

24 ¶ And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and

his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor.

25 And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones.

26 And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore

selves to his view, in a place where he was evidently without witness; and he perverted them to his own use.

Ver. 24. *And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan, &c.*] With the consent of the whole assembly, and followed by all the people, Joshua caused the criminal to be brought to the neighbouring valley, called from that time *the valley of Achor, or of trouble*, because of the trouble which this affair had occasioned to the Israelites; and with him they conducted, or carried, all that belonged to him. In the Hebrew it is, they made these things *go up in the valley of Achor*. In Scripture, to *go up*, sometimes signifies, only to go from one place to another.

Ver. 25. *And all Israel stoned him with stones, &c.*] There are three things to be considered from these words: I. It is asked, what was the punishment inflicted upon Achan? All the interpreters agree that he was stoned; but they are not equally agreed that he was burned. It is certain, that the law against sacrilege condemned offenders to the fire; (Deut. xiii. 15, 16.) it is also certain, that God had condemned to the fire whosoever should take of the accursed thing at the taking of Jericho, ver. 15. so that the rabbis insist that he was burned; and, with respect to the stoning which he previously underwent, some will have it that this happened accidentally, the furious people being unable to desist from overwhelming the guilty man with stones. Others say, that Jericho having been destroyed on the sabbath-day, and Achan having profaned this festival by retaining that which was devoted to God, he was stoned as profane, and burned as sacrilegious. But, upon the whole, the sentence which God had pronounced did not strictly import that the offender should be burned alive. By stoning him, he was punished capitally according to the laws; Lev. xx. 9, 11, &c. xxiv. 14. Numb. xv. 35. and by burning his body afterwards, they obeyed the commands which God had just before given. II. Perhaps it may be more difficult to determine upon a second question which is here started, viz. Whether the *sons and daughters* of Achan perished with him, as well as *his oxen, and asses, and sheep, and tent, and all that he had*? Most interpreters are of this opinion, and find no difficulty in justifying the righteousness of the sentence. For, not to mention that God is always Lord over our life, and has a right to remove us when and how it seemeth him good; not to mention that the family of Achan, guilty of sin in other respects, could never be unjustly punished; not to mention this, we may presume, that they partook of the

offence of their head; it not being probable that Achan could have buried his theft *in the midst of his tent*, without his children's knowing it. It is a maxim of the Jews themselves, that the accomplice in a crime, is as criminal as he who commits it. We readily subscribe to these reflections; and add, that, in these early times it was of importance to keep the people in respect, fear, and submission by instances of severity. But to the fact: The divine sentence expressed in ver. 15. condemned the guilty only, and his goods, to be burned. Here it is expressly said, that the Israelites stoned Achan, without mentioning his family; and if the historian adds, *and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones*, this may be understood of the *oxen*, the *asses*, and the *sheep* which belonged to the unhappy malefactor; and that God chose that his tent and effects should be burned with his body, to inspire a greater horror of his crime. In this view, the family of Achan might undergo no other punishment, than that of being condemned to be present at the execution of their head, before all the people of Israel. However, we leave the subject to the reader's judgment. But, III. The case will not be the same with respect to the third question which hath been started concerning Achan's punishment. It is absurd to ask, by what right Joshua dared to condemn Achan to a punishment so heavy and dishonourable, upon the bare confession of the offender, without even the usual testimony of two witnesses against him, as the law required: For, what did Joshua on this occasion, but execute the orders immediately issued from God? Was not the voice of the oracle equivalent to that of two witnesses, especially against a man who avowed his crime, and who himself demonstrated its veracity, by producing the subject-matter of the offence, the very effects which he had stolen?

Ver. 26. *Wherefore the name of that place, &c.*] From the day of the punishment of *Achan*, or *Achor*, the disturber of the public repose, the Israelites called the place where he was stoned *Achar*. What confirms this etymology is, that Achan is always called *Achar* in the Syriac version, and by Josephus, Athanasius, Basil, and other authors, at the head of whom we may place Esdras, 1 Chron. ii. 7. See Bochart on the subject, Hieroz. part i. lib. ii. c. 32. Mr. Saurin observes, that the design of raising this heap of stones was, to place before the eyes of all Israel a perpetual memorial of the crime of Achan, and of their indispensable obligation to pay an entire deference to the

command

the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor, unto this day.

CHAP. VIII.

*Ai is taken by stratagem; its king hanged, and the city burned with fire; Joshua builds an altar between Ebal and Gerizim, and there reads the blessings and curses enjoined by Moses.*

[Before Christ 1451.]

AND the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear not, neither be thou dismayed: take all

the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai: see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land:

2 And thou shalt do to Ai and her king as thou didst unto Jericho and her king: only the spoil thereof, and the cattle thereof, shall ye take for a prey unto yourselves: lay thee an ambush for the city behind it.

3 ¶ So Joshua arose, and all the people of

command of God. Happy if they had always followed this lesson; if they had not, by surpassing Achan in his crimes, drawn down upon their nation the greatest punishments! Dr. Shaw tells us, that many heaps of stone are seen in Barbary, the Holy Land, and Arabia, which have been gradually erected as so many signs over murdered travellers; the Arabs, according to a superstitious custom among them, contributing each of them a stone whenever they pass by them: something like this, he thinks, are the present event, and those recorded, ch. viii. 9. and 2 Sam. xviii. 17. See the preface to his Travels, p. 17.

REFLECTIONS.—God having directed Joshua in the method of procedure, he rises very early in the morning, in haste to purge the camp from the abominable thing which was hidden in it.

1. The tribes are convoked. Judah is taken, the first in dignity, yet now exposed to shame by one bad branch of this noble family. By repeated trials, from families to houses, and from houses to individuals, the criminal is discovered, and Achan, confounded with conscious guilt, stands forth the troubler of Israel. *Note;* When God is contending with us, we need well to examine our ways, and see if there be any way of wickedness in us: whilst Achan's wedge, any allowed sin remains, the curse must be upon us. 2. The divine lot having discovered the offender, Joshua, as judge, exhorts him to give glory to God by an open and unreserved confession. He does not fly out into anger or reviling against him; but, pitying his misery, beseeches him to repent of his great sin, and take to himself the deserved shame of such a guilty conduct. *Note;* (1.) Even the vilest of criminals deserve our pity, not reproach. (2.) The only retribution we can make to God for our sins, is an open acknowledgment. They cannot be true penitents, who shrink from the shame they have deserved, and seek to excuse and exculpate themselves, instead of glorifying God by an unreserved confession. 3. Hopes of concealment had hardened his heart before; but now that God has found him out, he bows under the conviction, acknowledges his great sin, and discloses the particular fact in all the circumstances of it. *Note;* (1.) A burdened conscience can only find ease by self-accusation, and owning its aggravated sin against God. (2.) The more deeply we are affected, the more particular will be our confessions, and the more sharp our self-upbraidings in the review of the process of our sin. (3.) The advances to sin are here laid down; concupiscence is at the root;

Satan presents the bait to the eye, the heart is caught by it, the hand is stretched out, and the crime completed. How strict a guard should we keep upon our eyes! How severely repress the first motions of evil desire! (4.) It is the devil's grand deceit, "No eye shall see thee; thy sin may be easily concealed;" but God can make the sinner turn self-accuser, and *vomit up the riches he hath swallowed*, Job, xx. 15. 4. He receives his just condemnation. The goods are instantly fetched, his confession is affirmed by the accursed spoils, and sentence passes upon him. God will have the trouble fall upon his own head, which he had brought on the innocent people. *Note;* (1.) Sin will bring trouble: the conscience must be humbled under it in time, or be tormented for it to eternity. (2.) What we get by injustice, will in the end prove our plague. 5. He is instantly executed, dragged from the judgment-seat without the camp, and all Israel in just indignation rise up to stone him. *Note;* (1.) We cannot be in too great haste to get rid of our sins. (2.) We see that nothing is got by stealing or sacrilege: not only the ill-gotten gain perishes, but the fire of the curse spreads to all our substance. (3.) Wicked parents are the heaviest plague to their families, and by their bad examples usually involve them in ruin. (4.) When sin is repented of, and washed away with the blood of Jesus, shed as a curse for us, then we may expect God's love and mercy will be restored to us. 6. A monument is raised on these ashes, as a warning to others, and a name given to the place, corresponding with the occasion, The valley of Achor, or Trouble. *Note;* (1.) We need to raise a memorial over our sins, and the places where they were committed, that we may continually remember and lament them. (2.) The valley of Achor is a door of hope to true penitents, Hosea, ii. 15. and they who go down thither in sorrow, shall be brought up from thence with joy.

CHAP. VIII.

*Ver. 2. Lay thee an ambush for the city, behind it]* That is, to the west; for the camp of Gilgal was to the east of Ai. It is asked here, by some, "How happens it that God, who, by his infinite power, could so easily destroy Ai and its inhabitants, should make use of artifice and stratagem to procure victory to the Hebrews? The pagans themselves (they add) judged such arts unworthy of men of courage; (see for examples, Grotius de Jure B. & P. l. iii. c. 1. sect. 20.) and they seem be-  
"neath

war, to go up against Ai: and Joshua chose out thirty thousand mighty men of valour, and sent them away by night.

4 And he commanded them, saying, Behold, ye shall lie in wait against the city, *even* behind the city: go not very far from the city, but be ye all ready:

5 And I, and all the people that *are* with me, will approach unto the city: and it shall come to pass, when they come out against us, as at the first, that we will flee before them,

6 (For they will come out after us) till we have drawn them from the city; for they will say, They flee before us, as at the first: therefore we will flee before them.

7 Then ye shall rise up from the ambush, and seize upon the city: for the LORD your God will deliver it into your hand.

8 And it shall be, when ye have taken the

city, *that* ye shall set the city on fire: according to the commandment of the LORD shall ye do. See, I have commanded you.

9 ¶ Joshua therefore sent them forth: and they went to lie in ambush, and abode between Beth-el and Ai, on the west side of Ai: but Joshua lodged that night among the people.

10 And Joshua rose up early in the morning, and numbered the people, and went up, he and the elders of Israel, before the people to Ai.

11 And all the people, *even the people* of war that *were* with him, went up, and drew nigh, and came before the city, and pitched on the north side of Ai: now *there was* a valley between them and Ai.

12 And he took about five thousand men, and set them to lie in ambush between Beth-el and Ai, on the west side of the city.

“neath the greatness of the Almighty.” But how weak is this manner of talking? Is God always obliged to work miracles, because he is able? And why does it seem more improper for him to have ordered an ambuscade to encompass the men of Ai, than to have set apart seven days for overturning the walls of Jericho, with so many ceremonies? He could, without striking a blow, have suddenly mowed down all the Canaanites, and opened to his people an entrance into Palestine, without their meeting the least opposition: but, had he chosen this method, he would neither have displayed his power by that vast number of miracles which he wrought, nor made the Israelites pass through trials that were expedient to their holiness and happiness.

*Ver. 3—9.* So Joshua arose, and all the people of war, &c.] Joshua first detached from his army thirty thousand men, and charged them to go in the night-time and lie in ambush on the west side of Ai, at a convenient distance; while, on his part, by break of day, he advanced with all his troops, and appeared before the town, in order to draw out from thence the garrison, which, doubtless, had no idea that the whole army followed. He then informed the officers who commanded the detachment, that, in this case, *he* would flee, in order to mislead the king of Ai; that then *they* were to quit their ambush on the signal which he should give them, (*ver. 18.*) enter Ai, set fire to some houses, to inform him of their success; and in all things punctually obey these instructions as orders delivered from God.

*Ver. 10.* Joshua—numbered the people] That is to say, he ordered the officers to see if all their men were ready, and to begin their march by day-break, accompanied by the heads of their tribes, or judges of the people, who served him as his council of war, and were authorized, by their calling, to assist him with their advice when necessary.

*Ver. 11.* And came—and pitched on the north side of Ai] Those who came with Joshua were all the people of war who were with him; i. e. evidently the bulk of the army, in opposition to the thirty thousand men who had been detached in the night-time. It was about three leagues from Gilgal to Ai. See Calmet. The army at noon might be over against this latter town, having only the valley to cross to reach the high places on which it was situated. But Joshua clearly conducted it in such a manner, that it was concealed by mountains which lay on that side, and which covered their march from the sight of the men of Ai.

*Ver. 12.* And he took about five thousand men] Besides the thirty thousand men whom Joshua had sent off, he detached five thousand more, either to enforce the former, or to guard the defiles, and shut up passages against those who fled. See Le Clerc and Calmet. We cannot help owning, however, that all this is far from being clear. It is reckoned, that six hundred thousand fighting men would only have occasioned perplexity on this occasion; that Joshua took only thirty thousand chosen men for this expedition; that of these thirty thousand men he detached five thousand, who, making a turn from the north to the south, by way of the east, posted themselves in the night-time as near as possible to Ai, while the general passed that night with the twenty-five thousand men remaining, and did not advance till the morrow. Or else, some conjecture, with Calvin, that the five thousand men, who had lain in ambush under favour of the dark, formed a detachment separate from that of the thirty thousand men, who did not march till the morrow. If these accounts do not appear so wholly conformable to the text as the other, they seem to have greatly the advantage in point of arrangement. It is left to the reader to form his judgment of them. We shall only observe, that an ambuscade of thirty thousand men must have been very strong; and that

13 And when they had fet the people, *even* all the hoſt that *was* on the north of the city, and their liers in wait on the weſt of the city, Joſhua went that night into the miſt of the valley.

14 ¶ And it came to paſs, when the king of Ai ſaw *it*, that they haſted and roſe up early, and the men of the city went out againſt Iſrael to battle, he and all his people, at a time appointed, before the plain; but he wiſt not that *there were* liers in ambuſh againſt him behind the city.

15 And Joſhua and all Iſrael made as if they were beaten before them, and fled by the way of the wilderneſs.

16 And all the people that *were* in Ai were called together to purſue after them: and they purſued after Joſhua, and were drawn away from the city.

17 And there was not a man left in Ai or Beth-el, that went not out after Iſrael: and they left the city open, and purſued after Iſrael.

18 And the LORD ſaid unto Joſhua, Stretch out the ſpear that *is* in thy hand toward Ai; for I will give it into thine hand. And Joſhua ſtretched out the ſpear that *he had* in his hand toward the city.

19 And the ambuſh aroſe quickly out of their place, and they ran as ſoon as he had

that the reaſon alleged by Biſhop Patrick, to prove that the whole army of Iſrael marched before Ai, appears not to be ſubſtantial. "It was," ſays he, "in order that all the Iſraelites might partake of the ſpoil:" but then this learned prelate had forgotten what he judiciously obſerves elſewhere; (ſee Numb. xxxi. 25, &c.) namely, that thoſe who remained in the camp had a ſuitable proportion of the booty, as well as thoſe who were commanded on an expedition; and that God himſelf had ordered matters in this manner.

*Ver. 13. And when they had ſet the people, &c.—on the north*] Or, *on the north-eaſt*. The meaning here is, that the whole army of Iſrael poſted itſelf to the north or north-eaſt of Ai, in the mountains, while the thirty or thirty-five thouſand men in ambuſh turned behind the city to the weſt, and all theſe troops remained in this poſition the reſt of the day and the night following: or elſe, this verſe muſt be conſidered to expreſs briefly what follows; namely, that Joſhua, who went in the night from his camp at Gilgal at the head of thirty thouſand men, took his ſtation to the north of Ai, in a valley, where he lay under covert; that the ſkirt of one of his wings turned off weſt of the place, and that from thence he ſent the five thouſand, who alſo went and lay in ambuſh on the weſt, but lower down, between Ai and Beth-el. Now we may very well ſuppoſe, that all this was done in one night. Joſhua went out in the evening; when he came to the place where he had determined to ſtop, and whence he detached the five thouſand men, it was dark night; but after taking ſome little reſoſe, he renewed his march before day, and, the day breaking, the enemy perceived and attacked them.

*Ver. 15. And Joſhua and all Iſrael, &c.*] As ſoon as the king of Ai appeared in the field, Joſhua executed his plan; he cauſed his men to give ground, who *fled* (as Mr. Chaiſ renders it) *towards the wilderneſs*, or to the plain which ſeparated Ai from Jericho, as if afraid to face the gariſon.

*Ver. 18. And the Lord ſaid unto Joſhua, Stretch out the ſpear, &c.*] The Hebrew word כִּידוֹן *kidon*, ſignifies a *ſield*; and ſo ſeveral interpreters, particularly the Vulgate,

render it. Bochart, however, has ſhewn, that it alſo ſignifies a *lance*, or *pole*, at the top of which Joſhua had fixed a ſreamer, to make it a ſtandard, that the whole army might obſerve it, and that it was, in fact, ſo obſerved; that is, as a ſignal, to rally thoſe who feigned flight; immediately determining the liers in ambuſh to riſe, and march ſtrait on to Ai. Probably, as this ſignal was beforehand agreed upon, and as God himſelf had given Joſhua orders reſpecting it, the hiſtorian, who only mentions it in this place, ſpeaks of it as if given by God at the very moment of execution. Accordingly, he *ſtretched forth the ſpear*, turning himſelf towards Ai. So formerly Moſes, during the famous battle againſt Amalek, lifted up his rod in the ſight of the Iſraelites, to aſſure them of victory.

*Ver. 19. And the ambuſh aroſe quickly, &c.*] Some find it difficult to underſtand how they could perceive Joſhua ſtretch out his ſtandard, as they muſt have been at a very great diſtance, and among the neighbouring mountains. Maſius answers, that they were divinely informed of it. We may add, that, Joſhua having ſettled with them reſpecting this ſignal, they had poſted perſons to obſerve it, and inform them either by ſound of trumpet, or otherwiſe. On their entrance into Ai, finding no reſiſtance, they ſet fire to ſome houſes in it, ſo ſituated that the ſmoke might be moſt eaſily diſcerned by the army.

REFLECTIONS.—We may here obſerve, 1. The conduct and prudence, the courage and caution, of the general. The ambuſh is regulated by his orders; he is by night in the valley, probably to chooſe the proper place for their concealment, perhaps to be alone with God in prayer for ſucceſs. Not diſmayed at the former defeat, he advances with confidence; by retiring ſecures the victory, and when the prey is in the net, lifts up that ſpear which never reſted from ſlaughter, whiſt one man remained alive. *Note*; (1.) To ſpend part of the night in prayer is highly needful, when the next morning leads to the field of battle. (2.) The Lord Jeſus Chriſt, by yielding for a moment in his humiliation, triumphed thus more gloriously, when, on a reſurrexion-day, he turned back, upon his enemies, and led captivity captive. (3.) They who have drawn the

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ſword

stretched out his hand: and they entered into the city, and took it, and hasted, and set the city on fire.

20 And when the men of Ai looked behind them, they saw, and, behold, the smoke of the city ascended up to heaven, and they had no power to flee this way or that way: and the people that fled to the wilderness turned back upon the pursuers.

21 And when Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had taken the city, and that the smoke of the city ascended, then they turned again, and slew the men of Ai.

22 And the other issued out of the city against them; so they were in the midst of Israel, some on this side, and some on that side: and they smote them, so that they let none of them remain or escape.

23 And the king of Ai they took alive, and brought him to Joshua.

24 And it came to pass, when Israel had made an end of slaying all the inhabitants of Ai in the field, in the wilderness wherein they

chased them, and when they were all fallen on the edge of the sword, until they were consumed, that all the Israelites returned unto Ai, and smote it with the edge of the sword.

25 And so it was, that all that fell that day, both of men and women, were twelve thousand, even all the men of Ai.

26 For Joshua drew not his hand back, wherewith he stretched out the spear, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai.

27 Only the cattle and the spoil of that city Israel took for a prey unto themselves, according unto the word of the LORD which he commanded Joshua.

28 And Joshua burnt Ai, and made it an heap for ever, even a desolation unto this day.

29 And the king of Ai he hanged on a tree until even-tide: and as soon as the sun was down, Joshua commanded that they should take his carcase down from the tree, and cast

sword against their spiritual enemies, must cast away the scabbard, and only expect rest and victory in the grave. 2. The infatuation of Israel's enemies. Intoxicated by success, they kept neither scouts to discover the ambush behind them, nor feared to advance to meet the approaching armies of Israel. When shouting already for anticipated victory, on the feint made to retire, lo, the flames ascend behind them; their foes halt, face about, and attack with fury irresistible; whilst they, dismayed, have neither power to fight, nor opportunity to fly. *Note:* (1.) The prosperity of fools destroys them. (2.) The enemies of God's people often promise themselves to glut their fury in their destruction, when they are only madly advancing to their own ruin. (3.) Security, and self-confidence in an evil way, are among the direst symptoms of a reprobate mind, and the surest presages of eternal misery. (4.) The triumphing of the wicked is but for a moment: in death, they shall lie down and perish for ever.

*Ver. 26. Joshua drew not his hand back, &c.]* He ceased not to fight spear in hand; or rather, he continued to hold up the standard to animate his troops to destroy the enemy, till they were all put to the sword.

*Ver. 28. And Joshua burnt Ai, &c.]* After giving up the city to plunder, according to the express command of God, Joshua caused it to be burnt to ashes, leaving there only a heap of stones, which was to be seen even to the time of writing this book. See ver. 11. 26. As to the expression *an heap for ever*, it is well known that it should not be understood in strictness. When the Hebrews say a

thing will last *for ever*, it almost ~~always~~ signifies that it will last a very long time, and nothing more. Thus we find that the city of Ai had been rebuilt, and was inhabited at the time of Esdras and Nehemiah. Esdras, ii. 28. Neh. xi. 31.

*Ver. 29. And the king of Ai he hanged on a tree]* An end worthy of a prince who, doubtless, had by his example encouraged his subjects to resist the commands of God, and so to fill up the measure of their guilt.

*Until even-tide]* See the law, Deut. xxi. 22, 23.

The king of Ai alone survived the general slaughter, and he was only spared to meet a more ignominious doom. He is hanged *in terrorum*, that the kings of Canaan may hear and tremble; and on his corpse a monument is raised in the gate of the desolate city, to warn all beholders of the end of those who fight against God. Let wicked kings, who oppress God's people, still look to this heap, and remember that the same avenging God lives and reigns. The people of the city, to the number of twelve thousand, are sacrificed to the divine justice, and the spoil divided among the host, as an encouragement to them to go on boldly in fighting the Lord's battles. *Note:* They who endure hardships, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, shall find to their comfort, that they who do his work shall reap his wages. The spear of Joshua now, like Moses's arm, is no longer lifted up. *Note:* In death, the believer shall no longer need to lift up the banner of war, nor to wield the sword of the spirit; but retire, to enjoy the fruit of his victories among the saints triumphant in the camp of the Lord of Hosts.

*Ver.*

it at the entering of the gate of the city, and raise thereon a great heap of stones, *that remaineth* unto this day.

30 ¶ Then Joshua built an altar unto the LORD God of Israel in mount Ebal,

31 As Moses the servant of the LORD commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of whole stones, over which no man hath lifted up *any* iron: and they offered thereon burnt-offerings unto the LORD, and sacrificed peace-offerings.

32 And he wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel.

33 And all Israel, and their elders, and officers, and their judges, stood on this side the

ark and on that side before the priests the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, as well the stranger, as he that was born among them; half of them over against mount Gerizim, and half of them over against mount Ebal; as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel.

34 And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law.

35 There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them.

*Ver. 30. Then Joshua built an altar—in mount Ebal]* This should be rendered, as we have observed on Deut. xxvii. *BY mount Ebal*; and nothing can more clearly prove the truth of the interpretation there given, than the relation of the fact before us. The taking of Jericho and Ai made Joshua master of the adjacent country: he advanced northward to Sichem, and, with all the people, went and took possession of the mountains Ebal and Gerizim, placed by some, improperly, between Ai and Beth-el; but which we have spoken of in the notes on Deut. xxvii.

*Ver. 31. And they offered thereon burnt-offerings, &c.]* They renewed for the third time the covenant with God, as has been elsewhere observed. See on Deut. xxvii. 10.

*Ver. 32, 33. And he wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law, &c.]* See on Deut. xxvii. 3, &c.

*Ver. 34, 35. And afterward he read all the words of the law, &c.]* i. e. *He caused to be read.* Houbigant. We have only a word to add to the remarks already made, respecting all these ceremonies, in the notes on Deuteronomy; which is, that the manner in which the sacred historian expresses himself in these two verses, appears much to favour their opinion, who think that only the *blessings* and *curses*, which Moses had commanded to be pronounced, were written upon the monument on mount Ebal: Joshua read, or caused to be read, all that he had written; or, as the text has it, *all the words of the law*. Now it is very evident, that he read only the *blessings* and *curses* above-mentioned; and not all the book of Deuteronomy, or the whole law, as many critics would insinuate. Thus it is evident, that he had only to write a duplicate of these blessings and curses, as they were contained in the law of Moses.

*Before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, &c.]* That is, without excepting women, children, or proselytes; because they ought all to know the law which they were bound to obey.

**REFLECTIONS.**—The introduction of this solemn transaction in the midst of the wars, intimates the diligence and

zeal of the people to observe the divine institutions. *Note,* When most surrounded with dangers, we have greatest cause to mind the one thing needful, the securing an interest in the favour of God.

1. They built an altar, and offered sacrifice thereon, on mount Ebal, where the curses were pronounced, intimating, (1.) Their dependance upon that atonement, without which the curses that were written in the law must quickly overtake them to their ruin. *Note,* Nothing but the blood of Jesus can save any soul from the curse of the law. (2.) Their gratitude for God's mercy to them. They got not the land by their own sword; and the beasts they offered were the spoil He had given them. *Notes,* [1.] We can only render to God of his own: all we possess is his. [2.] Yet God accepts the grateful offering; and they who acknowledge him in prayer and praise, shall find him prospering their ways with increasing blessings.

2. A solemn rehearsal was made of the blessings and curses, in the presence of all the people, great and small, half on mount Ebal, half on mount Gerizim, with the ark, the priests, the Levites, the judges, and officers in the midst. After each sentence, they expressed their assent aloud, and their readiness to embrace that covenant under which they held possession of the land. *Notes,* (1.) The word of God is given, not to be locked up from the common people, but to be heard and read of all men. (2.) The highest and the lowest are alike interested to hear and obey the divine command. In God's sight, the prince and the beggar are on a level; the soul that sinneth, it shall die. (3.) All God's commands, from the least to the greatest, are enjoined by the same authority: no sin so little, as not to be guarded by the awful sanction of the curse and wrath of God. (4.) Masters of families must see that all under their roof, who are able to understand, seriously attend the house of God, and hear his word read and preached. (5.) It is thus that we may hope to receive the fulness of the promise in glory, when by grace, through faith, we are obedient to the divine commands on earth.

## C H A P. IX.

*The Gibeonites obtain a league with Israel by craft; which being discovered, they are condemned to a state of slavery.*

[Before Christ 1450.]

AND it came to pass, when all the kings which were on this side Jordan, in the hills, and in the vallies, and in all the coasts of the great sea over against Lebanon, the Hittite, and the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, heard thereof;

2 That they gathered themselves together, to fight with Joshua and with Israel, with one accord.

3 ¶ And when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done unto Jericho and to Ai,

4 They did work wilily, and went and

made as if they had been ambassadors, and took old sacks upon their asses, and wine bottles, old, and rent, and bound up;

5 And old shoes and clouted upon their feet, and old garments upon them; and all the bread of their provision was dry and mouldy.

6 And they went to Joshua unto the camp at Gilgal, and said unto him, and to the men of Israel, We be come from a far country: now therefore make ye a league with us.

7 And the men of Israel said unto the Hivites, Peradventure ye dwell among us; and how shall we make a league with you;

8 And they said unto Joshua, We are thy servants. And Joshua said unto them, Who are ye? and from whence come ye?

9 And they said unto him, From a very far country thy servants are come because of the

## C H A P. IX.

*Ver. 1. And it came to pass, when all the kings, &c.]* The success of Joshua's arms in the eastern part of the land of Canaan, soon struck with terror those princes whose territories lay to the west of that country: The fright was general, even to the mountains inhabited by the Amorites on the south, (Deut. i. 7. 19, 20.) upon the coasts of the Mediterranean, where the Canaanites, properly so called, had their settlements; and to Lebanon, which bounded the Promised Land on the north. See on Deut. xx. 17. and hereafter on chap. xvi. 10.

*The great sea over against Lebanon] The Mediterranean sea as far as to Lebanon.* See Nold. 80. 831.

*Note; 1.* Those whom God means to destroy, are generally infatuated with malice and revenge. The enemies of God's people, however divided among themselves, are unanimous to oppose the truth: Deists, Arians, Socinians, Formalists, moral or profane, Conformists, or Separatists, all unite against the spiritual seed. 3. When we see the world so leagued together against the truth, surely they who are faithful should overlook their trivial differences in unessentials, and, laying every cause of dispute aside, join heart and hand against their common enemy.

*Ver. 3. And when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard, &c.]* The city of Gibeon, which was much more considerable than Ai, was, according to Eusebius and St. Jerome, the capital of the country of the Hivites. Eusebius adds, that in his time there was a village of this name four miles to the west of Beth-el. Gibeon afterwards fell to the lot of the tribe of Benjamin, and was assigned to the priests. See chap. xviii. 25. xxi. 17.

*Ver. 5. And old shoes, and clouted, upon their feet, &c.]* The Hebrew is, shoes spotted, i. e. of divers colours, by reason of their having been spoiled by the clay and dust; and pieced, as if worn out by the length of the journey;

with clothes suited to their shoes, and their bread dry and mouldy. In the Hebrew it is bread dry, and נִקְרָדִים *nikkudim*; that is to say, literally, pricked, speckled; so they call the cakes pierced with several holes. Buxtorf speaks of them in his Synag. Jud. c. xii. Perhaps, therefore, it should be translated, and their bread was dry, like cakes, or biscuits. Calmet is of this opinion, which he confirms by the testimony of Jonathan, and other circumstances.

*Ver. 6. And they went to Joshua—and said, &c.]* Some interpreters are of opinion, that the deputies from the Gibeonites addressed themselves to the first they met in the camp of Gilgal; but it seems more conformable to the text to suppose, that they did not signify their business to any but Joshua, in the presence of the chief men of Israel; i. e. to the heads of the tribes, who formed his council. 'Tis true, we read in the Hebrew, to Joshua,—and to the men of Israel; but the original expression often signifies in Scripture, men of note, people of distinction; and we need only look at verses 15. 18, 19. 21. to perceive that it should be so understood in this place.

*Ver. 8. And they said unto Joshua, We are thy servants]* Being more pressingly interrogated by Joshua, they answered with humility, that, knowing the greatness of the nation of Israel and their own inferiority, they desired nothing more than to live in amity and alliance with them; which is all that the expression, we are thy servants, implies. We see others like it in the history of the Patriarchs, (Gen. xviii. 3, 4. xxxii. 20.) where they are most certainly used merely by way of compliment.

*Ver. 9—13. And they said unto him, From a very far country thy servants are come, &c.]* Nothing can be more artful than this answer of the Gibeonites, to the prudent and close questions put by Joshua. 1. Instead of saying, without evasion, whente they came, they again reply, that they came from afar. 2. They give him to understand that they were led to undertake this long journey from

name of the LORD thy God: for we have heard the fame of him, and all that he did in Egypt,

10 And all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites, that *were* beyond Jordan, to Sihon king of Heshbon, and to Og king of Bashan, which *was* at Ashtaroth.

11 Wherefore our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spake to us, saying, Take victuals with you for the journey, and go to meet them, and say unto them, We *are* your servants: therefore now make ye a league with us.

12 This our bread we took hot *for* our provision out of our houses on the day we came forth to go unto you; but now, behold, it is dry, and it is mouldy:

13 And these bottles of wine, which we filled, *were* new; and, behold, they be rent: and these our garments and our shoes are become old by reason of the very long journey.

14 And the men took of their victuals, and asked not *counsel* at the mouth of the LORD.

15 And Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live:

from a motive of respect for the God of Israel; and, affecting to celebrate the wonders of his power in Ægypt, and beyond Jordan, they speak neither of the sacking of Jericho, nor of the destruction of Ai, in order to leave no room to suspect that fear and policy are the real motives of their embassy. 3. To understand them, some would suppose, that they beg of Joshua to enter into league with them, only that they might be united to a people so much more highly favoured by God than any other; and so dexterously is their discourse turned this way, that the Samaritans, in their *Chronicle*, say, that the Gibeonites made an offer to Joshua to embrace the religion of the Hebrews, and to submit to whatever he should enjoin them. 4. and lastly, The better to deceive Joshua and the heads of the people, they dwell upon their outward condition, where every thing, their clothes, shoes, provisions, and utensils, indicate a long and tedious journey, and bear testimony to the truth of their assertions.—After this, how are they to be excused, and how can their conduct be even justified? This, however, has been done, and the cause of the Gibeonites pleaded, by one of the greatest men of the last age. “The artifice of the “Gibeonites,” says Puffendorf, in his *Law of Nature and Nations*, “has nothing blameable in it, and, properly speaking, does not deserve the harsh name of “lying. For who would impute a crime to any one, because, to screen himself from the fury of an inexorable “and all-destroying enemy, he hath recourse to an innocent fiction? Besides,” adds this celebrated writer, “the “Israelites, strictly speaking, sustained no injury by this “piece of finesse; for what is lost by not shedding the “blood of a man, whom yet we can deprive of all his “substance, after having so disarmed and weakened him “that he is no longer able to rebel against us?” See lib. iv. cap. 2. sect. 7. But the question is, Whether we may justly give to this cunning of the Gibeonites, the appellation of an *innocent fiction*? Had the Israelites been robbers, who, without any command from heaven, carried their bloody arms into countries to which they had no right; and had the Gibeonites been ignorant that a wonderful providence superintended the conduct of these conquerors; then we might consider the fraud they had recourse to as innocent. But let any one read what they

say to Joshua in the 9th verse. The idea which they had formed of the God of Israel, should have engaged them to use every other expedient, rather than that of eluding his justice by disguise and falsehood. They should have gone back, so far as the obscurity of that oecomy under which they lived would permit, to the cause of that rigour which God exercised towards them. They should have acknowledged, that their crimes had drawn down upon them all those troubles wherewith their nation was oppressed; and after having clothed themselves in sackcloth and ashes, in order to the obtaining pardon, should have left the rest to Providence, and have been convinced that that God, who had moved all nature and the elements to punish guilty nations, is ever able to find out some means or other to serve those who turn unto him and repent.

*Ver. 14. And the men took of their victuals]* It has been asked in what light they thus took of it? and some pretend it was to taste with them in token of friendship, peace, and alliance, according to the ancient custom in use among almost all nations. Others think it was rather to examine whether their bread was, as they said, dry and mouldy, like a biscuit which has been a long voyage.

*And asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord]* They did not consult the high-priest, arrayed in the breast-plate with the Urim and Thummim, as they ought to have done, to know from his mouth the will of the Lord. They were determined by views merely political. After a bare inspection of the victuals which the Gibeonites brought with them, they believed their declaration, and received them cordially, without giving themselves the trouble of consulting God, who, in all probability, would have permitted them to make peace with them, on the conditions imposed by Joshua, and secretly prescribed by his divine providence.

*Ver. 15. And Joshua]* With the advice of the elders, who were deceived as well as himself, *made peace with them, &c.* That is, he not only preserved their lives, (for, supposing the Gibeonites to have come from a country situate beyond the land of Canaan, nothing obliged him to put them to the sword) but they were left in the quiet possession of their effects. The word *live* in Scripture is frequently of equal signification with *prosperity*; in which sense we understand it here. Joshua promised to preserve



and the princes of the congregation sware unto them.

16 ¶ And it came to pass, at the end of three days after they had made a league with them, that they heard that they *were* their

neighbours, and *that* they dwelt among them.

17 And the children of Israel journeyed, and came unto their cities on the third day. Now their cities *were* Gibeon, and Chephirah, and Beerth, and Kirjath-jearim.

to the Gibeonites their territories, privileges, and liberty. Hence this general seems to have engaged himself, without knowing it, to what he could not perform; for all alliance with the Canaanites was prohibited. And how, indeed, could the Israelites contract alliances with nations, whose gods and worship they were to abolish, and whose government they were commanded utterly to overthrow? See Deut. vii. 2. and Shuckford's Connection, vol. iii. p. 385.

*And the princes—sware*] They ratified this treaty of peace by a solemn oath, the violation whereof was afterwards punished with terrible severity. See 2 Sam. xxi. 6.

REFLECTIONS.—The same event produces very different effects, according to the different tempers of men. Israel's success roused the other Canaanites to battle, and warned the Gibeonites to make their peace before the sword overtook them. As no mention is made of Gibeon's king, and the three confederate cities, it seems they were a little republic; and whilst the proud kings of Canaan refused to bow, in their senators there was wisdom. We have here,

1. The method they took to obtain peace with Israel. Well acquainted with the late transaction, and being hardly more than eight leagues distant from the camp in Gilgal, of course, likely to be soon exposed to the arm of Israel, and no strangers to the utter extirpation of the Canaanites, which was commanded; they disguised themselves, as ambassadors come from a far country, on the fame of Israel's exploits; and, to confirm the cheat, appear before Joshua, as having undergone a tedious journey. *Note;* (1.) They who pretend to do us most honour are most likely to impose upon us. (2.) Pretences to antiquity have, we see, of old deceived God's Israel; we must beware of being caught with this Gibeonitish wile. (3.) Not every beggar who appears in rags is an object of distress: humble and true poverty has an artless tale; but when your Honour, or your Reverence, is pat on the tongue, this court to your pride detects the knave.

2. The Israelites and Joshua have some suspicion, and therefore begin to question who they were, and whence they came. We should not be credulous to every tale, but examine well before we contract intimacy. In our spiritual warfare, as much need is there to be aware of the wily serpent as of the roaring lion.

3. The more danger there is of discovery, the more need of strong assurances and artful pleas, to gain credit to their assertions. Though they carefully conceal the mention of the place, they affirm that they come from a far country; as if utterly unknown to Israel, and that their inducement was a respect for Israel's God, whose wonders in Egypt and the land of Bashan they had heard, not mentioning Ai or Jericho, though these latter were the real motives to their journey. They profess to be so affected by these wonders of God, that on any terms they would make peace with them, and call themselves their servants,

as if ready to do them any service which should be desired. *Note;* (1.) A Canaanite is never at a loss for a lie. (2.) One lie seldom stands alone, but requires the addition of others to support its credibility. (3.) It is very evil to seek a right end by wrong means: Perhaps if they had spoken honestly and openly, God would have interposed for them, and they would have found better terms than they afterwards obtained.

4. The stratagem succeeds, and Joshua and the princes, having inspected their bread, and found it agreeable to their description, too hastily concluded on the truth of their story; and counting it unnecessary on such an occasion to ask counsel of God, they make an agreement with them, and confirm it with an oath to let them live. *Note;* (1.) They who are honest themselves, are least suspicious of fraud in others. (2.) When we are hasty in our resolves, we shall often have cause to repent of them. (3.) Nothing of importance should be transacted by us, without prayer to God for his direction. (4.) It is wise in every sinner to imitate (in a good sense) those Gibeonites; in rags of humiliation and godly sorrow, to be found at the feet of Jesus, seeking that peace without which we perish, and we need not doubt of success; for he will say unto us, "Live;" and, for the comfort of our hope, confirm it with an oath.

*Ver. 16. And—at the end of three days—they heard that they were their neighbours*] Montanus's opinion of this matter is very probable. The pretended ambassadors of the Gibeonites having informed their countrymen of the success of their stratagem, rejoicings were made, the news of which could not fail to be soon brought to the camp of Israel.

*Ver. 17. And the children of Israel journeyed, &c.*] Three days after Joshua had learned the cheat of the Gibeonites, he sent out a detachment from his army to reconnoitre their country. *Gibeon* was the capital city; *Chephirah* and *Beerth* fell with it to the tribe of Benjamin. The latter, in the time of Eusebius and St. Jerome, was but a village, in the way from Jerusalem to Sichem, seven miles from Jerusalem.—Maundrell, who confounds *Beerth* with *Beer*, mentioned Judg. ix. 21. says, that the situation is very pleasant, upon a little eminence, which looks towards the south. At the top of this ascent, there is a fountain abounding with excellent water, which gives its name to Beer. On the upper side are the remains of an old church, built by the empress Helena, in memory of the Blessed Virgin. See Journey to Aleppo, p. 64. With respect to *Kirjath-jearim*, which fell to the tribe of Judah, it was situate between the confines of this tribe and that of Benjamin, nine miles from Jerusalem, and between that capital and Lydda. The ark of the covenant remained at *Kirjath-jearim* twenty years. The prophet Urijah, mentioned Jerem. xxvi. 20. was a native of the place.

*Ver.*

18 And the children of Israel smote them not, because the princes of the congregation had sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel. And all the congregation murmured against the princes.

19 But all the princes said unto all the congregation, We have sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them.

20 This we will do to them; we will even

*Ver. 18. And the children of Israel smote them not, &c.]* Even though they had not thought themselves bound by their oath, (as some think they were not, since it had been obtained upon a false pretence;) yet it was for the honour of religion that they should shew themselves scrupulous not to violate an engagement which had been entered into in the name of Jehovah. Nothing could be more proper than this prudent delicacy, to give the Gibeonites great ideas of the majesty of the true God, a majesty which would have been degraded in the sight of the Canaanites by a different conduct. Such was the respect of the ancient Hebrews for oaths, that even when they might have found plausible pretences for breaking them, they made it an indispensable duty to keep them faithfully. "Then," to use the words of a celebrated Roman historian, "men were not arrived at that pitch of indifference and contempt for religion, which is now grown so common: instead of giving themselves the liberty to interpret laws and oaths according to their own interest, each, on the contrary, submitted his conduct to the laws." Liv. l. iii. c. 20.

*All the congregation murmured against the princes]* It is the disposition of almost all nations to be ever ready to cavil at the conduct of those who govern them. In the present case, the Israelites could not justly reproach their leaders with being actuated by levity, and exposing the nation to fail in its duty, however it might be conducted; but what they most repined at was, evidently, because they could not pillage the cities of the Gibeonites, and enrich themselves with their spoils.

*Ver. 19. But all the princes said—we have sworn, &c.]* But did this oath then, made lightly, and upon a false pretence, bind Joshua and the Israelites? I. Some able interpreters think it did; and their reason is, because Joshua had not been deceived by the Gibeonites in the essential point. The Gibeonites had given themselves out to be foreigners, in order to obtain peace; but, as they could have obtained it, though Canaanites, by renouncing idolatry, and submitting themselves to the Israelites, this falsehood, say these critics, could not deceive Joshua in the essential part of his commission; so that, having once engaged, he was obliged to keep his word; and if he subjected the Gibeonites to servitude, it was only to punish their knavery. Of this opinion are Grotius and Puffendorf. Some remarks are added to confirm these reflections. 1. All the leaders of Israel thought themselves bound by their oath. 2. God punishes the violation of it long afterwards in the family of Saul. 3. As it is expressly declared, that the Gibeonites were the only people that fought for peace with the children of Israel, and as the other nations, who obstinately persisted to oppose them, were for that reason destroyed without mercy; it follows plainly, that there was nothing in the divine laws which obliged Joshua to destroy the Gibeonites in case they applied for peace; consequently, nothing that could dispense with his preserv-

ing their lives, after having engaged himself thereto by oath. See Calmet. II. Other casuists, on the contrary, are of opinion, that as Joshua, deceived by the Gibeonites, had promised to them, upon oath, a thing which he neither could promise nor perform, viz. to save their lives, this oath was therefore invalid. These learned men conceive, that the commands of God, respecting the destruction of the Canaanites, allowed of no exception; that the seven nations were to be destroyed without mercy, whether they submitted or not; consequently, that Joshua, on being informed that the Gibeonites were of Canaan, could not, nor ought to keep the oath that he had too lightly made, to preserve them; and that if he regarded this oath, it was, doubtless, because God ratified it by some apparent act, whereof the Scripture, which frequently omits particular circumstances, makes no mention. See Poole's Synopsis, and Barbeyrac's note on Puffendorf's Law of Nature and Nations, b. iv. c. 2. sect. 7. III. As we have embraced the opinion of those interpreters and divines, who think that God had given orders to spare those among the Canaanites who should renounce idolatry and submit to the government of Israel, we cannot subscribe to Grotius's decision. We must not, however, pass over in silence the manner in which this whole affair has been stated by an able critic. After shewing that the people of Israel could enter into no alliance with the Gibeonites in full form; that he treated literally with their ambassadors; that he engaged, in the most sacred manner, to spare the whole nation; that these words contained a formal engagement not to wage war against them; and, consequently, that it is rightly said, that he was unluckily situated, to oblige himself by oath to do that for them which he could not do, without rendering himself guilty of an express breach of the orders which he had received from God; but that the fraud of the Gibeonites having been discovered, Joshua represented to them, that his orders expressly signified, that he was to destroy all the Canaanitish nations, if they refused to submit to the religion and laws of Israel; that they had taken him by surprize, by falsely feigning to be what they were not; and that it was his duty to destroy them; that, nevertheless, he would propose to them an expedient for saving their lives, which was, not only by receiving the civil and religious laws of the Hebrews, but also by resolving to be for ever employed in hewing of wood and drawing of water for the whole congregation, as a punishment for their perfidy; that, how hard soever this condition might be, they chose rather to accept it than to die; that God agreed to this second treaty, as conformable to the orders he had issued against the Canaanites; and that by this means Joshua happily drew himself out of the dilemma into which he had fallen, together with the princes of Israel. See Shuckford's Connection, vol. iii. p. 372, &c.

*Ver. 20. This we will do to them, &c.]* "That we may not

let them live, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath which we swore unto them.

21 And the princes said unto them, Let them live; but let them be hewers of wood and drawers of water unto all the congregation; as the princes had promised them.

22 ¶ And Joshua called for them, and he spake unto them, saying, Wherefore have ye beguiled us, saying, We are very far from you, when ye dwell among us?

23 Now therefore ye are cursed, and there shall none of you be freed from being bondmen, and hewers of wood, and drawers of water, for the house of my God.

24 And they answered Joshua, and said, Because it was certainly told thy servants, how that the LORD thy God commanded his servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you, therefore we were fore afraid of our lives, because of you, and have done this thing.

25 And now, behold, we are in thine hand: as it seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, do.

26 And so did he unto them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, that they slew them not.

“not draw down upon us the wrath of God, by the violation of our oath, though rashly made; this is what we may now do with the Gibeonites. Let their lives be spared, but let them be reduced to the servile occupations of *hewers of wood and drawers of water unto all the congregation*, them, and their children after them, for ever.” The expression, *all the congregation*, is explained in ver. 23. to be *the house of God*. Thus then the Gibeonites were condemned to fetch all the water and wood necessary for the sacrifices, purifications, holy feasts, and, without exception, for whatever the service of the sanctuary required; a mean and toilsome occupation, (see Deut. xxix. 11.) which indicated a real slavery; and which, doubtless, they filled up by turns, in the same manner as the Levites discharged their functions. The Romans observed the same conduct as Joshua’s towards the Brutians, a people who at that time possessed what is now called Calabria; and to punish whom for having quitted their alliance, and taken part with Hannibal, they condemned them to serve always as couriers to all the magistrates and officers whom they sent into the provinces dependent on the republic. See Strabo, lib. v. Some learned men are of opinion, that the Gibeonites were afterwards called *Nethinims*; i. e. people given, as it were, to the service of God. *Note*; How great the mercy shewn unto the sinner, if but his life were given him for a prey; but how much greater, when his lot is assigned him in the temple of God, and the perfect freedom of God’s service becomes his happy portion.

*Ver. 23. Now, therefore, ye are cursed, &c.*] “Notwithstanding the oath which we have sworn to you, ye shall not utterly escape that sentence of malediction which the Lord of the whole earth has pronounced upon the Canaanitish nations, to which you belong.” The base and vile service to which they were about to be forever subjected, well deserved the odious epithet of a *curse*. The Gibeonites, in fact, ceased to be free men, and masters of themselves, by reason of the servile offices to which they were put. They did not, however, properly speaking, become absolute slaves.

*Hewers of wood, and drawers of water, for the house of my God*] This is the limitation of their servitude; to carry

wood and water for the use of the tabernacle, and afterwards of the temple, or for such other like purposes, as need or circumstances required: for instance, Solomon is thought to have employed them among the hewers of stone, and carriers of burdens, in the building of his magnificent structure. See 1 Chron. xxii. 2. 2 Chron. ii. 17, &c. Grotius has well expressed their condition: “They were subjected to certain personal servitude; whereas, had they but acted sincerely, they might have been received upon the footing of simple tributaries:” De B. & P. l. ii. c. 13. sect. 4. n. 2. Or, in some generations to come, they might have been even associated with the people of God. See on Deut. xxiii. 2. The author of the *Observations* remarks, that the labour enjoined the Gibeonites was also what *females* were wont to perform, and do to this day in those countries. So Dr. Shaw (p. 241 of his *Travels*) mentions the going out of the *women* at evening to fetch *water*, as still the custom of the Arabs of Barbary; and he cites Gen. xxiv. 11. to prove that it was the custom anciently; to which he might have added 1 Sam. ix. 11. and John, iv. 7. The author of the *History of the Piratical States of Barbary* assures us also, (page 47.) that they cut the fuel. “Amongst the Arabs of the kingdom of Algiers, the care of the cattle belongs to the *women* and children; they also provide food for the family, *cut wood, fetch water*, and, when their domestic affairs allow them, tend their silk-worms.” D’Arvieux likewise, in his voyage to Palestine, by Roque, p. 230. represents the *daughters* of the Turcmen of Palestine as fetching *wood* as well as *water*. As the *women* of these countries cut *fuel* now, as well as fetch *water*, we may believe that they did so formerly, and that they are both equally ancient customs: a supposition very much confirmed by Jeremiah, vii. 18. and Lam. v. 13. which speak of the *children’s* fetching *wood*,—*the young women*. The bitterness then of the doom of the Gibeonites does not seem to have consisted in the *labriousness* of the service enjoined them, as has been commonly understood; for it was usual for the women and children to perform what was required of the Gibeonites; but in its *degrading* them from the characteristic employments of men. The not receiving them as allies, was bitter; the disarming them who had been warriors, and condemning them to the employment

27 And Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of the LORD, even unto this day, in the place which he should choose.

## C H A P. X.

*Five kings war against Gibeon; who are subdued by Joshua, great hail stones falling upon them from heaven: Joshua commands the sun and the moon to stand still; subdues many other cities, and returns triumphant to the camp at Gilgal.*

[Before Christ 1449.]

**N**OW it came to pass, when Adoni-zedec king of Jerusalem had heard how Joshua

had taken Ai, and had utterly destroyed it; as he had done to Jericho and her king, so he had done to Ai and her king; and how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel, and were among them;

2 That they feared greatly, because Gibeon was a great city, as one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai, and all the men thereof were mighty.

3 Wherefore Adoni-zedec king of Jerusalem sent unto Hoham king of Hebron, and unto Piram king of Jarmuth, and unto Japhia king of Lachish, and unto Debir king of Eglon, saying,

of females in those days, was worse; but the extending this degradation to their posterity, bitterest of all; insomuch that it is no wonder, under these circumstances, that they are said to have been cursed.

*Ver. 27. And Joshua made them that day hewers, &c.]* Thenceforward he condemned them for ever to this service, the duties of which they continued to discharge in the time of Nehemiah, under the name of Nethinims; who, as we before observed on ver. 20. are considered by some learned men as having been the posterity of the Gibeonites: others, among whom is Calmet, observe, that the Gibeonites were greatly diminished by the persecution which Saul carried on among them, and that it was evidently this which obliged David and the princes of Israel to contribute slaves to the service of the house of the Lord, who were called *Nethinims*. The Gibeonites are no more mentioned after the captivity; or, if they are, a passage in Nehemiah, *x. 34.* would incline one to think that they were then discharged from one part of their office; and Josephus, *Bell. Jud. lib. ii. c. 7.* seems to confirm this opinion.

*In the place which he should choose]* The tabernacle was now at Gilgal, whence it was conveyed to Shiloh, Nob, and Gibeon; in which last two cities it remained for fifty-five years. Patrick. See 1 Kings, *iii. 2.* Psalm, *xlvi. 1.*

**REFLECTIONS.**—The business being thus determined, Joshua called for the chief men of these cities probably, and let them know the resolution.

1. He reproves them for their imposition. A lie deserves rebuke: yet he speaks with mildness, considering their situation, and feeling for their distress. *Note;* If we considered the violence of others' temptation, we should be less severe against their sin, considering ourselves, lest we also should be tempted. 2. They confess their fault, and assign their reason; which, though it will by no means excuse their sin, at least may be some alleviation of it. When life is at stake, it requires great grace to dare to speak the truth. 3. Joshua condemns them to perpetual servitude. Though the curse of death was removed, the curse of bondage was upon them. However, in its issue it was to be of service to all parties: *To the Gibeonites themselves*, who, being thus employed about the sanctuary, would be better

taught, and have a peculiar privilege of spiritual improvement: *To the priests and Levites*, who would be much assisted by the ministry of these strong men, in the very laborious work of drawing so much water as the frequent ablutions required, and cleaving so much wood as the frequent sacrifices would need: *To the people*, who had a common interest in the altar, that it should be well served, and were probably, before this, themselves assistants in these common services. *Note;* God can thus over-rule the issue of events, and bring much good out of evil. 4. The Gibeonites readily acquiesce in the determination. They refer themselves entirely to Joshua, to be and do as he pleased; and he saves them, and sets them to work. Their cities were given to the people, and their service employed for the public. *Note;* (1.) The soul which refers itself wholly to Jesus Christ need not fear being cast away. (2.) If Christ receives us, we need not complain of any cross that he is pleased to lay upon us. (3.) They, who serve the Saviour, will ever have reason to bless the day in which they made the exchange of carnal liberty for spiritual subjection.

## C H A P. X.

*Ver. 1. Now—when Adoni-zedec, &c.]* Adoni-zedec, signifies lord of righteousness, which is nearly the same as Melchizedec. As these kings were both kings of Salem, or Jerusalem, some suppose, that the successors of Melchizedec affected a name like his to give themselves more dignity, by resembling in some measure that famous monarch. But while he assumed a name which called forth so many virtues, Adoni-zedec was not careful to imitate them. Contented to adorn himself with an amiable appellation, he limited his wishes to the being called *just*, without any endeavour to merit so excellent a surname by just actions. It is very evident, that Jerusalem retained its ancient name of Salem till the Israelites took possession of it, and called it *Jeru-salem*. But the Benjamites, to whose lot it fell, being unable entirely to dislodge the Jebusites who occupied it, *Judg. i. 21.* and the latter having at length driven off the former, the Jebusites continued to call it *Jebus*, (*Judg. xix. 10.*) while the Israelites on their part called it *Jerusalem*, says Bishop Patrick. It

4 Come up unto me, and help me, that we may smite Gibeon: for it hath made peace with Joshua and with the children of Israel.

5 Therefore the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, the king of Eglon, gathered themselves together, and went up, they and all their hosts, and encamped before Gibeon, and made war against it.

6 ¶ And the men of Gibeon sent unto Joshua to the camp to Gilgal, saying, Slack not thy hand from thy servants; come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us: for all the kings of the Amorites that dwell in the

mountains are gathered together against us.

7 So Joshua ascended from Gilgal, he, and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valour.

8 ¶ And the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear them not: for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee.

9 Joshua therefore came unto them suddenly, and went up from Gilgal all night.

10 And the LORD discomfited them before Israel, and slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and chased them along the way that goeth up to Beth-horon, and smote them to Azekah, and unto Makedah.

must, however, be acknowledged, that all this is but conjecture. It is neither proved, that Jerusalem is precisely the same city as the ancient Salem, nor that the Israelites gave it the name of Jerusalem when they made the conquest of it. This latter name did not begin to supplant those of *Jebus*, *Sion*, and *city of David*, till the time of Solomon. Whatever is urged to account for this change is dubious; nor are authors agreed respecting the true signification of the name Jerusalem. The Massoretes pronounce it *Jerusalaim*; but, according to the method in which the Chaldees pronounce the Hebrew, it should be read *Jerousélem*, which come nearer to the *Jerusalem* of the Greeks, and our *Jerusalem*. This name is probably composed of *Sbalum*, or *Sbalem*, i. e. *peace*, and, as many persons think, of *jarab*, which signifies *to fear*, or from *jarash*, *to inherit*, *to possess*, (see Reland. *Palæst.* lib. iii. p. 834.) or from *jerus*, the same word as *jebus*, with the change only of a single letter.

*Ver. 3. Adoni-zedec—sent unto Hobam, &c.]* Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon, were four cities situated south of Jerusalem, and, together with that city, given to the tribe of Judah, as we shall see hereafter.

*Ver. 5. Therefore the five kings, &c.]* Hebron belonged to the Hittites, Gen. xxiii. 1—3. xxv. 9, 10. Jerusalem to the Jebusites, chap. xv. 63. and the Gibeonites made a part of the Hivites, chap. ix. 7. But as the Amorites were the most powerful nation in the land of Canaan, Gen. xv. 16. they held in subjection one part of their neighbours, and had given them kings. Hence it is, that the Gibeonites are particularly called *a remnant of the Amorites*, 2 Sam. xxi. 2.

REFLECTIONS.—Alarmed by the capture of Jericho and Ai, and more irritated with the surrender of Gibeon, Adoni-zedec, king of Jerusalem, (as it was afterwards called,) summons his neighbour kings to unite their forces against Gibeon; either to prevent so strong a city, and one so near him, from being occupied by his enemies, or to make an example of those who were accounted betrayers of their country. *Note;* They, who leave the ways of sin, must not expect to part from the world without perfe-

ction. Satan and his servants will persecute those as deserters who enlist under the banners of Jesus.

Alarmed by their approaching danger, they fly to Joshua for help. Though mighty men, they know themselves unable to cope with these confederate armies, and therefore plead that league which, though fraudulently obtained, they were assured would be religiously observed. They are importunate, because the danger was imminent; and expect protection, not only for the oath's sake, but in honour, as allies suffering for their attachment to Israel; and in interest, as servants, whose destruction would be Israel's loss. *Note;* (1.) When our souls are sore thrust at by legions of corruptions within and temptations without, we must look up to Jesus, the glorious Captain of our salvation, whose hand is not shortened that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear. (2.) If we are in fidelity cleaving to God as his servants, we may rest assured of his protection as our Almighty Lord.

*Ver. 10. And chased them along the way that goeth up to Beth-horon]* That is, by the way of the mountain on which the town of Beth-horon was raised at the time of writing this book; for that town did not yet exist, nor was it built till the Israelites had taken possession of the land of Canaan. It was founded by *Sherab*, the daughter or granddaughter of Ephraim. See 1 Chron. vii. 24. But it should be remarked, that *she built Beth-horon the nether and the upper*; these are the expressions of the historian. We do not exactly know the situation of these two towns; both of them were in the tribe of Ephraim, one to the south, the other to the north. It is certain, that that of which we are now speaking is *Beth-horon the nether*, or the southern, which was upon the frontiers of Ephraim, near the mountains. See Wells's *Geog.* vol. ii. p. 200.

*And smote them to Azekah and unto Makedah]* The towns of *Azekah* and *Makedah* are afterwards reckoned among the cities of Judah, chap. xv. 35. 41. They are both placed in the northern part of that tribe. *Azekah* could not be a great way from *Jarmuth*, so far as one may judge from chap. xv. 35. and consequently must be less northerly than *Makedah*.

11 And it came to pass, as they fled from before Israel, and were in the going down to Beth-horon, that the LORD cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah,

and they died: *they were* more which died with hailstones than *they* whom the children of Israel slew with the sword.

12 ¶ Then spake Joshua to the LORD in

*Ver. 11. And—as they—were in the going down to Beth-horon*] First, the kings in league fled towards *Beth-horon*, which was situate upon a little hill to the north of Gibeon. Their design evidently was to throw themselves into the place, and to occupy the heights of the mountains; but they were yet only on the *declivity* of the hill which led to Beth-horon, when the power of God armed nature to complete their overthrow. Hence, probably, the name *Beth-horon*, which signifies literally *the house of anger*.

*And—the Lord cast down great stones—upon them unto Azekah, and they died, &c.*] I. Some able commentators understand these words of a real shower of stones. This is the opinion of Grotius, Masius, Bonfrere, Vossius, and some others, particularly Calmet; see his learned Dissertation before his Commentary on Joshua. The substance of their arguments is here subjoined. 1. The text expressly signifies, that the Lord cast upon the army of the Amoritish kings *great stones*; and, though these stones are immediately after called *hail-stones*, yet that is only to denote the swiftness, quantity, and size of these stones. Indeed, the expression to *fall like hail* is not only common to all the ancient, but has also been preserved in most modern languages. 2. History makes mention of divers showers of stones having fallen in the course of time at divers places, and even speaks of enormous masses falling from heaven; witness that which Calmet attests to have been seen in the parochial church of Ensisheim in Alsace, and which, we are assured, fell among the hail on the 7th Nov. 1492. It is like a blackish flint which had been in the fire, and whose circumference had been broken into several pieces; it is said to have weighed about three hundred pounds. These facts, say some, are so well attested, that one cannot entertain a doubt of them without being guilty of manifest temerity. 3. No one can deny that dust, sand, earth, and other materials, may be carried to a considerable height into the air by a whirlwind: now what can hinder these matters from mixing with sulphureous, bituminous, or oily exhalations, and with the moisture of the clouds, hardening together through their own weight, and the pressure of the air and clouds, so as to fall afterwards, when they can be no longer kept up? Or, the shower of stones mentioned by Joshua might happen thus: Flints might have been raised into the air by a blast or whirlwind from without, or by a fire and compressed air from within. The wisdom of the Almighty might so manage these causes, and so determine them, as to produce their effects at the time and in the circumstances proper for destroying the enemies of his people. Nothing, in one sense, is more natural than all this; nothing, in another sense, more miraculous. It is by no means necessary, therefore, to have recourse to a figurative sense, nor, as others have done, to the assistance of angels, to account for this miracle, since all that was supernatural in this event consisted merely in the directing of the tempest in such a manner as to make it fall on the heads of the Canaanites.

II. Such, in substance, are the arguments urged in support of the literal sense. But to most commentators they seem very insubstantial; and not without reason. For, 1. That which Joshua calls *stones*, he himself explains by *hail-stones*. 2. It is so understood by the LXX, Josephus, (Hist. Jud. lib. v. cap. 1.) and the author of Ecclesiasticus, xvi. 6. 3. The showers of stones spoken of by so many writers have the appearance of fable, and merit little or no credit. See Scheuchzer, tom. iv. p. 106. 4. On the contrary, the fearful devastations of hail are determined by Scripture, Exod. ix. 23, &c. Ezek. xiii. 13. xxxviii. 22. 5. They are no less so by facts drawn from ancient and modern history, all absolutely incontestable. Let any one but open the Philosophical Transactions of our Royal Society, and he will see examples, taken not only from past ages, but almost from our own time, of hail-stones nearly half a pound in weight, which have ruined countries, and killed great numbers of men and beasts for seventy miles round. Such was the hail which fell in Suffolk the 17th of July 1666; that which oppressed the country about Lisle in 1686; that which happened in Wales in 1697; and, particularly, that which did so much damage in Staffordshire in the same year. We have, moreover, an account of the hail which in 1717 desolated Namur, and the whole country round it; the smallest pieces of which weighed a quarter of a pound, others a pound, others three, and some eight. All these events prove, that hail-stones alone are sufficient to have done that damage to the army of the Amorites which is mentioned by the sacred historian; so that nothing obliges us to have recourse to another explanation. 6. If then it be asked, wherein consists the miracle? It is easily answered, that it is in the circumstances of the event, which happened in the very instant proper for assisting those to whom God had promised victory; and which, without doing any hurt to God's protected people, destroyed his enemies, and was more fatal to them than the sword of the conquerors: an event that will always be considered as a miracle by every unprejudiced mind. God, for the working of miracles, has frequently employed the agency of second causes and natural phenomena: frequently, without producing new beings, he only employs in a manner extraordinary, and impossible to any but himself, those beings which his hand has already formed. In the present case, perhaps, he might not form the hail by an immediate effort of his Omnipotence, and perhaps the impetuous wind which caused it to fall with full force from Beth-horon to Azekah, i. e. twelve or fourteen miles in extent, had nothing in it but what was natural; but the time when the thing happened, and the persons who suffered it, shew his hand too visibly for us to be able to overlook it. To conclude, fabulous story has imitated, or rather disfigured this wonderful event, by assuring us, that, at the prayer of Hercules, Jupiter sent a shower of hail upon Albion and Bergion. See Pomp. Mela. lib. ii. cap. 5. Calmet and Bibliotheque Raisonnée, tom. xxix. p. 2. art. 8.

the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou Moon, in the valley of Ajalon.

13 And the sun stood still, and the moon

*Ver. 12—14. Then spake Joshua, &c.]* We may refer all that is necessary to say on this remarkable passage to the five following heads. I. The *miracle* itself, and the *manner* in which it is described. To facilitate the Israelites obtaining a complete victory over the five kings of the Amorites, God, at the prayer of Joshua, caused the *sun and the moon to stand still, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies*: these are the words of the historian, confirmed by Habak. iii. 11. But as, in the opinion of all modern philosophers, it is the earth which rolls round the sun, and not the sun round the earth, how is it possible to reconcile this system with the expressions of the sacred writer? To answer this question, without entering into discussions foreign to the design of a commentary, we content ourselves with remarking, that nothing is more common in Scripture than to express things, not according to the strict rules of philosophy, but according to their appearances, and the vulgar apprehension concerning them. For instance, Moses calls the sun and moon *two great lights*; but, however this appellation may agree with the sun, it cannot in the same sense signify the moon, which is now well known to be but a small body, and to have no light at all but what it borrows by a reflection of the rays of the sun; appearing to us larger than the other planets, merely because it is placed nearer to us. From this appearance it is, that the Holy Scriptures give it the title of a *great light*. In like manner, because the sun seems to us to move, and the earth to be at rest, the Scriptures represent the latter as placed on *pillars, bases, and foundations*, compare the former to a *bridegroom issuing from his chamber, and rejoicing as a giant to run his course, and speak of his arising and going down, and hastening to the place from whence he arose, &c.* when it is certain, that if the sun were made to revolve round the earth, the general laws of nature would thereby be violated, the harmony and proportion of the heavenly bodies destroyed, and the œconomy of the universe thrown into confusion and disorder. On the contrary, supposing the earth to turn upon its own axis within the space of twenty-four hours, and to go round the sun in the compass of a year, it will then be easily conceived to move according to the same laws of motion which impel the other planets round one common centre, and the execution whereof constitutes the order and harmony admired in the whole frame of nature. The general design of God when he inspired the sacred writers, having been to form mankind to holiness and virtue, not to make them philosophers; it no way derogates from the respect due to the Holy Spirit, or from the consideration which the writings of those holy men merit, whose pens he directed, to suppose, that in order to accommodate themselves to the capacity, the notions and language of the vulgar, they have purposely spoken of the phænomena of nature in terms most conformable to the testimony of the senses. In the present case, Joshua seems to have had in view the modern system, when he commanded the moon as well as the sun to stand still; for, of what use could the presence of the moon be to him, while favoured

with that of the sun? What he required, without doubt, was, that the sun and moon might lend him their light till he had completed the overthrow of his enemies. Now he could not be ignorant, that if the earth stood still, the sun, the moon, and the rest of the planets, must also seem to stand still: he chose, therefore, to speak the common language of the people, in order to be generally understood. II. The second thing which here presents itself to our consideration is, the *place* or *places* where Joshua desired and obtained that the sun and moon might appear to stand. *Sun, said he, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon!* "Let those two great lights seem stopped" and immovable in that part of the heavens where they "at this instant appear to be; the one upon Gibeon, the other over Ajalon." Supposing the modern system of the sun's motion to be accurate, Joshua could not speak this in a proper and philosophical sense. The sun, near a million times bigger than the earth, is many millions of miles distant from it. To justify, therefore, its being literally *upon Gibeon*, a line drawn perpendicularly from the centre of the sun to that of the earth must exactly take Gibeon in its way; now this is impossible, in as much as the Holy Land does not lie between the tropics. We must, therefore, necessarily conclude, that Joshua here speaks in the popular and figurative style; which is very intelligible, on a supposition that the earth moves round the sun. Those who would enter more philosophically into this subject, we refer to Scheuchzer, tom. iv. p. 37. III. Our third observation respects the *time* of the miracle. The text imports, that *the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hastened not to go down about a whole day; or more simply, for the whole day.* The words, *in the midst of heaven*, always signify the place of the sun and moon. Accordingly there it stood still, appearing to remain for a whole day, or twelve hours, in the same position. The account of the sacred historian necessarily leads us to understand it in this manner. The various transactions here recorded could not have been brought about in the compass of an ordinary day. The notion of Maimonides is so absurd, that it is inconceivable how Grotius and Masius could have approved it; for he makes the whole miracle to consist, not in God's having granted to Joshua's request really a longer day than was common at this season of the year, but in his giving that general and his soldiers powers sufficient for the effecting in one day what would otherwise have required two: whereas the historian expressly declares that *the sun stood still*, and that *there was no day like that, before it or after it*; and, indeed, never before, or since, was there so great a victory as this of Joshua obtained in a single day. It has been asked, why did not Joshua, instead of desiring God to arrest the sun in his mid-day course, delay his request till it was just upon its decline? Now it appears very evident from the event, how greatly it concerned the certainty and splendour of the miracle, that it should begin from the sun's being at the meridian of Gibeon. Had the retardation of the sun not happened till it was going to set, how many might have thought it plausible to attribute,

stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in

the midst of heaven, and hastened not to go down about a whole day.

14. And there was no day like that before it

bute, with Spinosa, the extraordinary length of this day to the refraction of the rays from the clouds, which, at that time, were loaded with hail; or to maintain, with Piererius, that it was owing to some aurora borealis, or other similar phænomenon, which, after the setting of the sun, might appear about Gibeon, and so be mistaken for the sun's standing still! See Spin. Tract. Theol. Polit. cap. 2. & Præadam. lib. iv. cap. 6. But now, by supposing the sun arrested at noon-day, all these cavils are effectually removed; and God, no doubt, who heard Joshua so readily, inspired him to request the miracle at the very time he did so. See Calmet's Dissertation on the subject. IV. But what is that book of Jasher, or the righteous, to which that sacred historian refers for the truth of this fact? Some are of opinion, that it was a poetical work, in the taste of the Orientals, full of hyperboles, and which it would be absurd to understand in a literal sense: and they add, that perhaps the author, in singing the victory of Joshua, had, under an elegant fiction, represented the planets arrested and day lengthened, in order to render the victory more complete; in the same manner as a Greek poet said, that the sun was used to stay his chariot to hear the melody of a choir of nymphs (see Callim. Hym. ad Dian. ver. 120.); or as another poet represents the course of this planet as suspended with horror at the offence of Atreus, bloody with the murder of the son of Thyestes, whom he gave to the unhappy father to eat. See Stat. Theb. lib. i. ver. 289. and lib. v. ver. 177. We find, say the defenders of this opinion, several passages in Scripture like this; which yet there is no necessity to understand literally, Judges, v. 20. Isai. xiii. 9, 10. xxxiv. 1—5. But those, who are inclined to see this method of interpretation defended to the utmost, may refer to a dissertation, intitled, "The Sun's standing still in the days of Joshua, rationally accounted for by A. O. LL. D. London, 1739:" an interpretation which appears to us in every respect ill-grounded, as there is nothing in the text of Joshua, which does not lead one to believe, that the historian spoke in the most simple and literal manner; and surely no examples in such cases should be drawn from the strongly figurative and metaphorical expressions of the classics. As to the passages brought in proof from Scripture, they are evidently figurative, and cannot be understood with propriety in a literal sense; those, for instance, in the song of Deborah, would be absurd in a literal sense: the sun may easily be supposed to stand still, but it cannot be supposed to sing; the stars may easily be retained by a divine course in their orbits, but they cannot fight. It is wonderful, that men should compare things which have so little resemblance. Though the Hebrew, according to some, may be translated, *Sun, be silent upon Gibeon*; it is no less true, that it may be translated with great propriety, *Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon*. See 1 Sam. xiv. 9. V. As to the objections raised against this miracle from St. Paul's silence respecting it, Heb. xi. and its being entirely unknown to heathen writers, the answer is easy: the argu-

ment with respect to St. Paul proves too much; for how came the apostle to omit other miraculous events? He speaks not, for example, of the plagues of Egypt, of the miracles of Moses in the wilderness, nor of the passage of the Jordan, &c. Designing only to give some notable examples of the efficacy of faith, he is neither curious in his choice, nor exact in his enumeration; of which there was the less need, as he wrote to Hebrews well acquainted with all these facts. And as to the silence of the heathen writers, that is nothing surprising; for the miracle of which we speak so long preceded every prophane writer of whom we have any remains, that there is no wonder that all remembrance of it was lost before the time of their writings: and yet, if one may be allowed to draw light out of darkness, it should seem very reasonable to conjecture, that the idea of the poets, that their heroes and demi-gods had the power of prolonging days and nights upon certain occasions, arose from this extraordinary event; nay, after all, should we find nothing in prophane history to confirm this fact, no conclusion can be drawn from thence against the literal sense of the words of the sacred writer, even setting aside his divine authority, if we would judge of him with the same candour as of every other historian. But see Huet, Demonstr. Evang. prop. iv. sect. 13. Quæst. Alnet. lib. ii. cap. 12. sect. 27. and Lucan, lib. vi. ver. 460, &c. Purver, in a note upon the passage, observes, that the Chinese History has a tradition, that the sun did not set for ten days, while the emperor Yao reigned. Days, says he, may be thought a mistake for hours, and both miracles to be the same, as the chronological computation exactly agrees.

In conclusion of this note we just observe, that it is easy to shew that God, in the present case, interposed his sovereign power in a manner worthy his wisdom and greatness. 1. The Gibeonites, now become subject to God, were to be protected against their unjust oppressors. 2. The best way of protecting them, was that which most powerfully evinced the superiority of the God of Israel, and his infinite might. Had the sword of the Israelites alone gained the victory, the success might have been attributed to their valour, to the courage and good conduct of their general, to the fortuitous arrangement of circumstances, or to other similar causes; whereas, the traces of the divine power gave incontestable splendor to the miracle thus wrought at the prayer of Joshua. 3. The sun and the moon were the principal objects of adoration with the Canaanites: to arrest these great luminaries in their course, and to do this at Joshua's request, was to give idolatry the severest blow; was to teach idolaters, in the most striking manner, that their gods were but vanity, and their worship foolishness.

Ver. 14. And there was no day like that, &c.] Some say it was thirty-six hours long: others think, that the sacred author only means, that no other day was ever seen in which the course of the planets was arrested at the prayer of a mortal. Amama has made a full collection of the various



or after it, that the LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the LORD fought for Israel.

15 And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp to Gilgal.

16 ¶ But these five kings fled, and hid themselves in a cave at Makkedah.

17 And it was told Joshua, saying, The five kings are found hid in a cave at Makkedah.

18 And Joshua said, Roll great stones upon the mouth of the cave, and set men by it for

to keep them :

19 And stay ye not, *but* pursue after your enemies, and smite the hindmost of them; suffer them not to enter into their cities: for the LORD your God hath delivered them into your hand.

20 And it came to pass, when Joshua and the children of Israel had made an end of slaying them with a very great slaughter, till they were consumed, that the rest *which* remained of them entered into fenced cities.

21 And all the people returned to the camp

various opinions of the critics upon the subject. See *Antibarbaro Biblico*. lib. iii. p. 381, &c.

*For the Lord fought for Israel*] Namely, by causing an extraordinary hail to fall upon their enemies; by stopping the sun, to allow them time for conquest; by giving them strength to pursue the confederated kings; and by preserving them from the strokes of that terrible shower which fell on the desecrated Amorites.

REFLECTIONS.—After the taking of Ai, the army seems to have rested awhile in Gilgal, and is now roused up to action by the attack made on their allies; in which the Canaanites being aggressors, the justice of their ruin is more evident, whilst by their confederacy they were brought together for a readier consumption by the sword of Israel.

1. Joshua, animated by divine encouragement, prepares to succour the trembling Gibeonites. They need not fear who have God with them, and never-failing promises for their security. 2. He marches all night with a select body of valiant men, in order to shew his readiness to help his friends, and unexpectedly to surprize his enemies. *Note*; (1.) In war, a well-judged expeditious march is among the chief proofs of generalship. (2.) They who would serve the Lord Jesus must follow him night and day, and stop at no toil that he may call them to endure. By and by their labours will end, and they shall rest in eternal uninterrupted peace. 3. God's marvellous interposition. Though he might have destroyed them by the sword in battle, he chooses rather immediately to manifest his power, that Israel may know to whom they are indebted for victory, and their enemies be made sensible against whom they lift up themselves. God discomfited them, put terror on their spirits, and gave them up to slaughter as sheep; and from heaven, in their flight, cast down hail-stones of such a size, as flew more than fell by the sword. *Note*; Upon the ungodly will he shortly rain a more terrible hail, Rev. xvi. 21. and judgments worse than death itself shall overtake them; under which men shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them. 4. Joshua's prayer. Fearing now lest the darkness should cover the flight of his enemies, and moved by divine impulse to make this strange request, he begs that God would stay the motions of the heavenly bodies, (as to us they appear to move,) or rather the revo-

lution of this earthly globe, that, by prolonging the light of day, they might avenge themselves on their enemies; and being under the influence of miraculous faith, in the hearing of Israel, he commands the sun to stand still now on Gibeon in the west, and the rising moon to rest in the valley of Ajalon. 5. God hears and answers him: the sun, arrested in his steep descent, hastes not to go down, nor the rising moon to advance, during the space of a whole day. Never was such a day before, or since: but God fought for Israel, therefore he granted the prayer of Israel's captain. *Note*; (1.) Great is the power of effectual fervent prayer. (2.) When God stirs up a spirit of supplication, it is a sure sign of his intention to grant the requests which he teaches us to make. (3.) God will appear for his people's comfort, and his enemies' confusion; and, if need be, all nature shall engage in their quarrel. (4.) When Israel's enemies shall receive their final overthrow, at the appearing of our great God and Saviour in the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men, then shall our sun no more go down, nor our moon withdraw itself for ever.

*Ver. 15. And Joshua returned, and all Israel—to Gilgal*] That is to say, he issued orders for so doing; but from ver. 43. it appears, that he did not, in fact, return till he had forced the five kings to come from the cave where they had taken refuge. It might be rendered, *and Joshua was about to return to Gilgal*. The Scripture sometimes mentions as done, what was designed to be done. See Gen. xxxvii. 21.

*Ver. 16. But these five kings fled*] That is, the kings mentioned above, in ver. 3. *And hid themselves, &c.* escaped from the sword of the conqueror; they had eluded the pursuit and the hail, by taking a different road from that of their main army: perhaps too they had prepared, for any event, beasts to carry them off with all dispatch. Be that as it may, they retired into a cavern near Makkedah, (for so the Hebrew particle should be rendered here and in ver. 10.) and there concluded themselves safe. Caves, it seems, dug in the rocks, are very common in those countries; they are places of retreat, and forts, whither the people retire at the time of war and invasion. We find several accounts of them collected by Reland in his *Palæst. Sacr.* l. iii. p. 648.

*Ver.*

to Joshua at Makkedah in peace: none moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel.

22 ¶ Then said Joshua, Open the mouth of the cave, and bring out those five kings unto me out of the cave.

23 And they did so, and brought forth those five kings unto him out of the cave, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon.

24 And it came to pass, when they brought out those kings unto Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said unto the captains of the men of war which went with him, Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings. And they came near, and put their feet upon the necks of them.

25 And Joshua said unto them, Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the LORD do to all your enemies against whom ye fight.

26 And afterward Joshua smote them, and slew them, and hanged them on five trees: and they were hanging upon the trees until the evening.

27 And it came to pass at the time of the going down of the sun, that Joshua commanded, and they took them down off the trees, and cast them into the cave wherein they had been hid, and laid great stones in the cave's mouth, which remain until this very day.

28 ¶ And that day Joshua took Makkedah, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and the king thereof he utterly destroyed, them,

*Ver. 21. All the people returned—in peace]* The LXX translate it, *safe and sound*; the Vulgate, *unhurt, and in the same number*. That is to say, the detachments, which pursued after the runaways, returned to Joshua without any loss. The next clause Bochart and others translate, *there was not a dog that moved his tongue*, &c. supplying the word *dog*, and making the words a kind of proverbial phrase, synonymous to that in Exod. xi. 7. as if the historian had said, that the victory of the Israelites was so complete, and so great their tranquillity after the battle, that even a dog would not have dared to bark against the Hebrews. See Hieroz. p. i. l. ii. c. 55.

*Ver. 22—25. Then said Joshua, Open the mouth of the cave]* In full view of all his troops, now returned to the camp near Makkedah, and before his assaulting that place, Joshua caused the five kings to be brought forth out of the cavern, which had served as their prison all the while the action of that miraculous day continued. Next he commands his principal officers to put their feet upon the necks of these kings: a rough and contemptuous treatment, but which God had, doubtless, enjoined him to use, in order to intimidate the Canaanites, by thus punishing them with the utmost rigour for their aggravated iniquity; to encourage the Israelites, and to accomplish gloriously what Moses had declared to them respecting their future prosperity. See Deut. xxxiii. 29.

*Ver. 26, 27. And afterward Joshua smote them, &c.]* He hung these five kings; and at the sun-setting they were taken down from their gibbets by his orders, lest the land which God had chosen to inhabit should be defiled by their dead bodies. Deut. xxi. 23. Thus the king of Ai had been before executed. Maimonides and the Samaritan Chronicle add, that, together with the bodies of the five kings, Joshua caused the instruments of their punishment, and all that had been used for the purpose, to be shut up in the cave of Makkedah. This cave served as a sepulchre to the five vanquished princes, and was again blocked up

by a heap of stones to serve as a monument of their tragical end, and of the triumph of the conquerors. Travelers inform us, that this cavern is still to be seen, and that it is inclosed with walls.

REFLECTIONS.—We have here,

1. News brought to Joshua of the discovery of the five kings, who had fled for concealment into a cave near Makkedah. To secure them there, great stones are rolled to the mouth of it, and, without staying to execute on them the intended judgment, the people are commanded to continue their pursuit. *Note*; When our spiritual enemies are falling, we must pursue the blow: the more complete the conquest, the more glorious the future triumph.

2. The pursuit is continued, and ended; the few who escaped the sword, only escaped to spread the terror of the defeat into the neighbouring cities, while Israel returned to Joshua at Makkedah, without the loss of a man. So easily can God turn the fury of the greatest persecutors into perfect tranquillity, and, after the severest storm has threatened, say, Peace, be still; and there shall be a great calm.

3. Now the kings are brought from their concealment, undergo the severest humiliation, and afterwards suffer the death which their pride, idolatry, and tyranny had merited. The captains are commanded to tread on their necks, not haughtily to insult their misery, but by way of terror to the kings of Canaan, and as an assurance that thus should all their enemies be laid low before them. They need not fear or be dismayed at the most numerous armies or mightiest kings, when God thus evidently fights for them. *Note*; (1.) The sinner who flies from God will find his securest retreat but a refuge of lies. (2.) Our triumphant Jesus has thus destroyed the principalities and powers of darkness, and will shortly bruise Satan, and all the other enemies of his people, under their feet.

*Ver. 28. And that day Joshua took Makkedah]* Usher, by that day, underitans, the day of hanging the five kings;

and all the souls that *were* therein; he let none remain: and he did to the king of Makkedah as he did unto the king of Jericho.

29 ¶ Then Joshua passed from Makkedah, and all Israel with him, unto Libnah, and fought against Libnah:

30 And the LORD delivered it also, and the king thereof, into the hand of Israel; and he smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that *were* therein; he let none remain in it; but did unto the king thereof as he did unto the king of Jericho.

31 ¶ And Joshua passed from Libnah, and all Israel with him, unto Lachish and encamped against it, and fought against it:

32 And the LORD delivered Lachish into the hand of Israel, which took it on the second day, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that *were* therein, according to all that he had done to Libnah.

33 ¶ Then Horam king of Gezer came up

to help Lachish; and Joshua smote him and his people, until he had left him none remaining.

34 ¶ And from Lachish Joshua passed unto Eglon, and all Israel with him; and they encamped against it, and fought against it:

35 And they took it on that day, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that *were* therein he utterly destroyed that day, according to all that he had done to Lachish.

36 ¶ And Joshua went up from Eglon, and all Israel with him, unto Hebron; and they fought against it:

37 And they took it, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and the king thereof, and all the cities thereof, and all the souls that *were* therein; he left none remaining, according to all that he had done to Eglon; but destroyed it utterly, and all the souls that *were* therein.

kings; and he is of opinion, that it was the morning after the victory: but it seems more easy and plain to conceive, that Joshua carried the assault of Makkedah on the very day in which he defeated the confederate army, and immediately after he had executed the unfortunate princes who commanded it. We are not to be surprised that so many things should be done in one day, so long protracted as this was by the suspension of the sun's course. The king of Makkedah was not taken alive, like him of Ai, but put to the sword with all the inhabitants who had rejected peace; only the city, the cattle, and the spoil, were spared.

*And he did to the king of Makkedah, as he did unto the king of Jericho*] The Scripture does not say how the king of Jericho was treated; but it is presumed, from what is said of the other kings, that his body was hanged up. The first verse of this chapter supports the conjecture.

*Ver. 29—32. Then Joshua passed—unto Libnah—and—from Libnah—unto Lachish, &c.*] Having refreshed his army, Joshua brought it before Libnah, a town near Makkedah, chap. xv. 41, 42. and which, afterwards, being comprized in the tribe of Judah, fell to the lot of the Levites, chap. xxi. 13. 1 Chron. vi. 57. Sennacherib laid siege to it, when he so haughtily menaced king Hezekiah, 2 Kings, xix. 8. Eusebius and St. Jerome say, that Libnah, in their time, was a village in the district of Eleutheropolis. Joshua put all the inhabitants to the sword, and then, advancing towards the south, proceeded to Lachish, seven miles from Eleutheropolis, and subdued it in like manner: but it cost him a day more than its neighbour Libnah; which probably was owing to the diversion given by the king of Horam, of which we proceed to take notice.

*Ver. 33. Then Horam, king of Gezer, came up to help Lachish, &c.*] While Joshua was besieging Lachish, the king of Gezer came to its assistance. Gezer was in the south part of the country, which fell to the tribe of Ephraim, (ch. xvi. 3.) between Beth-horon and the sea, and, as it should seem, not far from Gibeon; 1 Chron. xiv. 16. but it is evident that the Israelites did not possess it till the time of Solomon, to whom it was given by his father-in-law, Pharaoh, 1 Kings, ix. 16, 17. In St. Jerome's time, it was no more than a little town, known by the name of Gazara, four miles south of Nicopolia, the ancient Emmaus. Joshua did not proceed thither, but detached a party of his army from Lachish, which cut in pieces that of Horam, and then came back and completed the siege.

*Ver. 34, 35. And from Lachish, Joshua passed unto Eglon, &c.*] This town, at a small distance from Lachish, fell to the tribe of Judah.

*Ver. 36, 37. And Joshua went up from Eglon—unto Hebron*] The king of Hebron was one of the five confederated against Israel. They must, therefore, have quickly appointed him a successor; and it was this successor whom Joshua put to the sword. With respect to Hebron itself, we have already more than once spoken of it in the history of Abraham. See Gen. xiii. 18. It fell to the tribe of Judah, and was situated among the mountains. All the towns in the district of Hebron, which was the capital, and consequently figured among the principal cities of the country, were involved in the common fate. Caleb was one of the chief instruments in this conquest, and signified himself by the defeat of the three sons of Anak; ch. xv. 13, 14. Judg. i. 10.

*Ver.*

38 ¶ And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to Debir; and fought against it:

39 And he took it, and the king thereof, and all the cities thereof; and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and utterly destroyed all the souls that *were* therein; he left none remaining: as he had done to Hebron, so he did to Debir, and to the king thereof; as he had done also to Libnah, and to her king.

40 ¶ So Joshua smote all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings: he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the LORD God of Israel commanded.

41 And Joshua smote them from Kadesh-

barnea even unto Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, even unto Gibeon.

42 And all these kings and their land did Joshua take at one time, because the LORD God of Israel fought for Israel.

43 And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp to Gilgal.

#### C H A P. XI.

*Joshua subdues Jabin, king of Hazor, with the other kings of the northern parts of Canaan, at the waters of Merom: he destroys the Anakims, and puts the children of Israel in full possession of the land of Canaan.*

[Before Christ 1447.]

**A**ND it came to pass, when Jabin king of Hazor had heard *those things*, that he sent to Jobab king of Madon, and to the king of Shimron, and to the king of Achshaph.

*Ver. 41. And all the country of Goshen]* There was a city of *Goshen* in the tribe of Judah, towards the south, among the mountains, like Hebron; (see ch. xv. 51.) and this city evidently gave its name to the whole district. It was a place full of excellent pastures, well watered, and like the land of Goshen in *Ægypt*. See Calmet, and Gen. xlv. 10. Pelican is of opinion, that both of them went by the name of Goshen, from the Hebrew word *geshem*, which signifies a plentiful shower. Even unto Gibeon, i. e. says Bishop Patrick, towards the north.

*Ver. 42. And all these kings and their land did Joshua take at one time, &c.]* Three remarks here offer themselves to our consideration. 1. That Joshua, in making himself master of these countries, did not destroy all the inhabitants, but only such as had not fled. 2. That then kings carried to their camps all who were able to bear arms; so that, at a first defeat, all was lost with them, and the slaughter was inexpressible. But it is especially to be here remarked, 3. That, in all probability, Joshua, having taken the cities of Canaan with great rapidity, and then set fire to them, left them afterwards, and proceeded to other conquests; thus availing himself of the perturbation and distress of the nations: but that after this first setting on fire, those who had escaped the danger, returning to their cities immediately, set about fortifying them afresh; and that thus, while Joshua over-ran the country, carrying every where fire and sword, and leaving no garrisons in any of the cities, left he should thereby too much weaken his army, the Canaanites used all their endeavours to re-settle in the places which they had before abandoned. Properly speaking, therefore, it was not till after the division of the country that the Israelites drove the Canaanites from the cities that fell to each tribe. The rules of war required, that Joshua should first destroy all the chiefs of the enemies' nation, and disable the country from resisting him; after which, it was easy to reduce such places as, being no longer supported by the common aid of other cities, could not fail of falling soon into the hands of the

Israelites, provided they would use their efforts to subdue them, either by force or famine. But God permitted many of them to be left unreduced; which, in the event, was a cause of their ruin and destruction. Besides, if Joshua made so rapid a progress, it was because *God fought for Israel*; or, as the Chaldee paraphrase expresses it, *because the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel by his Word*.

*Ver. 43. And Joshua returned—to Gilgal]* Either for refreshment, or to divide the fruits of their victories with those who had not fought; or, more particularly, to pay to God their thanksgivings in his sanctuary. Thus gloriously ended (according to Usher's calculation) the fortieth year since the departure from *Ægypt*. Moses had begun it with the conquest of the kingdoms of Sihon and Og; Joshua ended it with that of a great part of the land of Canaan. In the middle of this year the manna ceased, and the Israelites ate of the corn of the country; so that, as the learned chronologist proceeds to remark, they began to sow in autumn, and consequently, from that time also, they began to reckon their sabbatical years. It was necessary to divide the country before they cultivated it; so that the first sabbatical year must have fallen out upon the seventh year after the division among the tribes.

*Note;* (1.) The judgments of God, in so severe an extirpation of this accursed race, should lead us to consider the end of impenitent sinners. The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations who forget God. (2.) When we have completed our victories over the powers of sin and Satan, we shall return, under the conduct of our divine Joshua, to our eternal rest in the camp of God.

#### C H A P. XI.

*Ver. 1. And—when Jabin king of Hazor had heard, &c.]* No sooner was this king of Hazor informed of the conquests of Joshua, than he took a resolution to stop, if possible, the progress of his victorious arms, by covering the north part of the country of Canaan, of which Hazor, afterwards given to the tribe of Naphtali, was the principal

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pal

2 And to the kings that *were* on the north of the mountains, and of the plains south of Chinneroth, and in the valley, and in the borders of Dor on the west,

3 *And* to the Canaanite on the east and on

the west, and *to* the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Jebusite in the mountains, and *to* the Hivite under Hermon in the land of Mizpeh.

4 And they went out, they and all their

pal city. *Jabin*, in all probability, was the common name of all the kings of Hazor. What inclines to this belief is, that the prince, who was subject to the Israelites for twenty years in the time of the Judges, and who was defeated by Deborah, went by this name of *Jabin*.

*He sent to Jobab, king of Madon, &c.*] This is the only place where mention is made of a *king of Madon*, excepting ch. xii. 19. This city is entirely unknown. It was formerly held by the king of Hazor, see ver. 10. Calmet observes, that if, with the Roman edition of the LXX, we read *Maron*, we might find the city of *Maronia* or *Marath*, north of mount Lebanon. The name *Maron* is preserved ch. xii. 19. I know not, says he, whether the land of *Meroz*, mentioned Judg. v. 23. might not be the country of Maron. *Shimron* is the same as that called *Shimron-Meron*, ch. xii. 20. This city afterwards belonged to the tribe of Zebulun, south of that of Naphtali. Calmet takes *Shimron* to be the *Symira* of Pliny, which lay in Cælo-Syria. It cannot be *Samaria*, for this city was not then in being; and its name was given it by Omri, king of Israel, 1 Kings, xvi. 24. *Achshaph* afterwards belonged to the tribe of Asher, and lay north-west, towards the extremity of that tribe, ch. xix. 25. Calmet is of opinion, that *Achshaph* was the *Eclippe* of Pliny, Ptolemy, Josephus, and Eusebius.

*Ver. 2. And in the borders of Dor on the west*] The Vulgate, and other versions, render it, and in *the country of Dor*. *Naphoth* signifies the *environs* of a place, a *quarter*, a *canton*, or *district*: *Dor* was situate near the Mediterranean, in the lot of the half tribe of Manasseh. Eusebius and St. Jerome place it between Tyre and Cæsarea, about nine miles from the latter. Josephus, contr. Ap. lib. 2. speaks of a city of *Dora*, situate near mount Carmel. See Bochart, l. i. c. 41.

*Ver. 3. And to the Canaanite on the east and on the west*] Among the Canaanites, properly so called, those of *the east* are they who dwelt along-side of the Jordan, south of the lake of Gennesareth; and the Canaanites of *the west*, those who dwelt on the Mediterranean coast. See Numb. xiii. 29. Bishop Clayton, in his Chronology of the Hebrew text, p. 66, &c. shews, that the land of the Canaanites, properly so called, was the country where Canaan had settled, from the territories of Hazor on the north, even unto Sichem on the south; Gen. xii. 6. and, according to this writer, it was bounded on the east by the Jordan, with the lakes Semechon and Gennesareth; on the west by the Mediterranean from Sidon to Dor; on the north by a line which crossed from Sidon to Jordan, by Hamath; and on the south by the mountains which lay south of Cinneroth, or Gennesareth. Perhaps Jabin was the chief king of the whole country; at least, in Judges, iv. 24. he is called *king of Canaan*.

*And to the Hivite under Hermon, &c.*] The Hivites dwelt at the foot of mount Hermon, which lay to the

north-east of the land of Canaan. Hence, as Bochart observes, they are called *Kadmonites*, Gen. xv. 19. that is to say, *Orientalis*. See Phaleg. l. iv. c. 36. and Canaan, l. i. c. 19. There were several cities of the name of *Mizpeh*. We meet with one in the tribe of Judah, ch. xv. 38. a second in the tribe of Benjamin, ch. xviii. 26. a third beyond Jordan, in the tribe of Gad; and a fourth also beyond that river, in the half tribe of Manasseh. The last gave its name to the adjacent territories; and it is that, and the country about it, of which we are now speaking. See Wells's Geog. vol. ii. p. 215.

*Ver. 4. And they went out,—and all their hosts, &c.*] Entering the field with so numerous an army, that the sacred writer does not scruple to express it by an hyperbole very familiar in Scripture, *even as the sand upon the sea shore in multitude*. The allied army was so much the more formidable, in that, as the host of the Israelites was wholly composed of foot-soldiers, in this there were not only cavalry, but armed chariots, in great numbers. Josephus makes it amount to 300,000 infantry, 10,000 horse, and 20,000 chariots. Hist. Jud. l. v. c. 1. Bochart, in his Hieroz. l. ii. c. 9. informs us, that Ægypt supplied the Canaanites with all these horses. God forbid his people the use of them in their armies. See on Deut. xvii. 16. xx. 1. With respect to the chariots of the Canaanites, they were, in all probability, armed with iron, such as were anciently used to break the enemies' battalions, and which, in fact, made the most terrible havoc in armies. They are described by the ancients as follows: "The pole " to which the horses were fastened, was armed with " spikes, or iron points, which advanced forward; the " yokes also of the horses had points, three cubits in " length; to the axletree were fixed iron spits, armed at " the ends with scythes; the spokes of the wheels were " armed with javelins, sticking out, and the very fellies " with scythes, which tore to pieces every thing they met " with; the axletree was longer, and the wheels stronger " than usual, that they might be the better able to bear a " shock, and the chariot be less liable to be overturned." The charioteer, who was covered all over with armour, sat in a kind of tower, made of very solid wood, about breast high, and sometimes men well armed were put into the chariot and fought from thence with darts and arrows. Hence we may judge that these machines must have made dreadful slaughter at first, when they met with the enemy's troops: but in time, when men came to find out the way of opposing them, they did not so much execution, and were of course disused. See Diod. Sic. l. ii. c. 93. Q. Curt. l. iv. c. 15. Xenoph. Cyr. l. vi. Lucret. l. vi. ver. 635. 641, &c. God Almighty forbid the Israelites the use of chariots, for the same reasons that he had prohibited that of cavalry; see Isai. xxxi. 1. Pf. xx. 7. Prov. xxi. 31. Hof. i. 7.

hofts with them, much people, even as the fand that *is* upon the fea fhore in multitude, with horfes and chariots very many.

5 And when all thefe kings were met together, they came and pitched together at the waters of Merom, to fight againft Israel.

6 ¶ And the LORD faid unto Joshua, Be not afraid becaufe of them: for to-morrow about this time will I deliver them up all flain before Israel: thou fhalt hough their horfes, and burn their chariots with fire.

7 So Joshua came, and all the people of war with him, againft them by the waters of Merom fuddenly; and they fell upon them.

8 And the LORD delivered them into the hand of Israel, who fmote them, and chafed them unto great Zidon, and unto Mizrephoth-maim, and unto the valley of Mizpeh eastward; and they fmote them, until they left them none remaining.

9 And Joshua did unto them as the LORD

*Ver. 5. They—pitched—at the waters of Merom*] Thefe waters of Merom are generally thought to be nothing but the lake of Semechon, fo called from the abundance of fifh it contains; *Semechon*, or *Samachon*, fignifying in the Arabic *ffhes*. Others derive the name of this lake from the word *Samaka*, which fignifies in Arabic, *to be elevated*. Reland derives it from a word, which, in the Chaldee, denotes *muddy waters*. See Palæft. Sacr. l. i. c. 40. Joshua calls this lake *the waters of Merom*, or, *the high waters*; becaufe, being fituated toward the fprings of Jordan, it was higher than the lake of Gennesareth, and much more fo than the Asphaltic lake, otherwife called the *Dead Sea*. The general quarters of the confederate kings were there marked out, this whole diftrict being in the kingdom of Jabin; and, according to Jofephus, Hazor, his capital, bordered on the lake Semechon. See Hift. Jud. l. v. c. 6. and Calmet. However, this opinion, it muft be confefled, is not without its difficulties: for, 1. It is very probable, that the confederate kings marched forward to the frontiers of their country, and did not fuffer the army of the Israelites to advance fifteen or twenty leagues within their territories, and to attack them upon the *Semechonite lake*. 2. Deborah, in her fong, praifes the men of Zebulun and Naphtali, for having expofed themfelves to danger in fighting againft the Canaanites *upon Merome*, (for fo the Hebrew imports,) Judg. v. 18. Now this battle was certainly fought near the river *Kifhon*, in *Tahanac*, by the waters of *Megidlo*, ver. 19. It feems natural, therefore, to fuppofe, that the kings in league againft Joshua came to the fame place, viz. to *Kifhon*, in the country of *Merom*, to difpute with the Israelites an entrance into their territories. Eufebius places *Merom*, or *Merus*, at twelve miles diftance from Samaria, near Dothaim; which confirms the opinion juft advanced. This place was a famous and important paffage. There Barak defeated the Canaanites, and there Jofias was beaten. Toward the fame place ftood the town of *Legion*, mentioned by Eufebius and St. Jerome, which took its name from the troops that the Romans kept there for the fecurity of the province.

*Ver. 6. And the Lord faid unto Joshua*] This was fpoken in the camp at Gilgal. It is difficult to conceive how this matter could have been literally accomplifhed; fince, from Gilgal to Hazor was fixty or eighty miles; and Jofephus fays, that Joshua was five days going from Gilgal to the camp of the kings. The word *to-morrow*, therefore, muft be taken in a vague fenfe, to fignify *foon*, in a *day or two*;

or elfe we muft conclude, that Joshua was already on his march, and near the enemy's camp, when God promifed him victory. But for a full difcuffion of this fubject, we refer the reader to an excellent difertation of *Pfalmanazar*, Effays, p. 215.

*Ver. 8. Israel—fmote them, and chafed them unto Great Zidon*] *Zidon* is called *great*; not becaufe there was a fmaller, but on account of its extent and opulence. This city was founded by a fon of Canaan, and lay north-eaft of the Holy Land. See Gen. x. 15.

*Mizrephoth-maim*] Some make this to be a city; others a fpot where there arofe fome hot fprings; and others, a place noted for ditches, where the heat of the fun prepared and produced falt. Calmet fuppofes it was a city, the fame with Sarepta, not far from Zidon. Mafius conjectures it to have been a place where there ftood furnaces for the manufactory of glafs, from the fand of the river Belus.

*Ver. 9. And Joshua—houghed their horfes, &c.*] That is, he hamftrung, or difabled them by cutting the finews of the ham: the word is derived from the Saxon *hog*, the *hough*, or lower part of the thigh. See Johnson. God would not have the Israelites preferve thefe animals, left they fhould put their confidence in them, inftead of glorifying in Him alone; Pfal. xx. 7. It was in confequence of this divine injunction, that David, when he had fubdued Hadadezer, *houghed all the chariot-horfes of that prince*, referring one hundred chariots, for his own ufe; 2 Sam. viii. 4. The Jewifh rabbis fay, that at the death of a king of Israel, they houghed all the horfes which were found in his ftables, to prevent his fucceffor from making ufe of them. See Schickardi Jus. Regium, cap. 6. theor. 19. & Boch. Hieroz. pars i. lib. 2. cap. 11.

REFLECTIONS.—1. Alarmed by thefe increafing fucceffes of Israel, the northern kings of Canaan, with Hazor at their head, and at his infligation, collect their forces; thofe in the eaft and weft join them, fo that the afociation becomes general, and, with thefe united forces, they hope to crufh thefe cruel invaders. They become hereby the aggreffors; and as they firft difturb the peace of Israel's camp, they juftly fall under the power of Israel's arm. *Note*; The ftrongeft confederacy of finners will only make their ruin more notorious.

2. Joshua hereupon receives encouragement from God. Though a brave man, fuch an army, and fo accounted, ftrengthened with horfe, and chariots armed with fcythes, which

bade him: he houghed their horses, and burnt their chariots with fire.

10 ¶ And Joshua at that time turned back, and took Hazor, and smote the king thereof with the sword: for Hazor before-time was the head of all those kingdoms.

11 And they smote all the souls that *were* therein with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying *them*: there was not any left to breathe: and he burnt Hazor with fire.

12 And all the cities of those kings, and all the kings of them, did Joshua take, and smote them with the edge of the sword, *and* he utterly destroyed them, as Moses the servant of the LORD commanded.

13 But *as for* the cities that stood still in their strength, Israel burned none of them, save Hazor only; *that* did Joshua burn.

14 And all the spoil of these cities, and the

cattle, the children of Israel took for a prey unto themselves; but every man they smote with the edge of the sword, until they had destroyed them, neither left they any to breathe.

15 As the LORD commanded Moses his servant, so did Moses command Joshua, and so did Joshua; he left nothing undone of all that the LORD commanded Moses.

16 ¶ So Joshua took all that land, the hills, and all the south country, and all the land of Goshen, and the valley, and the plain, and the mountain of Israel, and the valley of the same;

17 *Even* from the mount Halak, that goeth up to Seir, even unto Baal-gad in the valley of Lebanon under mount Hermon: and all their kings he took, and smote them, and slew them.

which mowed down ranks of men before them, might beget some solicitude about the event of the battle: But he is commanded to attack them, and God promises to give them up to the sword, as dead men, unable to make resistance. *Note*; (1.) Vain are multitudes or strength against God. (2.) The greater dangers surround us, the greater supports from God we may expect.

3. Joshua immediately summons the people; and having acquainted them, no doubt, with God's promise, by a sudden march they surprize their enemies, who are broken on the first attack, and fly different ways; some westward to Zidon, others eastward to Mizpah, leaving their chariots and horses an easy prey to their pursuers, who hewed the one, and burnt the other with fire, according to the command of God, who would not have them trust in these human supports, but on himself alone, for their success. *Note*; The more we are taken off from every dependence, and the more entirely our hearts are fixed on God as our strength, the more surely shall we find our spiritual enemies subdued before us.

*Ver. 13. But as for the cities that stood still in their strength, &c.*] The Hebrew is על תלם *al tillam*, which may signify a foot, or standing; and then the sense would be, that Joshua preserved all those cities which had yielded, without having obliged him to besiege them, to make breaches in their walls, or to demolish their fortifications. This sense is preferred by the LXX, Onkelos, ours, and the French version, and by several interpreters; but nothing hinders us from translating, with the Vulgate, *and Joshua burned none of the cities, which were situated on high places; or, as our margin renders it, on their heap.* Bochart, who prefers this exposition, thinks that *Thebassar*, 2 Kings, xix. 12. and *Thebabit*, Ezek. iii. 15. two cities well known, took their name from the word תל *tel*, thus un-

derstood. See his *Canaan*, lib. i. cap. 29. We should also conceive, that instead of translating Jer. xxx. 18. thus, *Jerusalem shall be built on her own heap*, the Hebrew might be very well rendered, *shall be rebuilt upon her height, or high hill.* It was certainly easier for Joshua to keep cities which were situate on *high places*, and well-defended spots, than the cities of the plain.

*Note*; (1.) God is just in all his judgments. (2.) It becomes us to give no more quarter to the least of our sins than did the Israelites to the infant Canaanite.

*Ver. 15. Joshua—left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses*] Spinosa is pleased to say, that this eulogy is too great to have fallen from the pen of Joshua; whence he concludes, that Joshua did not write this book, known by his name. What admirable reasoning is this! So that, in like manner, we are to refuse granting St. Paul to be the author of the epistles, in which he does justice to his own fidelity; and to deny that Cæsar wrote those commentaries which are unanimously ascribed to him, because they specify his own great achievements.

*Ver. 16. So Joshua took, &c. and the mountain of Israel, and the valley of the same*] As this *mountain of Israel* with its *valley*, are in ver. 21. set in opposition to the *mountains of Judah*, some judicious interpreters conclude, that those mountains are here intended which were in the lot of Ephraim. But may it not be insisted, with the learned Pelican, that the singular is here put for the plural, and that by the *mountain* and *valley* of Israel, are to be understood all the mountains and all the valleys of the country, those excepted, which were included in the tribe of Judah? The whole country betwixt the Mediterranean and the Jordan, is, properly, nothing more than a chain of mountains. The sea-coast lies on a level: we meet there only with mount Carmel: the banks of the Jordan are so likewise.

18 Joshua made war a long time with all those kings.

19 There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, save the Hivites the inhabitants of Gibeon: all *other* they took in battle.

20 For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favour, but that he might destroy them, as the LORD commanded Moses.

21 ¶ And at that time came Joshua, and cut off the Anakims from the mountains, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, and from all the mountains of Judah, and from all the mountains of Israel: Joshua destroyed them utterly with their cities.

22 There was none of the Anakims left in the land of the children of Israel: only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod, there remained.

23 ¶ So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD said unto Moses;

*Ver. 18. Joshua made war a long time with all those kings]* Joshua did not make all these conquests in one single campaign; Josephus says, that he was five years about them; Hist. Jud. lib. v. cap. 2. and some make him out to have employed six years in them. Caleb was forty years old when he was sent to discover the land of Canaan, in the year of the world 2514, and in the second year after the departure from Ægypt. Now, at the end of the war he was eighty-five years old, according to his own account, chap. xiv. 10. Consequently, the war ended in 2559, and probably towards the end of the year. But it had begun the 10th day of the first month of the year 2554, by the passage over Jordan, and soon after that followed the siege of Jericho; from this date, to the end of the year 2559, we find exactly six years; the first of which Joshua seems to have employed in the conquest of south Canaan, and the five others in the conquest of all the territories situated on the north of that country.

*Ver. 20. For it was of the Lord to harden their hearts]* He hardened them in the same sense that he had hardened the heart of Pharaoh. Instead of inspiring them with a greater terror than that wherewith they were stricken, instead of giving them any respite, instead of opening their eyes through the agency of his Almighty Grace, he left them to the working of their own passions. Wisd. x. 11. Unworthy the assistance of that grace, by reason of their enormous disorders, and their perverse obstinacy in guilt, that which should naturally have softened only hardened them. God therefore, enraged at their incorrigible wickedness, abandoned them to themselves, and to a corruption which, through their own fault, drew them into utter ruin. In this sense it is that God *hardened them*, or rather, that, being left by him, they hardened themselves, so as to venture, after all that had happened, to *come against Israel in battle, that he (Israel) might destroy them*. Deut. vii. 2. xx. 16, 17, &c. See Waterland's Scrip. Vind. part ii. p. 58. This forsaking them was really a punishment of the Canaanites for their crimes, and especially because they had refused peace. The text says as much; at least it is certain that the Hebrew particle *כי* may be so translated in this place, as well as in many others; 1 Sam. ii. 25. 1 Kings, xiii. 25. See Noldius in *כי*, sect. 8.

*Ver. 21, &c. Joshua—cut off the Anakims, &c.]* This wild, barbarous, and gigantic people, who were of a dif-

ferent origin from that of the Canaanites, inhabited certain mountains of the country. It would have been dangerous to let them remain, nor were they worthy of such indulgence. Joshua, therefore, marched against them, and crowned his victories by the utter defeat of this nation, which was become as hateful as dangerous. He put to the sword all he could find, and utterly destroyed them, those excepted who fled, or who were now settled at Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod, three cities in the land of the Philistines; where some of them remained in David's time, particularly at Gath; but not at Ascalon, as some have supposed. See Bochart, Canaan, lib. i. cap. 1.

*Ver. 23. So Joshua took the whole land]* All that belonged to the Amoritical kings eastward of Jordan. Innumerable Canaanites perished in this war; others, in some places, saved themselves: God did not permit the country to be too much depopulated, as it might thereby have been exposed to wild beasts; Exod. xxiii. 29. and on other accounts which the reader will find in Judg. iii. 1. 4. Lastly, others left their country, went and settled in Africa, and in their flight having, according to some authors, made themselves masters of Lower Ægypt, they there erected a monarchy, which subsisted under several of their kings, known in history by the name of the *shepherd kings*; till at length, not having forces sufficient to defend them, they were compelled to retire further on into the western parts of Africa. See Sir Isaac Newton's Chronol. p. 9. Procopius mentions two white columns, reared by them in the city of Tingis, now Tangier, a city of their founding, and capital of the province of Tingitania, on which was an inscription in the Phœnician language and character, to this purpose; "We are fugitives, who fled to save ourselves from the great robber, Joshua, the son of Nun." St. Augustin farther assures us, that the Africans boasted themselves to be descended from the ancient Canaanites, and preserved their old Phœnician language, the Punick being generally allowed to be very near the Hebrew and Phœnician. They are likewise supposed by the learned to have come in colonies into Greece, Cilicia, and Lesser Asia, and most of the islands of the Ægean and Mediterranean sea, quite to Cadiz in Spain. Arrian likewise tells us, that among the many ambassadors who waited upon Alexander the Great at Babylon, some came from Africa, who were of the Canaanitish race; and the Baby-



and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land rested from war.

## CHAP. XII.

*The kings are named who were conquered and driven from their kingdom; two on the east side of Jordan, namely, Sihon and Og; and thirty-one on the west.*

[Before Christ 1445.]

**N**OW these are the kings of the land, which the children of Israel smote, and possessed their land on the other side Jordan toward the rising of the sun, from the river Arnon unto mount Hermon, and all the plain on the east:

2 Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt in Heshbon, and ruled from Aroer, which is upon the bank of the river Arnon, and from the middle of the river, and from half Gilcad, even unto the river Jabbok, which is the border of the children of Ammon;

3 And from the plain to the sea of Chinneroth on the east, and unto the sea of the plain, even the salt sea on the east, the way to Beth-jeshimoth; and from the south, under Ashdoth-pisgah:

4 And the coast of Og king of Bashan, which was of the remnant of the giants, that dwelt at Ashtaroth and at Edrei,

5 And reigned in mount Hermon, and in Salcah, and in all Bashan, unto the border of the Geshurites and the Maachathites, and half Gilcad, the border of Sihon king of Heshbon.

6 Them did Moses the servant of the LORD and the children of Israel smite: and Moses the servant of the LORD gave it for a possession unto the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh.

7 ¶ And these are the kings of the country which Joshua and the children of Israel smote on this side Jordan on the west, from Baalgad in the valley of Lebanon even unto the

Ionish Gemara adds, that they came to beg of him to reinstate them in their ancient seats, whence the Israelites had driven them. See Psalmanazar's 3d Essay.

*According to their divisions by their tribes.]* See Numb. xxvi. 53. xxxiii. 54.

*And the land rested from war.]* All the potentates and nations of the land of Canaan being subdued, the Israelites, now become peaceable possessors of that fine Land of Promise, thought only how to divide it, as we shall see in chap. xiii. Here begins the 7th year, reckoning from their first seed-time, after the passage over Jordan; the first sabbatical year celebrated by them after Joshua had brought them into rest; that rest which is a type of the eternal rest which the great Joshua of the New Covenant prepares for his people in heaven. Heb. iv. 8, 9, &c. From this same epocha we are to reckon the jubilees: see on Levit. xxv. 8, 9, 10.

**REFLECTIONS.**—The history of this war concludes, happily for Israel, in the conquest of the whole land, north and south. Far from being warned by their neighbours' calamities, no city but Gibeon sought for peace, but, hardened as Pharaoh by the Divine judgment, came out to war with Israel, and rushed upon their own destruction. Thus still, hardness of heart drives sinners furiously to pursue those ways of sin which must end in their eternal perdition. The conquest is now completed: these dreaded foes of Israel no longer make them afraid, but fall before the devouring sword of the conquering Joshua. *Note;* We must not be weary of our spiritual warfare, nor count the time long; we shall finally reap, if we faint not.

The people now begin to taste the sweets of repose, and disperse themselves over the conquered country: for

Joshua, as an obedient servant, had faithfully accomplished his business; and God, as a faithful God, had fulfilled to them his promises, which he spake by his servant Moses. *Note;* (1.) Obedience to the command, is the way to obtain the fulfilment of the promise. (2.) They who go forth with a dependance on God, shall find that they are not disappointed in their hopes.

## CHAP. XII.

*Ver. 1. Now these are the kings, &c.]* Having concluded the relation of the wars of Joshua, the sacred historian, now about to enter into a detail of the division made of the conquered country among the tribes, lays in some measure before the reader a map of that country, beginning with those places which the Israelites took under the conduct of Moses. The country extended from the river Arnon on the south, to mount Hermon on the north, and included all the plain, i. e. all the plains of Moab, on the east of Jordan.

*Note;* On this side Jordan, the people of God have possession of some blessings, as pardon, peace, comfort, &c.; but their chief inheritance lies beyond the grave, where the fulness of the promises shall be accomplished in the glory which shall be revealed.

*Ver. 7, 8. And these are the kings of the country which Joshua and the children of Israel smote, on this side Jordan.]* The author wrote in the country of Canaan, properly so called; and this region was, with respect to him, on this side Jordan, to the west of that river. With respect to the limits which he describes of this conquered land, he specifies them as in ver. 17. of the foregoing chapter. Here Calmet is of opinion, that instead of translating *even unto the*

mount Halak, that goeth up to Seir; which Joshua gave unto the tribes of Israel for a possession according to their divisions;

8 In the mountains, and in the vallies, and in the plains, and in the springs, and in the wilderness, and in the south country; the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites:

9 The king of Jericho, one; the king of Ai, which is beside Beth-el, one;

10 The king of Jerusalem, one; the king of Hebron, one;

11 The king of Jarmuth, one; the king of Lachish, one;

12 The king of Eglon, one; the king of Gezer, one;

13 The king of Debir, one; the king of Geder, one;

14 The king of Hormah, one; the king of Arad, one;

15 The king of Libnah, one; the king of Adullam, one;

16 The king of Makkedah, one; the king of Beth-el, one;

17 The king of Tappuah, one; the king of Hopher, one;

18 The king of Aphek, one; the king of Lasharon, one;

19 The king of Madon, one; the king of Hazor, one;

20 The king of Shimron-meron, one; the king of Achshaph, one;

*the mount Halak, &c.* we should render it, *even to the mountains of separation*, which serve as limits betwixt the land of Canaan and that of Seir, and rise towards Idumea. Nothing can better suit with those mountains which lay to the south of Judæa, than this name *mountains of separation*; to be convinced, we need only cast our eyes over any accurate map of the country.

*Ver. 13. The king of Geder*] This is the first and only time that mention is made of a *king of Geder*. This city is in all probability the same as *Gedera*, *Gederothaim*, *Gederoth* or *Gedor*, in the tribe of Judah, mentioned chap. xv. 36. 41. 58. and 2 Chron. xxviii. 18. We cannot tell the exact situation of it; but it seems not to have been far distant from Jamnia. Strabo calls it *Godara*, and places it within the territory of Joppa and Jamnia. Bochart says, that all these names carry the idea of cities inclosed with hedges. See Can. lib. i. cap. 34.

*Ver. 15. The king of Adullam*] A city of Judah, chap. xv. 35. well known for the retreat of David, who, during his disgrace, often concealed himself in the caves of Adullam, 1 Sam. xxii. 1. Eusebius says, that it was a very large city in his time, about ten miles from Eleutheropolis; and St. Jerome, that it was not a small city. See de Loc. Heb.

*Ver. 17. The king of Tappuah*] It seems that there were two cities of this name; one in the tribe of Judah, chap. xv. 34. xvi. 8. xvii. 8. the other belonging to that of Ephraim, on the borders of Manasseh. It is difficult to say which of the two is here spoken of; perhaps the last: what would incline to this opinion is, that the *king of Tappuah* is named immediately after the king of Beth-el, a city placed on the confines of Ephraim and Benjamin, and before the king of Hopher, a city of the tribe of Zebulun, not far from Beth-el. Calmet places Tappuah in the tribe of Judah.

*The king of Hopher*] *The land of Hopher* is spoken of, 1 Kings iv. 10. St. Jerome places it in the tribe of Zebulun, near Sephorim or Diocæsarea.

*Ver. 18. The king of Aphek*] In the country conquered by Joshua, there were at least two cities of this name;

one in the tribe of Judah, chap. xv. 53. the other in the tribe of Asher, chap. xix. 30. But we cannot venture to determine which of the two is here spoken of.

*The king of Lasharon*] There is no city of this name now known. Modern interpreters, following the Vulgate, consider the letter *ש*, in the Hebrew, as a mark of the genitive, and translate of *Sharon*, as it stands in the margin of our Bibles. The place now in question, we should apprehend to be that city of *Saron* which was near *Lydda*, (Acts, ix. 35.) and whose delightful and fertile plains are so often celebrated in other parts of Scripture. Isai. xxxiii. 9. xxxv. 2. There was also a Sharon to the east of Jordan, in the tribe of Gad, which some think to be mentioned, Isai. lxx. 10. Eusebius and St. Jerome say, that the whole country from Cæsarea to Joppa went by the name of Joppa, as well as the plains which extended from mount Tabor to the lake of Gennesareth. Perhaps it is this district, not a city, that is here intended by the sacred writer. Reland asserts, that the name of Sharon was given only to the country situated between Joppa and Cæsarea, and that there was no city of this name in the tribe of Gad; but that the people of this tribe sent their flocks to the rich pastures of Sharon. Indeed, in 1 Chron. v. 16. it is only said, that the children of Gad *dwelt in all the suburbs of Sharon*; but why in the *suburbs*, and not in the *cities*, if the country had belonged to them? It was in the suburbs that the beasts were lodged; Numb. xxxv. 3. Josh. xiv. 4. And the law allowed the sending them from one place to another, in the pastures belonging to the suburbs dependant on cities of a tribe to which they did not belong.

*Ver. 19, 20. The king of Madon—The king of Shimron-meron*] See on chap. xi. 1.

*Ver. 21. The king of Taanach—The king of Megiddo*] Taanach, a city assigned to the Levites, chap. xxi. 25. in the half tribe of Manasseh, to the west of Jordan, chap. xvii. 11. was not far from the frontiers of Zebulun; Eusebius and St. Jerome place it four miles from *Legion*; but this latter city, well known in the book of *the Latus of Palestine*, written by the first, and translated by the second of these learned men, being now unknown, cannot help

- 21 The king of Taanach, one ; the king of Megiddo, one ;  
 22 The king of Kedesh, one ; the king of Jokneam of Carmel, one ;  
 23 The king of Dor in the coast of Dor,

one ; the king of the nations of Gilgal, one ;

24 The king of Tirzah, one : all the kings thirty and one.

help us to fix the precise distances. Cellarius places Taanach between mount Tabor and the Mediterranean sea, fifteen miles from Nazareth westward. *Taanach* seems to have been not far from the river Kishon, and the city of Megiddo. Judg. v. 19—21. We should add that the Canaanites were not entirely driven from thence : probably, they seized upon it after the death of Joshua : see Judg. i. 27, 28. *Megiddo*, situate near the Kishon, belonged as well as Taanach, to the half tribe of Manasseh ; Judg. v. 19. The Canaanites held it a long time ; ch. xvii. 11—13. Solomon rebuilt it ; 1 Kings, ix. 15. and in its neighbourhood Josiah was defeated by the king of Ægypt, 2 Chron. xxv. 22.

*Ver. 22. The king of Kedesh]* There were two cities of this name ; one in the tribe of Judah ; chap. xv. 23. the other in the tribe of *Naphtali*, chap. xix. 37. The king of the latter is thought to be here meant ; 1st, Because it was at the same time a considerable city, a city of the Levites, and a city of refuge ; chap. xx. 7. 2dly, Because Kadesh is named in this chapter among other places which were all situated in North Canaan. Calmet thinks *Kedesh* might be the *Kadytis* of Herodotus.

*The king of Jokneam of Carmel]* The city of Jokneam was at the foot of Carmel, near the river Belus, in the tribe of Zebulun, chap. xix. 11. It was given to the Levites, chap. xxi. 34. Bochart derives its name from the beauty of its situation. Canaan, lib. i. cap. 28.

*Ver. 23. The king of Dor, in the coast of Dor]* The city of this name fell to the lot of the children of Manasseh ; chap. xvii. 11. It appears to have commanded a great territory ; and Bochart observes, that it was one of the oldest royal cities in Phœnicia. The Canaanites held it ; Judg. i. 27. Antiochus Sydetes besieged it in after times, but could not make himself master of it. See Boch. Can. lib. i. cap. 28.

*The king of the nations of Gilgal]* The LXX have it, *the king of Gei of Galilee*, or rather, as Dr. Hammond renders it, *of Galilee* ; for so he thinks it should be read : by which *Galilee*, he understands the Galilee of the nations, the same country whose king was *Tidal*, Gen. xiv. 1. See Hamm. on Matt. note e. The Gilgal here mentioned cannot be the place where Joshua had his camp ; there was no city at that time, and Joshua gave the spot the name of *Gilgal* for the reason mentioned, chap. v. 9. Several learned men understand, by *the king of the nations of Gilgal*, a king who ruled over some district of *Galilee of the Gentiles* or *nations* ; but, as St. Jerome remarks, this name, *Galilee of the nations*, was unknown in Joshua's time ; and we should fix its rise in the time of Solomon, when that prince gave Hiram the twenty cities spoken of 1 Kings, ix. 11—13. St. Jerome further observes, that there was, in his time, a city named *Gelgel*, near the sea, not far from Joppa, and six miles from Antipatris. Per-

haps this is the city we are looking for. Trade bringing people from all nations into these parts, perhaps the petty king of Gelgel might from thence have been called the king of the nations settled in the territories of this place. We must confess however, notwithstanding what Bishop Patrick mentions to the contrary in his notes on Gen. xiv. 1., that there seems to be a more plausible opinion respecting the matter ; for, first, it is certain that the name *Gojim*, which we find here in the Hebrew, is the same that we read of in Gen. xiv. 1. where *Tidal* is called king of *Gojim*, or the nations. It is also as certain, that the kingdom of this *Tidal* was neither near the sea, nor in the neighbourhood of Joppa : thus the conjecture of St. Jerome, approved by the Bishop of Ely, is not easily supported ; on the contrary, the kingdom of Tidal may very naturally be supposed to be in north Galilee. It is strongly asserted, that the name of *Galilee of the nations* commenced in the time of Solomon ; but it is more easy to assert than to prove. The name constantly implies a country much more extensive than the twenty cities which Solomon gave to Hiram. We do not see why it might not be anterior to that offer, and as old as Tidal. Though in the passage of Genesis the LXX render *Gojim* as a name appellative, they render it here as a proper name, and in all probability it should be so translated. Our historian, therefore, signifies to us, *a king of Gojim of Galilee*. See Wells's Paraphrase and notes ; Calmet and Le Clerc.

*Ver. 24. All the kings thirty and one]* The LXX reckon and specify but twenty-nine, and of them too they disfigure the names. We must not be surpris'd at seeing so many kings in so small a country. Each city and its territory had its own. What was the king of Beth-el ? He and the king of Ai together had hardly twelve thousand subjects. Such were kingdoms in their first state every where. Cæsar, in his *Commentaries*, speaks of four kings in the single county of Kent. How many then must there have been in all Great Britain ? Tacitus says, that the Silures and Brigantes had each of them their own king. Cæsar tells us, that among the Gauls there were as many kings as princes. Livy says the same thing of Spain ; and Vopiscus introduces the emperor Probus writing to the senate, that he had subdued Germany, and saw at his feet nine kings of different nations, &c.

REFLECTIONS.—The conquered countries of Canaan are here described, and the cities with their kings, no less than thirty-one : a proof of the vast fertility of the land, which could maintain such a number of populous cities with their villages. But as God's blessing made it thus fruitful for his people's sake, their sin has long since brought down a curse of barrenness upon it, so that there is hardly a town of importance left ; and the land is so desolate, that it scarcely maintains the few wretched inhabitants which remain.

C H A P. XIII.

*The boundaries of the land not yet conquered: the countries and cities beyond Jordan assigned to the two tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, are specified.*

[Before Christ 1445.]

**N**OW Joshua was old and stricken in years; and the LORD said unto him, Thou art old and stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed.

C H A P. XIII.

*Ver. 1. Now Joshua was old and stricken in years]* By assigning to Joshua the same age with Caleb, it is easy to justify what the sacred historian says; for Caleb was now eighty-five years old, ch. xiv. 10. Joshua, however, is commonly made to be more, for reasons drawn from the chronology of the time which elapsed from the departure out of Ægypt, till the building of the temple of Solomon. See Bedford's Script. Chronol. b. v. c. 2. We suppose him, with the generality of interpreters, to have been about one hundred years of age; for, allowing him to have been forty-five when he left Ægypt, if we add to them the forty years spent in the wilderness, and the seven which it took him to conquer the land of Canaan, we shall find him to be ninety-two years of age at the end of the war. Now he lived one hundred and ten years; so that, according to our supposition, he must have made the division of the country seven or eight years after the conquest. See Vignoles, tom. i. p. 1—16.

*And the Lord said unto him, Thou art old, &c.]* It is evident that Joshua meditated new conquests: to divert him from which, God leads him to reflect on his great age; as if he had said, "Although a part of the country which I promised to give unto my people remains still to be conquered, yet it is time to make a division of the whole. If this people keep my covenant, I will fully perform my promises; but, in the mean time, it is proper to exercise their faith, and try their submission." God had never promised Joshua that he should conquer the whole land of Canaan; but only, that he should bring his people into it, Deut. xxxi. 23. and divide its territories among them, ch. i. 6. On the one hand, his great age no longer allowed him to bear the fatigues of war; and, on the other, it invited him to a speedy division of the country among the children of Israel, in order to prevent, by his authority, all contest and ground of discontent among them.

*Ver. 2. This is the land that yet remaineth; all the borders of the Philistines]* i. e. The country which they kept upon the sea-coast, to the south-west of the land of Canaan. See ch. xxii. 10, 11.

*And all Geshuri]* This name was given to a city and region situate on the north-east of the Holy Land, toward mount Hermon. Both of them fell to the lot of the tribe of Manasseh, Deut. iii. 14. Josh. xii. 5. It should, however, be observed, that there was another country of Geshuri, on the south of the land of Canaan, towards

2 This is the land that yet remaineth: all the borders of the Philistines, and all Geshuri,

3 From Sihor, which is before Egypt, even unto the borders of Ekron northward, which is counted to the Canaanite: five lords of the Philistines; the Gazathites, and the Ashdathites, the Eshkalonites, the Gittites, and the Ekronites; also the Avites:

Ægypt, the inhabitants of which country are sometimes joined with the Amalekites. It was they who tried David's valour; 1 Sam. xxvii. 10. xxx. 20. There was a third city of Geshuri in Syria, the king of which protected Absalom his son-in-law, 2 Sam. iii. 3. xiii. 37. xv. 8. and which appears to have been not far from the land of Geshuri situate in the tribe of Manasseh, 1 Chron. ii. 23.

*Ver. 3. From Sihor, which is before Egypt]* Here the sacred historian, intending, in a particular manner, to describe the extent of the country of the Philistines, fixes its northern limits at the river Sihor, which, it is generally thought, was only the Pelusiack branch of the Nile. See on Numb. xxxiv. 5. Le Clerc, Calmet, Mills, Bishop Clayton, and many others, are of this opinion.

*Even unto the borders of Ekron northward]* Ekron was a considerable city in the land of the Philistines, particularly famous for the altars of *Beelzebub*, called, in the New Testament, *the prince of the devils*. He was esteemed the chief deity of the country. Ekron was a portion of the tribe of Judah, and afterwards of Dan; but neither of them took it from its original possessors.

*Which is counted to the Canaanite]* The first possessors of the country were the descendants of Canaan, the youngest son of Ham. With respect to the Philistines, they, it is well known, sprung from Mizraim, the second son of Ham; and, in a course of time, dispossessed the Avims of the places they held in the land of Canaan, and there settled themselves under the name of *Philistines*. See on Gen. x. 13. and Deut. ii. 23.

*Five lords of the Philistines]* The whole country of the Philistines, from Sihor to Ekron, was divided into five governments. The Scripture calls them *chiefs, saraim, or saranaim*; an old Phœnician word, as some think, signifying the same as *farim* in Hebrew, i. e. *prince or governor*: the LXX translate it, *satrapes*, and the Vulgate *petty kings*; which does not answer, so well as the expression used by the LXX, to the idea that the Scripture gives of the government of the Philistines, which was rather aristocratical than monarchical. Achish, king of Gath in the time of David, is perhaps the only one of these lords who became absolute in his government. The land of the Philistines was of inconsiderable extent, not above forty English miles long, and very narrow, but rendered famous for its fertility and commerce. The *Avites* are to be distinguished from the *Hivites*, who inhabited the country near mount Hermon, to the north of Canaan; the latter dwelt on the west, and did not make a separate government. Though they, as well as the Philistines, were de-

4 From the south, all the land of the Canaanites, and Mearah that *is* beside the Sidonians, unto Aphek, to the borders of the Amorites:

5 And the land of the Giblites, and all Lebanon, toward the sun-rising, from Baal-gad under mount Hermon unto the entering into Hamath,

6 All the inhabitants of the hill country from Lebanon unto Misrephoth-maim, *and* all the Sidonians, them will I drive out from before the children of Israel: only divide thou it by lot unto the Israelites for an inheritance,

as I have commanded thee.

7 Now therefore divide this land for an inheritance unto the nine tribes, and the half-tribe of Manasseh,

8 With whom the Reubenites and the Gadites have received their inheritance, which Moses gave them, beyond Jordan eastward, *even* as Moses the servant of the LORD gave them;

9 From Aroer, that *is* upon the bank of the river Arnon, and the city that *is* in the midst of the river, and all the plain of Medeba unto Dibon;

prived of their country by the Capthorims, yet some of them remained in certain districts, where they lived under the dominion of their conquerors.

*Ver. 4. From the south, all the land of the Canaanites]* To the south of the country of the Philistines, on the sea-coast, lay the Canaanites, properly so called, who remained still unconquered. *Mearah*, a city unknown, towards the north, but in the territory of Sidon, was in the same class. See Calmet. *Aphek* was probably the city which we find in the tribe of Asher, not very distant from Sidon, but farther eastward.

*To the borders of the Amorites]* There were Amorites in all the land of Canaan, to the north as well as to the south and east. Joshua proceeds from Sidon to Aphek, a city in Syria, betwixt Heliopolis and Byblos, where stood the temple of Venus of Aphek, and which is spoken of 1 Kings, xx. 26. 2 Kings, xiii. 17. as the capital of Syria. From this place, in the verse following, he passes on to the borders of the Syrians, towards *Gabal*, or *Gebala*, which, according to Ptolemy, lay in Phœnicia.

*Ver. 5. And the land of the Giblites]* This people dwelt out of the land of Canaan; their capital, named *Gebal*, was seated to the east of Tyre and Sidon. Ezek. xxvii. 9. Ps. lxxxiii. 7. The *Giblites* are named among the workmen sent by king Hiram to Solomon. See 1 Kings, v. 18. and the margins of our Bibles. Some traces of the name *Giblites* are still to be met with in the city of *Gibyle* in Syria, which Maundrell describes, and thinks to have been the ancient *Gebal*. See his Journey from Aleppo, p. 33. The Israelites extended their conquests *as far as Lebanon, toward the sun rising*, penetrating no further. Respecting which, *Baal-Gad*, and *Hamath*, see ch. xi. 17. and Numb. xxxiv. 8.

*Ver. 6. All the inhabitants of the hill-country—will I drive out]* God promises to expel these nations; but, upon a condition implied, that the Israelites did not render themselves unworthy this favour by their disobedience: a condition which having never been fulfilled, there is no room to wonder that the Lord did not give them all that he had promised. The Sidonians never submitted to the yoke of the Hebrews; and all that David and Solomon could do to the nations about Lebanon was to make them tributary. But why was it that, so far from giving to his people all the land of Canaan, God suffered them to remain so many

years in a state of war before they became masters of the places which they kept? It was certainly not owing (as Josephus, Hist. Jud. l. v. c. 1. hardly asserts) to the weakness of Joshua, nor to the situation or strength of the cities in the promised land. Providence disposed the event in this manner for reasons well worthy its adorable wisdom. 1. It was not proper that the country should be depopulated all at once. Had the natives been driven out immediately, the wild beasts would have been too numerous for the conquerors. Exod. xxiii. 29. Deut. vii. 22. 2. God preserved a part of the Canaanites in order to try the faith, piety, and fidelity of the Israelites. 3. Nor can it be denied, that the progress of the Israelites was retarded through their default, negligence, and improper conduct. Ps. cvi. 34, 35. 4. And, upon the whole, the goodness of God is, in a very sensible manner, evident, who punishes his enemies slowly and by degrees, to give them time to be converted.

REFLECTIONS.—Joshua now was growing old, and the fatigues of war probably hastened infirmities upon him: God, therefore, gives him rest after his toils; and, as his finishing service, appoints him to make the division of what yet should be conquered, as well as of the country already possessed. *Note:* (1.) Old age wants a quiet resting-place, and, after a busy life, to be recollected against the near approach of death. (2.) The strongest must bow, and the best of men pay this tribute to nature; and they who are advancing in years need be reminded of it, that what they yet have to do they may do quickly.

The country here described was very extensive; yet God promises to put them in possession of it, if they continue obedient. If the Philistines afterwards proved such troublesome neighbours, they must blame their sins, which prevented their extirpation; and their negligence or cowardice, which restrained them from putting in force the liberty given them by the Divine promise. *Note:* If we sin against our own mercies, we have nobody but ourselves to blame for our sufferings.

*Ver. 9—12. From Aroer, &c.]* These four verses specify at large the territories on the east of Jordan already occupied by the fore-mentioned two tribes and a half. See

10 And all the cities of Sihon king of the Amorites, which reigned in Heshbon, unto the border of the children of Ammon;

11 And Gilead, and the border of the Geshurites and Maachathites, and all mount Hermon, and all Bashan unto Salcah;

12 All the kingdom of Og in Bashan, which reigned in Ashtaroth and in Edrei, who remained of the remnant of the giants: for these did Moses smite, and cast them out.

13 Nevertheless the children of Israel expelled not the Geshurites, nor the Maachathites: but the Geshurites and the Maachathites dwell among the Israelites until this day.

14 Only unto the tribe of Levi he gave none inheritance; the sacrifices of the LORD God of Israel made by fire *are* their inheritance, as he said unto them.

15 ¶ And Moses gave unto the tribe of the children of Reuben *inheritance* according to their families.

16 And their coast was from Aroer, that *is* on the bank of the river Arnon, and the city that *is* in the midst of the river, and all the plain by Medeba;

17 Heshbon, and all her cities that *are* in the plain; Dibon, and Bamoth-baal, and Beth-baal-meon,

18 And Jahaza, and Kedemoth, and Mephaah,

19 And Kirjathaim, and Sibmah, and Zareth-shahar in the mount of the valley,

20 And Beth-peor, and Athdoth-pisgah, and Beth-jeshimoth,

21 And all the cities of the plain, and all the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites, which reigned in Heshbon, whom Moses smote

with the princes of Midian, Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, *which were* dukes of Sihon, dwelling in the country.

22 ¶ Balaam also the son of Beor, the sooth-sayer, did the children of Israel slay with the sword among them that were slain by them.

23 And the border of the children of Reuben was Jordan, and the border *thereof*. This *was* the inheritance of the children of Reuben after their families, the cities and the villages thereof.

24 ¶ And Moses gave *inheritance* unto the tribe of Gad, *even* unto the children of Gad according to their families.

25 And their coast was Jazar, and all the cities of Gilead, and half the land of the children of Ammon, unto Aroer that *is* before Rabbah;

26 And from Heshbon unto Ramath-mizpeh, and Betonim; and from Mahanaim unto the border of Debir;

27 And in the valley, Beth-aram, and Beth-nimrah, and Succoth, and Zaphon, the rest of the kingdom of Sihon king of Heshbon, Jordan and *his* border, *even* unto the edge of the sea of Chinnereth on the other side Jordan eastward.

28 This *is* the inheritance of the children of Gad after their families, the cities, and their villages.

29 ¶ And Moses gave *inheritance* unto the half-tribe of Manasseh: and *this was the possession* of the half-tribe of the children of Manasseh by their families.

30 And their coast was from Mahanaim, all Bashan, all the kingdom of Og king of Bashan, and all the towns of Jair, which *are* in Bashan, threescore cities:

Numb. xxi. 24, &c. xxxii. 33, &c. Deut. iii. and the six first verses of the foregoing chapter.

Ver. 11. *And the border of the—Maachathites*] The Maachathites bordered upon the Geshurites on the north of the land of Canaan, toward mount Hermon. Maacha, their capital, which fell to the half tribe of Manasseh, is the same that Ptolemy calls *Epiceras*. The Chaldee paraphrase calls it *Apkeroz* in this place, ch. xii. and Deut. iii. 14.

Ver. 20. *Beth-peor, &c.*] See Numb. xxv. 3. 5. Deut. xxxiv. and ch. xii. 3.

Ver. 22. *Balaam also the son of Beor, the sooth-sayer, did*

*the children of Israel slay*] Why is mention here made of Balaam? Probably, as we must suppose, because he had advised Sihon and the Midianitish princes to engage in war against the children of Israel. At least it is very certain, that he had suggested to the Midianites the means of seducing the Israelites to idolatry. See Numb. xxv. 17.

Ver. 29—31. *And Moses gave inheritance unto the half-tribe of Manasseh*] It does not appear that the tribe of Manasseh had desired the settlements which Moses gave to the half tribe of it on the east of Jordan, Numb. xxxii. 1, 2. But as it was numerous, Numb. xxvi. 34. and had evidently much cattle, Moses thought proper to

31 And half Gilead, and Ashtaroth, and Edrei, cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan, were pertaining unto the children of Machir the son of Manasseh, even to the one half of the children of Machir, by their families.

32 These are the countries which Moses did distribute for inheritance in the plains of Moab, on the other side Jordan, by Jericho, eastward.

33 But unto the tribe of Levi Moses gave not any inheritance: the LORD God of Israel was their inheritance, as he said unto them.

#### C H A P. XIV.

*Joshua and Eleazar distribute the land of Canaan by lot: Caleb desireth mount Hebron to be given to him; and Joshua granteth his petition.*

[Before Christ 1445.]

**A**ND these are the countries which the children of Israel inherited in the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest, and

Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel, distributed for inheritance to them.

2 By lot was their inheritance, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses, for the nine tribes, and for the half-tribe.

3 For Moses had given the inheritance of two tribes and an half-tribe on the other side Jordan: but unto the Levites he gave none inheritance among them.

4 For the children of Joseph were two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim: therefore they gave no part unto the Levites in the land, save cities to dwell in, with their suburbs for their cattle and for their substance.

5 As the LORD commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did, and they divided the land.

6 ¶ Then the children of Judah came unto Joshua in Gilgal: and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite said unto him, Thou

associate the half with the tribes of Reuben and Gad. The country was extensive. The half tribe of Manasseh, placed on the north, covered the two others; and Moses, by placing it there, rewarded the family of Machir, who was so famous for his valour in the war against Og. Numb. xxxii. 39.

*Ver. 31. Half of the children of Machir, by their families]* Jair had the honour to be included, though of the tribe of Judah, because he had contributed to the conquest of the country, Numb. xxxii. 41, 42; and was moreover great grand-son, by the grand-mother's side, of Machir, who married Hezron, of the tribe of Judah, 1 Chron. ii. 21.

*Note;* It is repeatedly mentioned, that the Levites had no lot among their brethren; but they had a better, Jehovah, who was their portion; and by his service they were liberally provided for. *Note;* They who have a portion in the Lord need not envy the world the possession of the land.

#### C H A P. XIV.

*Ver. 2. By lot was their inheritance, as the Lord commanded, &c.]* Though God had sufficiently pointed out by the predictions of Jacob, when dying, and those of Moses, what portions he designed for each tribe, we readily discern an admirable proof of the Divine wisdom, in the orders he gave to decide them by lot. By this means were prevented the false interpretations which might have been given to the words of Jacob and Moses; and, by striking at the root of whatever might occasion jealousies and disputes among the tribes, he evidently secured the honesty of those who were to be appointed to distribute to them the conquered countries in the land of Canaan. Besides, the success of this method became a fresh proof of the divinity of the Israelites' religion, and the truth of its oracles. Each tribe finding itself placed by lot exactly in

6

the spot which Jacob and Moses had foretold, it was evident that Providence had equally directed both those predictions and that lot. The event justified the truth of the promises. The more singular it was, the more clearly do we discern the finger of God in it. No one has set these reflections in a fairer light than Masius. "The portion," says he, "fell to each tribe just as Jacob had declared two hundred and fifty years before, in the last moments of his life, and Moses immediately before his death; for, to the tribe of Judah fell a country abounding in vineyards and pastures; to Zebulun and Issachar, sea-ports; in that of Asher was plenty of oil, wheat, and metals; that of Benjamin, near to the temple, was in a manner between the shoulders of the city. Ephraim and Manasseh were distinguished with a territory blest in a peculiar manner by heaven. The land of Naphtali extended from the west to the south of the tribe of Judah. Since, therefore, the lots so well corresponded to these predictions, would it not be insolence and stupidity in the highest degree, not to acknowledge the inspiration of God in the words of Jacob and Moses, the direction of his hand in the lot, and his providence in the event?" See Masius on the place.

*Ver. 5. The children of Israel—divided the land]* That is, they were disposed so to do; they began to set about it. The Scripture calls that done, which is begun or only resolved upon. Gen. xxxvii. 21. Exod. xii. 48. chap. x. 15. The text might be disposed thus: "The children of Israel did as the Lord had commanded Moses, by assigning cities and suburbs to the Levites, [ch. xxi. 1, 2, &c.] when they divided the land, under the direction of Joshua, Eleazar, and the heads of the tribes."

*Ver. 6. Then the children of Judah came unto Joshua in Gilgal]* Or, Now the children of Judah had come, &c.

And

knowest the thing that the LORD said unto Moses the man of God concerning me and thee in Kadesh-barnea.

7 Forty years old *was* I when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land; and I brought him word again as *it was* in mine heart.

8 Nevertheless my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt: but I wholly followed the LORD my God.

9 And Moses sware on that day, saying, Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children's for ever, because thou hast wholly followed the LORD my God.

10 And now, behold, the LORD hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years, even since the LORD spake this word unto Moses, while *the children of Israel* wandered in the wilderness: and now, lo, I *am* this day

fourscore and five years old.

11 As yet I *am as strong* this day as I *was* in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength *was* then, even so *is* my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in.

12 Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the LORD spake in that day (for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims *were* there, and *that* the cities *were* great and fenced); if so be the LORD *will be* with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the LORD said.

13 And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh Hebron for an inheritance.

14 Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite unto this day, because that he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel.

15 And the name of Hebron before *was*

*And Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite]* See Numb. xxxii. 12.

*Ver. 7. I brought him word again, as it was in mine heart]* Sincerely, without a desire to flatter, or fear to displease him.

*Ver. 8. I wholly followed the Lord my God]* The Hebrew literally is, *I filled after the Lord my God*: Words, the energy of which is very well rendered in our version; they give the idea of a traveller, who, attentive to the following of his guide, so treads in his steps, as to leave hardly any void space betwixt his guide and him, and continually fills up the traces of his feet. See Poole's Synopsis.

*Ver. 9. And Moses sware on that day, saying]* See Numb. xiv. 21—24. and Deut. i. 34, 35. It was God who sware, and not Moses; but as he sware by the mouth of the latter, the expression used by the sacred writer is just.

*Ver. 11. As yet I am as strong, &c.]* Caleb adds this consideration only the better to shew the high sense he has of the divine goodness, which had so preserved his vigour in this advanced age, as to enable him either to take from the enemies, which still retained them, the possessions to which he was entitled, or to defend what should belong to him against their attempts. For the expression, *to go out, and to come in*, see Numb. xxvii. 17.

*Ver. 12. In that day (for thou heardest) &c.]* The LXX and Vulgate construe these words with what goes before, and render the whole thus: *Give me, therefore, this mountain, which the Lord promised me, as thou thyself heardest.* Beside the city of Hebron, the Anakims possessed at least two others in this district. See Numb. xiii. 29, 32, 33. ch. xi. 21. xx. 7.

*If—the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able, &c.]* Here arises a difficulty. We observed that Joshua had already taken Hebron; how, therefore, can Caleb say now

that he shall drive out the Anakims? Some are of opinion, that Caleb claimed the country of Hebron before the city of that name was conquered. But, without making any alteration in the narrative here given by the sacred historian, we may answer, that still, though Joshua had taken the city of Hebron, the Anakims kept in the adjacent mountains, whence they frequently descended and infested the country, and were therefore necessarily to be expelled by Caleb. This conjecture is the more probable, as it appears by the sequel that the city of Hebron was given to the priests, (ch. xxi. 11—13.) and not to Caleb, who only possessed the country wherein it stood, and therefore doubts required no more. We would, however, choose rather to answer, with some other interpreters, that the Anakims had evidently retaken Hebron, and the other cities in that district, while Joshua was engaged elsewhere; in which case, the whole verse might be rendered thus: *Now, therefore, give me this mountain, whereof the Lord spake in that day, as thou thyself then heardest; for though the Anakims are there—if the Lord be with me, I shall be able to drive them out.* It must not be thought here, that Caleb at all doubts the faithfulness of God: so far from it, his language is that of a pious and modest man, who means to declare, that without the assistance of heaven he cannot succeed in the enterprise which his valour had projected. The paraphrase of Jonathan has it, *If the WORD of the Lord is my help*, agreeable to his usual style throughout. See Houbigant on the place.

*Ver. 13. And Joshua blessed him]* Granted him the boon he desired, acknowledged his right to the country of Hebron, consented to his making a conquest of it, and entreated the Lord to favour him in his undertaking.

*Ver. 15. And the name of Hebron before was, &c.]* Perhaps the words, *a great man*, might be rendered a *strong*



Kirjath-arba; *which Arba was a great man among the Anakims. And the land had rest from war.*

### CHAP. XV.

*The borders of the tribe of Judah are described: Caleb promises that he will give his daughter to wife to the man who shall take Kirjath-sepher: Othniel succeeds: the cities of the tribe of Judah are enumerated.*

[Before Christ 1445.]

**T**HIS then was the lot of the tribe of the children of Judah by their families; *even to the border of Edom; the wilderness of Zin*

southward *was the uttermost part of the south coast.*

2 And their south border was from the shore of the salt sea, from the bay that looketh southward :

3 And it went out to the south side to Maaleh-acrabbim, and passed along to Zin, and ascended up on the south side unto Kadesh-barnea, and passed along to Hezron, and went up to Adar, and fetched a compass to Karkaa :

4 *From thence* it passed toward Azmon, and went out unto the river of Egypt; and the

*strong man; the original word גִּדּוֹל gadol signifying greatness of size and strength, as well as greatness of authority and power. See Gen. xxiv. 35. Arba was the father of Anak; ch. xv. 13. xxi. 11. He built or fortified Kirjath, or made it the city of his residence, after the manner of princes, and perhaps was there buried. Hence its name. See Numb. xiii. 33. and particularly Gen. xiii. 18.*

*And the land had rest from war]* The sacred writer repeats what he had said before, because, having gone aside by way of digression, which had a little diverted him from the history of the division of the conquered country, and now coming to that interesting detail, he would shew, that the enemies who remained still in the land of Canaan dared not lift the head to hinder the disposition of their territories.

Caleb, in right of former promise, when now the land was about to be divided, puts in his claim for a particular possession in Hebron, which, as being given him of God, ought not to be put into a lot, God's will being determined before by his promise. The children of Judah accompany him to support his plea, which he urges with great simplicity, deep piety, and noble courage.

1. He mentions his faithful report among the faithless spies; not by way of proud boasting, but to the honour of God, whom he followed, speaking the truth from his heart. *Note;* (1.) It is not pride, but due acknowledgment, to declare what a gracious God has done for us, and by us. (2.) The more singular our fidelity to God has been, the more commendable. (3.) They who serve God in simplicity in their youth, will find the comfort and blessing of it when they are old.

2. He repeats his long experience of God's care of him, as kept alive for the fulfilment of the promise. Five-and-forty years he had been preserved, when all the men of his own age had long since been buried: and he not only lived, but was as strong as ever, as if reserved at eighty-five more gloriously to magnify the Divine power, in the destruction of those sons of Anak who had so terrified the host of Israel in the wilderness. *Note;* (1.) The issues of life are in God's hand; nor age, nor sickness, nor the sword, can hurt those whose preservation he determines. (2.) Every year that we are spared is a call for new thankfulness to him who preserveth our souls in life. (3.) The death of others

around us should make us more sensible of the mercy which preserves us. (4.) A vigorous old age is an unusual blessing.

3. He offers now, aged as he was, to dispossess the Anakims, who had, after the taking of the city of Hebron, retired to the fastnesses of the mountains; and doubts not but by the Divine blessing, to which alone he trusted, to be able to subdue them. *Note;* (1.) They, who trust in God, will never find themselves disappointed of their hope. (2.) If God be with us, the sons of Anak, our giant-like corruptions, must fall before us.

4. Joshua admits the claim, and consents to the offer; commends his courage, and prays for his success. Thus Caleb received his reward for having wholly followed the Lord; and they who carefully copy his steps shall as surely share his blessing in a better country, that is, a heavenly.

### CHAP. XV.

*Ver. 1. This then was the lot of the tribe of—Judah]* In one of the following chapters we see, that the first care of Joshua, Eleazar, and the princes appointed to divide the conquered country, was, to have a plan of the whole drawn out, and to divide it into nine parts and a half, as equally as possible, calculating the extent and goodness of the district. This done, they cast lots in the manner before described, Numb. xxvi. 53—56.; and the lot first assigned a portion to the tribe of Judah; as it were, to confirm the pre-eminence which Jacob's famous prediction had promised to him before all the rest.

*By their families]* It should constantly be remembered, that the lot determined nothing more than the right of each tribe to such or such a portion of the general division into nine provinces and a half. It then remained with Joshua and the other commissioners, to give each family lands proportioned to its situation, without partiality or respect of persons. Thus the district in which each tribe was to be settled was marked out, as it were, by the hand of God; but the bounds of it were fixed by the general and the heads of the people, who, on an estimation of the value of the lands, and the necessity of the families, contracted or extended those bounds according to their discretion. See chap. xix. 9.

goings out of that coast were at the sea : this shall be your south coast.

5 And the east border *was* the salt sea, *even* unto the end of Jordan. And *their* border in the north quarter *was* from the bay of the sea at the uttermost part of Jordan :

6 And the border went up to Beth-hoglah, and passed along by the north of Beth-arabah ; and the border went up to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben :

7 And the border went up toward Debir from the valley of Achor, and so northward, looking toward Gilgal, that *is* before the going up to Adummim, which *is* on the south side of the river : and the border passed toward the waters of En-shemesh, and the goings out thereof were at En-rogel :

8 And the border went up by the valley of the son of Hinnom unto the south side of the Jebusite ; the same *is* Jerusalem : and the border

went up to the top of the mountain that *lieth* before the valley of Hinnom westward, which *is* at the end of the valley of the giants northward :

9 And the border was drawn from the top of the hill unto the fountain of the water of Nephtoah, and went out to the cities of mount Ephron ; and the border was drawn to Baalah, which *is* Kirjath-jearim :

10 And the border compassed from Baalah westward unto mount Seir, and passed along unto the side of mount Jearim, which *is* Chesalon, on the north side, and went down to Beth-shemesh, and passed on to Timnah :

11 And the border went out unto the side of Ekron northward : and the border was drawn to Shicron, and passed along to mount Baalah, and went out unto Jabneel ; and the goings out of the border were at the sea.

12 And the west border *was* to the great

*To the border of Edom ; the wilderness of Zin southward]* The tribe of Judah was the most southwardly of all. Its limits took up the south side, from the arm or point of the Salt or Dead sea on the south, along Edom, or Idumea, passing by the mountains of Acrabbim, the desert of Zin, Kadesh-barnea, Hebron, Adar,—Karkaa, Azmon, and the river of Egypt, and so on to the Mediterranean. See the three following verses, Numb. xxxiv. 1. 5. and Wells's Geogr. vol. ii. chap. 5.

*Ver. 6, 7. And the border went up to Beth-hoglah]* This border, issuing from the north point of the Dead sea, towards the west, was formed by a line which passed by Beth-hoglah, a city in the tribe of Benjamin, above Beth-Arabah, whether we understand by it another city of this name in the same tribe, ch. xviii. 21. or that mentioned ver. 61. or, with some geographers, make of these two places only one and the same city, placed on the border of the two tribes. This line went up to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben, a place famous, no doubt, for some monument which had been erected in memory of a great exploit performed there by Bohan, or because he was there buried. It then went on toward Debir, (ver. 7.) a city unknown, but evidently different from that which stood in the neighbourhood of Hebron, ver. 15.—*From the valley of Achor*, mentioned before in ch. vii. 24. 26. and so northward, looking toward Gilgal ; that is, by the valley of Achor, which had on the north Gilgal, or rather Geliloth, in the tribe of Benjamin, according to Masius, Le Clerc, &c. Calmet is of opinion, that both here and in ch. xviii. Gilgal and Geliloth signify, in general, limits. Gilgal is said to be before the going up to Adummim, in the same tribe of Judah, or perhaps of Benjamin, on the south side of the river, i. e. probably, Kedron. After this it passed on towards the west, constantly inclining from east to west,

by the waters of En-shemesh, whence it proceeded to the spring or fountain of En-rogel, near Jerusalem.

*Ver. 8. And the border went up by the valley of the son of Hinnom]* This valley, which lay to the east of Jerusalem, was so pleasant, and covered with so many groves, that the cruel worshippers of Moloch thought proper to place there the idol of their god, to whom they sacrificed their children. 2 Kings, xxiii. 10. Jerem. vii. 32. & al. It is thought to have belonged formerly to the family of some great personage, named Hinnom, and that from the compound word Gehinnom, the valley of Hinnom, is derived the word Géhenne, which is taken in Scripture for hell. Matt. xviii. 9. xxiii. 33. When the pious Josiah had taken away the idol of Moloch, this valley continued as a place of execration, into which they threw all the filth of Jerusalem, dung, excrements, carcases, and whatever else is cast off to the lay-stalls ; and where, according to the Jewish doctors, they kept continual fires, whether to consume the bones and other combustibles thrown there, or to prevent infection. After this, it is not surprising to find this abominable valley considered as a kind of picture of the place of punishments prepared by divine justice for the wicked in the life to come. The Jebusite, so called from one of the sons of Canaan, Gen. x. 16. became the capital of his descendants, who possessed the fortrefs called Sion, till the time of David. Jebus, properly speaking, was in the territory of Benjamin, and Sion, its citadel, in that of Judah. It was afterwards called Jerusalem. See on chap. x. 13.

*And the border went up to the top of the mountain]* That is, of Moriah, that lieth before the valley of Hinnom westward, which is at the end of the valley of the giants northward ; so that this mountain had on the east the valley of Hinnom, and on the south that of the Rephaim, or giants, which extended

sea, and the coast *thereof*. This is the coast of the children of Judah round about, according to their families.

13 ¶ And unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh he gave a part among the children of Judah, according to the commandment of the LORD to Joshua, *even* the city of Arba the father of Anak, which *city is* Hebron.

14 And Caleb drove thence the three sons of Anak, Shephai, and Ahiman, and Talmi, the children of Anak.

15 And he went up thence to the inha-

bitants of Debir: and the name of Debir before *was* Kirjath-sepher.

16 ¶ And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife.

17 And Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife.

18 And it came to pass, as she came *unto him*, that she moved him to ask of her father a field: and she lighted off *her* ass; and Caleb said unto her, What wouldest thou?

extended as far as Bethlehem, according to Josephus, *Antiq. lib. vii. cap. 4.* Thus the line, which separated the two tribes, left to that of Benjamin the greatest part of Jerusalem, on which the temple was afterwards built; and the smallest part to the tribe of Judah.

*Ver. 12. And the west border was to the great sea, &c.]* On this side the tribe of Judah had no other limits than from the Mediterranean to the river of Ægypt. Such was the portion which fell by lot to the tribe of Judah. But this portion having been found more extensive than was necessary, several pieces from thence were cut off, in order to give to the tribes of Simeon, Dan, and Benjamin.

*Note;* (1.) It is good to have certain limits fixed to prevent disputes. (2.) They, who have the largest portion to possess, have the largest frontiers to defend: when our advantages and disadvantages are balanced, God's distributions will not be found so unequal as at first sight they may appear.

*Ver. 16, 17. And Caleb said, &c.]* To encourage his troops to take Debir, Caleb, at the head of the army, declared publicly, that he would give his daughter in marriage to whoever undertook and succeeded in storming that city. Among the Hebrews, fathers had an absolute power over the marriage of their children. Saul exercised this right, as well as Caleb, 1 Sam. xvii. 25.; and prophane history supplies us with many similar instances. Othniel, Caleb's nephew, the son of his brother Kenaz, offered himself. The Spirit of God, without doubt, incited him, as it afterwards did to deliver his fellow-citizens, Judg. iii. 9, 10. Thus Providence every way rewarded Caleb's virtue, by giving him the country which God had promised him, and by procuring to him the possession of it, by means of the valour of one of the greatest men of the tribe of Judah, who became his son-in-law.

*Ver. 18. And—as she came unto him—she moved him to ask of her father a field, &c.]* As she was conducted from the house of her father to that of her husband, according to the custom of that time, persuaded that Caleb could refuse nothing to the generous warrior who had subdued for him Kirjath-sepher, she begged of Othniel to ask boldly of him a field which lay conveniently for them; and the latter seeming fearful to do so, she hastily alighted, and placed herself in a suppliant posture, to open her mind to her father herself. Caleb perceiving her uneasiness, prevented it, by asking her what she required; and on Achsah's

answering, that she begged him to consider, that, having given to her husband and herself only dry grounds, from which they could raise nothing, it would be proper to add thereto a spot which she pointed out, and which was rendered fertile by the waters of an adjacent spring. Caleb granted her beyond her wishes, and gave her one territory in the mountains, and another in the plain, both of them well watered. Such, according to our version, is the sense of these two verses; which interpreters have explained differently, as to particulars, but have all understood nearly in the same manner. See Poole's Synopsis. We should add, however, that it is uncertain whether this happened before or after the death of Joshua.

REFLECTIONS.—Caleb's portion, though allowed him according to his claim, falls providentially in the midst of the lot of his brethren of the tribe of Judah. And as he must possess it by the sword, we have it for his honour reported, that he conquered it from the sons of Anak. They seem to have fled at his approach, because they felt that resistance was vain: the inhabitants of Debir only stood on the defensive. Though this city had been taken, chap. x. 39. yet being deserted, the Canaanites, it seems, returned and repaired the fortifications. To animate his troops, therefore, for the attack, he promises his daughter Achsah in marriage to the person who should take the city. Othniel, his brother's son, seizes the glad occasion; to gain the object of his love, he flies to the attack, and signalizes his valour in the capture of the city: an early preface of his future advancement as judge in Israel. *Note;* They, who in age would be respected, must spend their youth in deeds of virtue. Caleb immediately fulfils his promise, and Othniel is made happy in his beloved Achsah. *Note;* Among the first of human blessings is the union of their hands in marriage, whose hearts were before united in faithful love. With his wife, Othniel received an inheritance in land: Achsah observing the situation, as a south land, which being exposed to the sun would be parched, moved her husband to ask for another field, in which were springs of water; but Othniel suggesting, probably, that she was more likely to obtain it, in token of respect to her father, she alighted, and asked the blessing or favour of him, to bestow upon her the springs of water in the upper field: but in this he exceeded her expectation, for he gave her both the upper and nether springs. (1.) When parents

19 Who answered, Give me a blessing; for thou hast given me a south land; give me also springs of water. And he gave her the upper springs, and the nether springs.

20 This *is* the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Judah according to their families.

21 ¶ And the uttermost cities of the tribe of the children of Judah toward the coast of Edom southward were Kabzeel, and Eder, and Jagur,

22 And Kinah, and Dimonah, and Adadah,

23 And Kedesh, and Hazor, and Ithnan,

24 Ziph, and Telem, and Bealoth,

25 And Hazor, Hadattah, and Kerioth, and Hezron, which *is* Hazor,

26 Amam, and Shema, and Moladah,

27 And Hazar-gaddah, and Heshmon, and Beth-palet,

28 And Hazar-shual, and Beer-sheba, and Bizjothjah,

29 Baalah, and Iim, and Azem,

30 And Eltolad, and Chefil, and Hormah,

31 And Ziklag, and Madmannah, and Sanfannah,

32 And Lebaoth, and Shilhim, and Ain, and Rimmon: all the cities *are* twenty and nine, with their villages:

33 *And* in the valley, Eshtaol, and Zoreah, and Ashnah,

34 And Zanoah, and En-gannim, Tappuah, and Enam,

35 Jarmuth, and Adullam, Socoh, and Azekah,

36 And Sharaim, and Adithaim, and Gederah, and Gederothaim; fourteen cities with their villages:

37 Zenan, and Hadashah, and Migdalgad,

38 And Dilean, and Mizpeh, and Joktheel,

39 Lachish, and Bozkath, and Eglon,

40 And Cabbon, and Lahmam, and Kithlish, 41 And Gederoth, Beth-dagon, and Naamah, and Makkedah; sixteen cities with their villages.

42 Libnah, and Ether, and Ashan,

43 And Jiphtah, and Ashnah, and Nezib,

44 And Keilah, and Achzib, and Maresbah; nine cities with their villages:

45 Ekron, with her towns and her villages:

46 From Ekron even unto the sea, all that *lay* near Ashdod, with their villages:

47 Ashdod with her towns and her villages, Gaza with her towns and her villages, unto the river of Egypt, and the great sea, and the border *thereof*:

48 And in the mountains, Shamir, and Jattir, and Socoh,

49 And Dannah, and Kirjath-fannah, which *is* Debir,

50 And Anab, and Eshtemoth, and Anim,

51 And Goshen, and Holon, and Giloh; eleven cities with their villages:

52 Arab, and Dumah, and Eshean,

53 And Janum, and Beth-tappuah, and Apekah,

54 And Humtah, and Kirjath-arba, which *is* Hebron, and Zior; nine cities with their villages:

55 Maon, Carmel, and Ziph, and Juttah,

56 And Jezreel, and Jokdeam, and Zanoah,

57 Cain, Gibeah, and Timnah; ten cities with their villages:

58 Halhul, Beth-zur, and Gedor,

59 And Maarath, and Beth-anoth, and Eltekon; six cities with their villages:

60 Kirjath-baal, which *is* Kirjath-jearim, and Rabbah; two cities with their villages:

61 In the wilderness, Beth-arabah, Middin, and Secacah,

62 And Nibshan, and the city of Salt, and En-gedi; six cities with their villages.

parents marry their children, they are in duty bound liberally to supply them with what they need, and themselves can well spare. (2.) Husband and wife have but one interest, and should have one purse as well as one heart. (3.) We may, without danger of sin, desire the comforts and conveniencies of life, and use lawful means to procure them. (4.) If an earthly father is so kind, shall we not experience greater favours from our Father in heaven when we pray unto him? (5.) They who have

nether springs of earthly blessings, and the upper springs of Divine grace, bestowed upon them, have, indeed, abundant reason to be satisfied with, and thankful for their lot.

*Ver. 32. All the cities are twenty and nine, with their villages.]* We reckon up in the text thirty-eight; but it may be said, that of this number there were but twenty-nine cities, and that the rest were villages. Of which

63 ¶ As for the Jebusites the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out: but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day.

### CHAP. XVI.

*The general borders of the sons of Joseph. The Canaanites not yet conquered.*

[Before Christ 1445.]

**A**ND the lot of the children of Joseph fell from Jordan by Jericho, unto the water of Jericho on the east, to the wilderness that goeth up from Jericho throughout mount Beth-el,

2 And goeth out from Beth-el to Luz, and passeth along unto the borders of Archi to Ataroth,

3 And goeth down westward to the coast of

Japhleti, unto the coast of Beth-horon the nether, and to Gezer: and the goings out thereof are at the sea.

4 So the children of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, took their inheritance.

5 ¶ And the border of the children of Ephraim according to their families was *thus*: even the border of their inheritance on the east side was Ataroth-addar, unto Beth-horon the upper;

6 And the border went out toward the sea, to Michmethah on the north side; and the border went about eastward unto Taanah-shiloh, and passed by it on the east to Janohah;

7 And it went down from Janohah to Ataroth, and to Naarath, and came to Jericho, and went out at Jordan.

8 The border went out from Tappuah west-

opinion are many able commentators; or else, with most of the rabbis, it may be urged, that of those thirty-eight cities nine are to be excepted, which were afterwards given to the tribe of Simeon: viz. *Beerseba, Moladab, Hazar-sbual, Baalab, Azem, Hormah, Ziklag, Ain, and Rimmon*. This latter opinion, which yet is not without its difficulties, seems the most probable, because in all the remainder of this enumeration, the villages are no where mentioned. *Grotius, Vatablus, &c.* subscribe to the same opinion.

*Ver. 63. As for the Jebusites—the children of Judah could not drive them out*] The children of Judah remained in the city, and the Jebusites in the citadel, on mount Sion, till David forced the latter to quit the place, 2 Sam. v. 6, 7.

REFLECTIONS.—In Judah's lot alone lay a hundred and fourteen cities. No mention is made of Bethlehem, though so distinguished in after-times; it seems not to have been yet built, or to have been among the villages. Some also of these cities they never possessed; and Jerusalem-itself was yet in the hands of the Jebusites: through sloth, or weariness of the war, or unbelief, they suffered them to remain among them till the reign of David. *Note*; Sloth and unbelief are dangerous enemies in our Christian warfare: how much more could we have done for God and our souls, had we a heart to trust him, and zeal to serve him.

### CHAP. XVI.

*Ver. 2. And goeth out from Beth-el to Luz*] If now and then Luz and Beth-el are mentioned as one and the same place, as ch. xviii. 13. Judg. i. 23. it is, perhaps, because in a length of time they were united, and the inhabitants of the former went to the latter. There are numerous examples in history of these unions of two cities into one. See *Huet. Demonst. Evang. Prop. 4.* We should apprehend, therefore, with Dupin, that the whole verse might be

rendered thus: *And goeth out from Beth-el Luzah, to Archi-ataroth*. See his *Prolegomena*, l. i. c. iii. sect. 2.

*Ver. 5. And the border of the children of Ephraim, &c.*] After marking out the south, east, and west boundaries of the tribe of Ephraim, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, referring to ch. xvii. 7. the description of its northern limits, the author proceeds to a more exact designation of the extent of the territories of Ephraim; and first he sets out at large the breadth from south to north, or the north-east borders at the broadest part: All we can say respecting which is, that *Ataroth-addar* was on the south, and *Upper Beth-horon* on the north-east of that tribe. We are not to expect any satisfactory account respecting this article: the Sacred History is too concise to be extended now, when every thing in the Holy Land is transposed. We can scarcely meet with the ruins of any of some cities which formerly figured there, nor discover the least traces of others. The floods which watered some places are now exhausted and dry; its rivers have taken another course: in a word, it is no longer the same country; and where the descriptions of Sacred Writ are not circumstantiated in the clearest manner, we can only supply them by conjectures more or less probable. Here, for instance, commentators rather guess than conjecture; and therefore we prefer being silent, to following so vague a method.

*Ver. 6. And the border went out toward the sea, &c.*] The whole verse is very obscure: all that we can observe upon it is, that the portion of Ephraim was inclosed on the north by a line, which went from Upper Beth-horon, among others, to Michmethah, in the way to the Mediterranean, but on the north of that city drew near a little on the east towards *Taanah-shiloh*, and went on to *Janohah*. From ch. xvii. 7. it appears, that *Michmethah* was opposite *Sichem*. *Taanah-shiloh* is probably the same as *Taanach*, ch. xvii. 11. which Eusebius places ten miles from *Sichem*, in the way to the Jordan. As to *Janohah*, Eusebius sets

down

ward unto the river Kanah; and the goings out thereof were at the sea. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Ephraim by their families.

9 And the separate cities for the children of Ephraim were among the inheritance of the children of Manasseh, all the cities with their villages.

10 ¶ And they drave not out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer: but the Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites unto this day, and serve under tribute.

down a place of that name at ten miles from Sichem, and also in the way to the Jordan.

*Ver. 9. And the separate cities for the children of Ephraim were, &c.]* The natural sense of these words is, that besides the above-mentioned cities, through which the line of separation of the tribe of Ephraim, from that of Manasseh, crossed, the Ephraimites had some other cities beyond the boundaries of their country, in the land of the half-tribe of Manasseh, see ch. xvii. 7, 8, 9. Or else the words may be paraphrased thus: *These are the cities which were separated for the children of Ephraim, in the country of Manasseh, with the villages which sprung from them.* According to this interpretation, the historian speaks not of cities different from those just mentioned, but of those very cities; and he calls them separate cities, inasmuch as, the lot of the tribe of Manasseh proving too large in proportion to the number of its families, some cities were set apart from them, to be given to the children of Ephraim, who, on the contrary, were too much confined. See Wells. But here we should observe, 1. That, in the numbering of the tribes, the Ephraimites were less numerous than the Manassites by about twenty thousand men. Numb. xxvi. 28. 37. But afterwards Moses foretold to the Ephraimites, that there should be ten of them for one Manassite, Deut. xxxiii. 17.; and the event justified the prediction. 2. That several celebrated cities, not mentioned here, fell to the lot of Ephraim. Such, among others, are *Ramah*, the country of Samuel, known in the New Testament under the name of *Arimathea*; *Shiloh*, where the tabernacle resided; *Tirzah*, the royal city of Jeroboam, and some of his successors; *Samaria*, the capital of the kingdom of Israel, after the destruction of Tirzah; and *Sichem*, with the mountains of Ebal, Gerizzim, Sichar, &c.

*Ver. 10. And they drave not out the Canaanites that dwell in Gezer, &c.]* Gezer was upon the sea-coast, in the district retained by the Philistines. Judg. i. 29.

*But the Canaanites—serve under tribute]* Grotius, in his commentary upon these words, thinks that the Gezerites, when become tributaries, were forced to receive the positive laws which God had given to Abraham and Noah, and which tended to exclude all idolatry. But in another part of his works, that great critic observes, that the Gezerites were spared, as, without doubt, they surrendered immediately on being summoned. He observes the same of the Gergesenes, who remained even in the time of Jesus

CHAP. XVII.

*The lot of the half tribe of Manasseh: possessions are given to the daughters of Zelophehad: the borders of the tribe of Manasseh are described. Joshua promises to the sons of Joseph, that they should not have one lot only; and commands them to inhabit the mountain, till they drive out the Canaanites.*

[Before Christ 1445.]

THERE was also a lot for the tribe of Manasseh (for he was the first-born of Joseph); to wit, for Machir the first-born of Manasseh, the father of Gilead: because he

Christ. Matt. viii. 28. "This people," says he, "had surrendered from the first; for which reason no mention is made of them in the numbering of the enemy-nations. Deut. xx. 17. and ch. xi. 1." See de B. & P. lib. ii. cap. 13. sect. 4. n. 2. and Barbeyrac's note on the place. For the rest, it is well known, that the city of Gezer and its inhabitants were destroyed by Solomon, after the conquest made of it by the king of Ægypt, in order to give it as a portion to his daughter on her marriage with that prince. 1 Kings, ix. 16.

CHAP. XVII.

*Ver. 1. There was also a lot for the tribe of Manasseh, &c.]* As if it were said, "A lot for Manasseh after Ephraim, though Manasseh was the first-born." Or, rather, these words form a parenthesis, as our version gives it, the design of which is, to shew the reader that Jacob had testified some preference for Ephraim. Gen. xlviii. 19, 20. However, he did not pretend to take from Manasseh the least privilege to which he might have a right. Both being sons of Joseph, they drew but one lot, and their estates and cities were, in some degree, mixed together; but, after having described the portion of the lot which fell to Ephraim, it was proper, in like manner, to describe the portion of his brother Manasseh. Machir, the only son of Manasseh, Numb. xxvi. 28, 29. must have been either dead, or one hundred and eighty years of age, at the time of the division of the country by Moses. This is proved from his son Gilead's being himself born while Joseph was living. Machir, therefore, must have had the honour of passing for a man of war, by some warlike exploit performed during his stay in Ægypt, and perhaps in the bloody quarrels which early subsisted between the Ephraimites and Manassites. 1 Chron. vii. 21. Others think, that the name of father is here put to signify the whole family; as if the author had said, *because the children of Machir were men of war.* God, on account of the valour of the Gileadites, who were as courageous as Machir from whom they descended, had settled them in a part of the country of Bashan, and in a part of that of Gilead; ch. xiii. 11. 31. The latter bore the name of Gilead so early as in the time of Jacob, Gen. xxxi. 21. Gilead never set foot in it himself, as he was not born before the death of Joseph; but he occupied it by his posterity, who were there settled.

was a man of war, therefore he had Gilead and Bashan.

2 There was also *a lot* for the rest of the children of Manasseh by their families; for the children of Abiezer, and for the children of Helek, and for the children of Afriel, and for the children of Shechem, and for the children of Hopher, and for the children of She-mida: these *were* the male children of Manasseh the son of Joseph by their families.

3 ¶ But Zelophehad, the son of Hopher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, had no sons, but daughters: and these *are* the names of his daughters, Mahlah, and Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah.

4 And they came near before Eleazar the priest, and before Joshua the son of Nun, and before the princes, saying, The LORD commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brethren. Therefore according to the commandment of the LORD he gave them an inheritance among the brethren of their father.

5 And there fell ten portions to Manasseh, beside the land of Gilead and Bashan, which *were* on the other side Jordan.

6 Because the daughters of Manasseh had an inheritance among his sons: and the rest of Manasseh's sons had the land of Gilead.

7 ¶ And the coast of Manasseh was from Asher to Michmethah, that *lieth* before Shechem; and the border went along on the right hand unto the inhabitants of En-tappuah.

8 *Now* Manasseh had the land of Tappuah, but Tappuah on the border of Manasseh *belonged* to the children of Ephraim;

9 And the coast descended unto the river Kanah, southward of the river: these cities of Ephraim *are* among the cities of Manasseh: the coast of Manasseh also *was* on the north side of the river, and the outgoings of it were at the sea:

10 Southward *it was* Ephraim's, and northward *it was* Manasseh's, and the sea is his border; and they met together in Asher on the north, and in Issachar on the east.

11 And Manasseh had in Issachar and in Asher Beth-shean and her towns, and Ibleam and her towns, and the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, and the inhabitants of En-dor and her towns, and the inhabitants of Taanach and her towns, and the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns, *even* three countries.

12 ¶ Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out *the inhabitants* of those cities; but the Canaanites would dwell in that land.

13 Yet it came to pass, when the children of Israel were waxen strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute; but did not utterly drive them out.

14 ¶ And the children of Joseph spake unto Joshua, saying, Why hast thou given me *but* one lot and one portion to inherit, seeing I *am* a great people, forasmuch as the LORD hath blessed me hitherto?

*Ver. 3. But Zelophehad, &c.]* Zelophehad, the son of Hopher, having no male issue, his share was subdivided between his five daughters. They had claimed it in the wilderness before the conquest; and God having approved of their plea, they might well plead their right, and assuredly succeed. *Note;* If in the wilderness of the world we secure a title to glory under the Divine promise, we shall not fail, when the conquest, at death, is completed, to possess our inheritance.

*Ver. 10. They met, &c.]* Or, *and they are bounded by Asher on the north-west, and by Issachar on the north-east.*

*Ver. 12. Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out, &c.]* They were unable through negligence, from a want of valour and confidence in the divine promises, and because God, to punish them, refused them that protection and success of which they had rendered themselves unworthy. *Judg. ii. 19.* See Waterland's *Script. Vind.* part ii. p. 69. To *destroy a city*, signifies often to destroy its inha-

bitants; and to be unable to do a thing is sometimes put for being unwilling to do so. So *Gen. xxix. 8. xxxiv. 14, &c.*

*Note;* (1.) If we lose the opportunity that God puts in our power, when we would afterwards succeed it is too late. (2.) Ephraim's conduct probably led them into this step; so easily do we follow the bad examples of others, and plead them for our exculpation.

*Ver. 14. And the children of Joseph spake unto Joshua, &c.]* The children of Ephraim and Manasseh, just spoken of, came to Joshua, and complained, that the portion which had fallen to them in common was hardly sufficient for one of their tribes, by reason of their great numbers: not that the country assigned to those tribes was so scanty; but it is remarked, that there were many forests to fell towards the mountains, and a number of Canaanites to subdue in the valley. Upon the whole, it is very probable, that the descendants of Joseph flattered themselves that Joshua, who

15 And Joshua answered them, If thou be a great people, *then* get thee up to the wood country, and cut down for thyself there in the land of the Perizzites and of the giants, if mount Ephraim be too narrow for thee.

16 And the children of Joseph said, The hill is not enough for us: and all the Canaanites that dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron, *both they who are* of Beth-shean and her towns, and *they who are* of the valley of Jezreel.

17 And Joshua spake unto the house of Joseph, *even* to Ephraim and to Manasseh, saying, Thou art a great people, and hast great power: thou shalt not have one lot *only*:

18 But the mountain shall be thine; for it is a wood, and thou shalt cut it down: and the outgoings of it shall be thine: for thou shalt drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots, *and* though they be strong.

was an Ephraimite, would have a regard for them, and treat them as brothers, without holding them rigidly to those laws which the lot seemed to prescribe in the division of the land of Canaan.

*Ver. 15. And Joshua answered them, If thou be a great people, &c.]* Joshua was not a man calculated to sacrifice his duty to the caprice of the people of his own tribe, and to abuse the authority deposited with him, in order to gratify their inclinations. He answers them, that the will of God, as specified by lot, was to be the rule of his conduct, and ought to be of their desires; and that indeed the very thing they urged, namely, their being so many in number, gave them the means of settling themselves at large, by felling down the thick forests of the country, and driving the Perizzites and the Rephaims from their residence there; and thus by their valour enlarging the portion which had fallen to them, if they were not content with mount Ephraim, and the fine country about it.

*Ver. 17, 18. And Joshua spake, &c.]* Joshua replies to the solicitations of the children of Joseph, by repeating, that it is not his intention that they should have but one lot, as if they were but one single tribe: nor that they should dwell pent up in a portion too much confined; but that he chose they should make use of their arms, for extending their habitations, and possessing more than the lot which had fallen to them. "Use your strength," he means to tell them; "shew a courage suited to your numbers: go, master the mountains which confine you; cut down the woods, make ye openings for going still further into all the adjacent valleys; and remember, that so long as you make not yourselves unworthy of the Divine assistance, neither the Canaanites, nor their formidable chariots, ought in the least to intimidate you: if God be for you, all shall bend before you." Thus, equally

## C H A P. XVIII.

*The tabernacle is set up at Shiloh: the remainder of the land is described, and divided by lot.*

[Before Christ 1444.]

AND the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there. And the land was subdued before them.

2 ¶ And there remained among the children of Israel seven tribes, which had not yet received their inheritance.

3 And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, how long are ye slack to go to possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers hath given you?

4 Give out from among you three men for each tribe: and I will send them, and they shall rise, and go through the land, and de-

firm, just, and impartial, Joshua sends back the children of Joseph, uninfluenced by their objections, and unshaken by their complaints. The mountain here mentioned was, in all probability, mount Gilboa, which stood north of Manasseh, and reached from the country about Kishon, as far as to Beth-shean. See Calmet.

## C H A P. XVIII.

*Ver. 1. And the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh]* After a stay of seven years at Gilgal, Joshua took, and (without doubt at the express command of God,) performed the resolution, to remove the camp to Shiloh. It belonged to the Lord only, to mark out the place where he thought proper to fix the residence of his tabernacle; Deut. xii. 8—10. And in all probability he made known his will in this respect by *Urim and Thummim*. Shiloh was the place pitched upon. This city, which the learned Archbishop Usher alleges to have been the same with Salem, was situate upon a hill, in the tribe of Ephraim, about fifteen miles from Jerusalem, in the heart, as it were, of the whole country. There, consequently, the tabernacle was more safe than any where else; and for the same reason, it was more within reach of each of the tribes who were to present their religious services to God. Here this sacred edifice remained for about three hundred and fifty years, till the time of Samuel, or at least three hundred and twenty-eight years, as the Archbishop observes, whose chronology we follow. See Annals, to the year of the world 2560. Lastly, at Shiloh Joshua was himself better accommodated for the convenient dividing of the lands which still remained to be distributed. All Israel, therefore, decamped from Gilgal, and came to Shiloh; the Canaanites, either



scribe it, according to the inheritance of them ; and they shall come *again* to me.

5 And they shall divide it into seven parts : Judah shall abide in their coast on the south, and the house of Joseph shall abide in their coasts on the north.

6 Ye shall therefore describe the land *into* seven parts, and bring *the description* hither to me, that I may cast lots for you here before the LORD our God.

7 But the Levites have no part among you ; for the priesthood of the LORD *is* their inheritance : and Gad, and Reuben, and half the tribe of Manasseh, have received their inheritance beyond Jordan on the east, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave them.

8 ¶ And the men arose, and went away : and Joshua charged them that went to describe the land, saying, Go, and walk through the land, and describe it, and come again to me, that I may here cast lots for you before the LORD in Shiloh.

9 And the men went and passed through the land, and described it by cities into seven parts in a book, and came *again* to Joshua to

the host at Shiloh.

10 ¶ And Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before the LORD : and there Joshua divided the land unto the children of Israel according to their divisions.

11 ¶ And the lot of the tribe of the children of Benjamin came up according to their families : and the coast of their lot came forth between the children of Judah and the children of Joseph.

12 And their border on the north side was from Jordan ; and the border went up to the side of Jericho, on the north side, and went up through the mountains westward ; and the goings out thereof were at the wilderness of Beth-aven.

13 And the border went over from thence toward Luz, to the side of Luz, which *is* Beth-el, southward ; and the border descended to Ataroth-adar, near the hill that *lieth* on the south side of the nether Beth-horon.

14 And the border was drawn *thence*, and compassed the corner of the sea southward, from the hill that *lieth* before Beth-horon southward ; and the goings out thereof were

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either subdued or terrified, not daring to interpose the least obstacle in their way. For, as the historian adds, *the land was subdued before the children of Israel.*

*Note:* The name was given to the place, probably, from the peace which they now enjoyed, and might typify the place of rest for all true believers in heaven, when, after all their spiritual enemies shall be finally subdued, they shall rest with Christ, the ark of the covenant, in glory for ever.

*Ver. 5.* *Judah shall abide in their coast on the south, and the house of Joseph—on the north*] The meaning is, “The territory of the tribes of Judah, Ephraim, and Manasseh, which are now provided for, shall no more be meddled with ; there is no need to measure it anew. If it be necessary to retrench it, or add any thing to it, there will always be time to do so afterwards, when a more exact plan shall be taken of all the rest.” Joshua speaks agreeably to the situation of Shiloh, the place where he then was ; which stood a good way within the tribe of Ephraim, and pretty near to that of Judah ; one lying on the north, the other on the south. See Calmet. We shall find in the sequel, that the tribe of Judah did in fact, and doubtless with common consent, give up a part of its territories to the tribes of Dan and Simeon, who found their station too scanty. ch. xix. 29. 41.

REFLECTIONS.—Though seven tribes were yet unsettled, there was such plenty from the spoil of the Canaanites, and they were so taken with the state of peace which they

enjoyed after the toils of war, that they seem to have been not at all solicitous to proceed in the division of the land ; in doing which they must not only be separated from each other, and many a comfortable connection be dissolved, but must renew their warfare, to rescue the cities in their several lots, which were in the hands of their enemies. *Note:* (1.) The sweets of worldly comforts and connections are very apt to draw off our minds from desire after our inheritance in heaven. (2.) The difficulties which appear in the way to heaven are often discouragements from labouring thither, though they are usually the mere creatures of our unbelief and sloth. Joshua, observing this, reproves their negligence. While they were trifling, the Canaanites might recover courage and strength, and they might have all their work to do over again. *Note:* To do things by halves, is always the way to have double trouble : once well done, is done for ever.

*Ver. 11.* *And the lot of the tribe of the children of Benjamin came up, &c.*] By a very peculiar direction of Providence, the name of Benjamin, the only brother of Joseph, and, like him, descended from Rachel, the beloved wife of Jacob, was first drawn. Thus this tribe stood the first after those of the sons of Joseph, and by the side of them, to receive the country which God assigned to it, and which was afterwards divided in a more particular manner among the families of which it was composed.

*And the coast of their lot came forth, &c.*] A fresh token of the direction of Providence. In the benedictions of Moses,

at Kirjath-baal, which is Kirjath-jearim, a city of the children of Judah: this *was* the west quarter.

15 And the south quarter *was* from the end of Kirjath-jearim, and the border went out on the west, and went out to the well of waters of Nephtoah:

16 And the border came down to the end of the mountain that *lieth* before the valley of the son of Hinnom, *and* which *is* in the valley of the giants on the north, and descended to the valley of Hinnom, to the side of Jebusi on the south, and descended to En-rogel,

17 And *was* drawn from the north, and went forth to En-ihemesh, and went forth toward Geliloth, which *is* over against the going up of Adummim, and descended to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben,

18 And passed along toward the side over against Arabah northward, and went down unto Arabah:

19 And the border passed along to the side of Beth-hoglah northward: and the outgoings of the border were at the north bay of the salt sea at the south end of Jordan: this *was* the south coast.

20 And Jordan *was* the border of it on the east side. This *was* the inheritance of the children of Benjamin, by the coasts thereof round about, according to their families.

21 ¶ Now the cities of the tribe of the children of Benjamin according to their families were Jericho, and Beth-hoglah, and the valley of Keziz,

22 And Beth-arabah, and Zemaraim, and Beth-el,

23 And Avim, and Parah, and Ophrah,

24 And Chephar-haammonai, and Ophni, and Gaba; twelve cities with their villages:

25 Gibeon, and Ramah, and Beeroth,

26 And Mizpeh, and Chephirah, and Mozah,

27 And Rekem, and Irpeel, and Taralah,

28 And Zelah, Eleph, and Jebusi, which *is* Jerusalem, Gibeath, *and* Kirjath; fourteen cities with their villages. This *is* the inheritance of the children of Benjamin according to their families.

C H A P. XIX.

*The lot of Simeon, of Zebulun, of Issachar, of Asher, of Naphtali, of Dan, whose boundaries are described: the children of Dan take the city Lesbem: the Israelites give to Joshua the city of Timnath-serah, which he rebuilds.*

[Before Christ 1444.]

**A**ND the second lot came forth to Simeon, *even* for the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families: and their inheritance *was* within the inheritance of the children of Judah.

2 And they had in their inheritance Beer-sheba, and Sheba, and Moladah,

3 And Hazar-shual, and Balah, and Azem,

4 And Eltolad, and Bethul, and Hormah,

5 And Ziklag, and Beth-marcaboth, and Hazar-susah,

6 And Beth-lebaoth, and Sharuhem; thirteen cities and their villages:

7 Ain, Remmon, and Ether, and Afhan; four cities and their villages:

8 And all the villages that *were* round about these cities to Baalath-beor, Ramath of the south. This *is* the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families.

9 Out of the portion of the children of Judah *was* the inheritance of the children of Simeon: for the part of the children of Judah *was* too much for them: therefore the children

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Moses, Deut. xxxiii. 12. Benjamin had been placed between Judah and Joseph; and the event now justifies that prediction.

Ver. 24. *Chephar-haammonai*] *The village of Haamonai.* Hiller. Onomast. p. 13.

C H A P. XIX.

Ver. 1. *And the second lot came forth to Simeon*] Simeon *was* the eldest son of Jacob, who still remained un-

portioned. The lot, directed by an especial Providence, gave him a portion, which fully verified the divine promises and threatenings. Animated by the spirit of God, Jacob, when dying, had declared to Simeon and Levi, that they should be dispersed in Israel, for their cruelty against the Shechemites. See Gen. xlix. 6, 7. and Gen. xxxiv. Levi *was* scattered through all Palestine, and had no separate province: Simeon *is*, as it were, shut up in the tribe of Judah: and thus *was* the prediction of the holy patriarch accomplished.

Ver.

of Simeon had their inheritance within the inheritance of them.

10 ¶ And the third lot came up for the children of Zebulun according to their families: and the border of their inheritance was unto Sarid:

11 And their border went up toward the sea, and Maralah, and reached to Dabbatheth, and reached to the river that is before Jokneam;

12 And turned from Sarid eastward toward the sun-rising unto the border of Chisloth-tabor, and then goeth out to Daberath, and goeth up to Japhia;

13 And from thence passeth on along on the east to Gittah-hepher, to Ittah-kazin, and goeth out to Remmon-methoar, to Neah;

14 And the border compasseth it on the north side to Hannathon: and the outgoings thereof are in the valley of Jiphthah-el:

15 And Kattath, and Nahallal, and Shimron, and Idalah, and Beth-lehem: twelve cities with their villages.

16 This is the inheritance of the children of Zebulun according to their families, these cities with their villages.

17 ¶ And the fourth lot came out to Issachar, for the children of Issachar according to

their families.

18 And their border was toward Jezreel, and Chesulloth, and Shunem,

19 And Haphraim, and Shihon, and Anahareth,

20 And Rabbith, and Kishion, and Abez,

21 And Remeth, and Eu-gannim, and Enhaddah, and Beth-pazzez;

22 And the coast reacheth to Tabor, and Shahazimah, and Beth-shemesh; and the outgoings of their border were at Jordan: sixteen cities with their villages.

23 This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Issachar according to their families, the cities, and their villages.

24 ¶ And the fifth lot came out for the tribe of the children of Asher according to their families.

25 And their border was Helkath, and Hali, and Beten, and Achshaph,

26 And Alammelech, and Amad, and Mishael; and reacheth to Carmel westward, and to Shihor-libnath;

27 And turneth toward the sun-rising to Beth-dagon, and reacheth to Zebulun, and to the valley of Jiphthah-el toward the north side of Beth-emek, and Neiel, and goeth out to Cabul on the left hand,

*Ver. 16. This is the inheritance of the children of Zebulun* It is easy to conceive, that twelve cities would not have been sufficient to lodge and support the inhabitants of a tribe which exceeded sixty thousand; Numb. xxvi. 27. The historian then has named here only the chief cities, those which were upon the borders of the other tribes; or perhaps those which the commissioners, on surveying the country, had set down in the maps and minutes which they presented to Joshua. Two other cities of Zebulun, viz. *Kartab* and *Dimnah*, are afterwards spoken of; ch. xxi. 34, 35. According to Jacob's prophecy, Gen. xlix. 13, the coasts of Zebulun were havens for ships, lying on the Mediterranean sea west, and the sea of Tiberias east. In this tribe lay Nazareth, where Jesus dwelt; Tabor, where he was transfigured; and the coasts of the sea of Galilee, the chief scene of his ministry and miracles, were all in this tribe: it produced also one judge, Tola, and one king of Israel, Baasha.

*Ver. 23. This is the inheritance, &c.]* Issachar's lot consisted of sixteen cities with their villages. It was a numerous tribe, bordering on the sea westward, having Jordan on the east, Manasseh on the south, and Zebulun on the north. Jezreel, Ahab's royal city of Shunem, wherein dwelt the kind hostess of Elijah, Kishon famed for Debo-

rah's victory, Gilboa where Saul fell, and the valley of Megiddo where Josiah was slain, lay in this tribe.

*Ver. 26. Alammelech,—Amad,—Mishael, &c.]* These are cities unknown, but situate near mount Carmel, famous for the miracles of Elijah, and very different from that which went by the same name in the tribe of Judah, 2 Kings, xviii. ch. xv. 55. The Carmel of Asher was near the sea; and, according to Josephus, at one hundred and twenty furlongs from Ptolemæis on the south. Hist. Bell. Jud. lib. ii. c. 9. The ancients boasted of it on account of its height, and called it the holy mountain of Jupiter. There was said to be a temple and a god of the same name with the mountain; and Jamblichus mentions, that Pythagoras often went thither to study. Several ages since, Carmel was variously honoured by the Christians, on account of the cave, where, as it is thought, Elijah remained some time before he was carried up to heaven. Hence sprung the order of the Carmelites, founded in the wilderness of Syria, in 1180, by Almeric, Bishop of Antioch. Their old convent is destroyed; that which they now inhabit is lower down, and can scarcely maintain three monks. Efforts have been made to re-establish it on the top of the mountain, but in vain, an Emir of the Arabs having made it his residence.

*Ver.*

28 And Hebron, and Rehob, and Hammon, and Kanah, *even* unto great Zidon;

29 And *then* the coast turneth to Ramah, and to the strong city Tyre; and the coast turneth to Hofah; and the outgoings thereof are at the sea from the coast to Achzib:

30 Ummah also, and Aphek, and Rehob: twenty and two cities with their villages.

31 This *is* the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Asher according to their families, these cities with their villages.

32 ¶ The sixth lot came out to the children of Naphtali, *even* for the children of

Naphtali according to their families.

33 And their coast was from Heleph, from Allon to Zaanannim, and Adammi, Nekeb, and Jabneel, unto Lakum; and the outgoings thereof were at Jordan:

34 And *then* the coast turneth westward to Aznoth-tabor, and goeth out from thence to Hukkok, and reacheth to Zebulun on the south side, and reacheth to Asher on the west side, and to Judah upon Jordan toward the sun-rising.

35 And the fenced cities *are* Ziddim, Zer, and Hammath, Rakkath, and Chinnereth.

*Ver. 27. And goeth out to Cabul on the left hand*] That is, to the north of this city, according to the custom of the Hebrews in the designation of the four cardinal points. Some learned men have concluded from this passage, that the Book of Joshua could not have been written before Solomon's time, because, say they, the land of Cabul received its name from Hiram, king of Tyre, who called it so in contempt, 1 Kings, ix. 11—13.; but this is a manifest mistake: the question here is not about the *land of Cabul* and its twenty cities, but about the *town of Cabul*, near Ptolemais. Josephus plainly makes a distinction between them, who, in his life, and Hist. Jud. Bell. lib. iii. cap. 4. speaks of the city of *Chabul* or *Chabolo*. See Huet. Demonst. Evang. prop. iv.

*Ver. 29. Then the coast turneth to Ramah, &c.*] There were several cities of this name in Palestine. Masius supposes the present to be the same as was afterwards called Zarepta. *Ramah* signifies *high, elevated*; and such, it seems, was the situation of Zarepta, celebrated for its vineyards, which evidently suppose an elevated situation.

*And to the strong city Tyre*] So the LXX and Vulgate, followed by a variety of interpreters, translate the clause. Sidon is much spoken of in the Books of Moses, and even in Jacob's prophecies: the famous city of Tyre was not in being till the time of David. Homer, who makes frequent mention of Sidon, and the Sidonians, nowhere takes notice of the Tyrians. The sacred writer in this place, therefore, must have intended to point out some other city of the same name; there were four different places in Phœnicia called Tyre. Perhaps the historian here had in view *Palatyrus* or *Ancient Tyre*, which was built on the main land, whereas the other Tyre was erected over against it, in an island. This is the opinion of Perizonius, Grotius, Calmet, Le Clerc, &c. For an ingenious account of the origin of Tyre, &c. we refer the reader to the learned chronology of M. Vignoles, lib. iv. cap. 1, &c.

*And the coast turneth to Hofah—and—to Achzib*] From the neighbourhood of Tyre, the western border of Asher came round towards *Hofah*, (a place now unknown,) and abutted on the territory or neighbouring quarter of the sea, in the next adjacent district of *Achzib*, which, according to St. Jerome, is the same city as Pliny calls *Ecdippa*. Maundrell, in his voyage to Aleppo, p. 53. gives the following account of it: "Having travelled about

"an hour in the plain of Acra, we passed by an old town called *Zib*, situate on an ascent, close by the sea side. "This may probably be the old *Achzib*, mentioned, "Joth. xix. 29. and Judg. i. 31. called afterwards *Ecdippa*, "for St. Jerome places *Achzib* nine miles distant from "Ptolemais, towards Tyre, to which account we found "the situation of *Zib* exactly agreeing."

*Ver. 30. Twenty and two cities, with their villages*] If we take away *Carmel*, a mountain, and *Jiphtah-el*, a valley, there still remain more than twenty-two cities mentioned in the foregoing verses.

*Ver. 34. And—the coast—reacheth to Zebulun on the south side, and—to Asher on the west side, and to Judah upon Jordan toward the sun-rising*] Here it may be asked, how could the tribe of Naphtali border on that of Judah on the east, when there were several tribes between them? In answer, we may observe, that *Naphtali* adjoined to Judah by the Jordan, which united the two tribes, by supplying each with a free passage to the other. And thus, as some interpreters think, the prophecy of Moses, Deut. xxxiii. 23. *possess thou the west and the south*, was fulfilled; not that this tribe had any lands in the south of Canaan; but because, through its situation, it could easily carry on a trade thither by means of the Jordan. This reply, however, may not be thought sufficiently full; and it may possibly be urged, why should the tribe of Naphtali meet the tribe of Judah at the Jordan, any more than the tribes of Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh, who could much more easily trade with Judah by means of that river? and besides, it is well known, that the eastern limits of the tribe of Judah began rather at the point of the Dead Sea, than at the Jordan. To this, some return for answer, that the sacred writer thus expresses himself, to signify that the tribe of Naphtali, though the most northerly of all those which lay toward the river, yet communicated itself with the most southern tribes, even that of Judah. Others are of opinion, that at that time there was a city upon the Jordan, to the east of *Naphtali*, which went by the name of Judah. For another solution see the *Miscellan. Duijburg* de M. Gerdes, tom. i. p. 683.

*Ver. 35. And the fenced cities are Ziddim, &c.*] The two first of these cities are unknown. Respecting *Hammath*, see on Numb. xiii. 21. xxxiv. 8. It was the most northern of all the cities assigned to the Israelites. Prob-

bably,

36 And Adamah, and Ramah, and Hazor,

37 And Kedesh, and Edrei, and Enhazor,

38 And Iron, and Migdal-el, Horem, and Beth-anath, and Beth-she-mesh; nineteen cities with their villages.

39 This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Naphtali according to their families, the cities and their villages.

40 ¶ And the seventh lot came out for the tribe of the children of Dan according to their families.

41 And the coast of their inheritance was Zorah, and Eshtaol, and Ir-she-mesh,

42 And Shaalabbin, and Ajalon, and Jethlah,

43 And Elon, and Thimnathab, and Ekron,

44 And Eltekeh, and Gibbethon, and Baalath,

45 And Jehud, and Bene-berak, and Gath-rimmon,

46 And Me-jarkon, and Rakkon, with the border before Japho.

47 And the coast of the children of Dan went out *too little* for them: therefore the children of Dan went up to fight against Leshem, and took it, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and possessed it, and dwelt therein, and called Leshem, Dan, after the name of Dan their father.

48 This is the inheritance of the tribe of

bably, it was built by the youngest son of Canaan, as the eldest had built Sidon; Gen. x. 18. It continued famous till the time of David, when its king made peace with that monarch. *Rakkath*, by some rabbis, is thought to be the same as *Tiberias*; and they say, that it was at first named *Zipporia*; afterwards *Rakkath*, from its situation on the bank of the river; next *Masfa*, and lastly *Tiberias*. *Cinnereth* was on the lake of *Tiberias*; in which there were fine gardens, and a kind of paradise or park: hence its name *Genefer*, signifying *the gardens of princes*. Its name *Cinnereth*, say the Jews, was taken from its fruits, which are as sweet to the taste, as the sound of the *cinnor*, or harp, to the ear. See Hottingeri Not. Cip. Judai. p. 36.

Ver. 43. *Elon*,—*Thimnathab*,—*Ekron*] *Elon* is thought to be the same with *Holon*, mentioned ch. xv. 51. *Thimnathab*, seems to be a different place from *Timnath*, spoken of in the same chap. ver. 10. and 57. For, as we read in Judg. xiv. 5. that Samson *went down* to this city, which shews it to have been in a valley; so in Gen. xxxviii. 11. 13. we read that Judah *went up* to Timnath to shear his sheep, which shews that city to have been upon a hill. *Ekron*, the capital of the Philistines, was at first given to the tribe of Judah. See ch. xv. 45.

Ver. 46. *Me-jarkon*,—*Rakkon*,—*Japho*] *Me-jarkon*, and *Rakkon*, that is *Jarkon-Japho*. Hiller. Onomast. 915. The two first are unknown; but were probably situated near *Japho*. This city, known afterwards by the name of *Joppa*, was the principal sea-port town in all *Judea*, and mentioned as such by Pomponius Mela, Strabo, and Pliny; indeed, it continues to be so to this day, being now called *Jaffa*, a name which in the Hebrew signifies *fair* or *beautiful*. The author does not (as Eusebius seems to have understood him) say positively, that *Japho* was given to the Danites; he only says, that their portion extended to the lands which lay opposite those which belonged to this city.

Ver. 47. *And the coast of the children of Dan went out too little for them: therefore, &c.*] The words *too little*, are neither in the Hebrew, the LXX, nor the Vulgate. The text literally is, *And the country of the children of Dan went*

*out from them*. Now the phrase, *went out from them*, is naturally explained here by the manner in which it is used, Lev. xxv. 28—33; where, speaking of the year of jubilee, Moses says, that the estates *went out* from those who had acquired them, because they then passed into other hands; namely, of the proprietors who had alienated them to that period. In this place, therefore, in like manner, to say that the coast of the Danites *went out* from them, is saying that it passed partly into other hands than their own, or, in a word, *was taken from them*. In fact, their formidable neighbours, the *Amorites*, forced the Danites into the mountains, and would not suffer them to come down to the valley. See Judg. i. 34. The city of *Leshem* (called in Judg. xviii. 29. *Laisb*;) was not far from Jordan. The Danites gave it their name after they had conquered it. In after-times, when it fell into the hands of the Romans, they called it *Pancas*, and made it the metropolis of *Iturea* and *Trachonitis*. Philip, the son of Herod the Great, afterwards repaired it, and, in compliment to Tiberius Cæsar, gave it the name of *Cæsarea Philippi*. This expedition against Leshem was made after the death of Joshua. For more respecting it, see on Judg. xviii.; where there is an account of the whole expedition. From this, as some insist, it appears, that this book was not written by Joshua; whereas no more can be inferred from it, than that in after-times this passage might be here inserted by Samuel or Ezra, or some other inspired writer, in order to complete the account of the Danites' possessions. It is very evident, that the present verse is not by the same pen with the rest of the book. But as the learned Bishop Huet observes, were the whole verse taken away, all that is said of this tribe would be perfectly coherent, and leave no breach at all in the context.

Ver. 48. *This is the inheritance of—Dan, &c.*] The Danites mustered 64,400 men of war in the numbering which was made of the tribes in the plains of Moab; Numb. xxvi. 43. The tribe of Judah only exceeded them. They found themselves, however, placed in a country which seemed very narrow, in comparison of that which was occupied by less numerous tribes; but, not to mention

the children of Dan according to their families, these cities with their villages.

49 ¶ When they had made an end of dividing the land for inheritance by their coasts, the children of Israel gave an inheritance to Joshua the son of Nun among them :

50 According to the word of the LORD they gave him the city which he asked, *even* Timnath-herah in mount Ephraim : and he built the city, and dwelt therein.

51 These *are* the inheritances, which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel, divided for an inheritance

tion that the Danites could not take the whole territory which had been given them, Judg. xviii. 1. and that the Philistines on the one hand, and the Amorites on the other, stood their ground, we are to consider that their country was very fruitful, and so conveniently situated within reach of the sea, as to afford them the advantages of commerce ; of which we learn from Judg. v. 7. they failed not to make a proper use. Samson, the scourge of the Philistines, was of this tribe.

*Ver. 49. The children of Israel gave an inheritance to Joshua* How admirable is Joshua's moderation ! every tribe had shared in the division ; each had, as it were, its reward ; and he alone seemed to be overlooked in the distribution of the conquered country : last of all, he receives a private settlement ; not by lot, but from the tribes, as the gift of the people. Many things might be said upon this head, and many lessons of disinterestedness given to persons, who, elevated to the highest offices, are thereby become depositaries of the public good.

*Ver. 50. According to the word of the Lord, they gave him the city which he asked* The commands of God, upon this occasion, which probably were signified by the mouth of Eleazar, the high-priest, or at the time when provision was made for Caleb, ch. xiv. 6. had authorized Joshua to choose whatever district should please him in the land of Canaan, to be possessed by him as his own property : this great general, however, postponed his claim till every one was settled ; and then what is his choice ? *Timnath-herah in mount Ephraim* : too modest to think of appropriating to himself the best part of the country, he not only shuts himself up in his own tribe, but chooses precisely the roughest, most uncultivated, and, at first, most difficult spot thereabout. See ch. xvii. 18. *Timnath-herah* seems to have been an old castle or village, standing north of the mountain called *Gausb*, chap. xxiv. 30.

*He built the city, and dwelt therein* He fitted up the ruins, built a new city, and, as we may suppose, by cutting down the forests which covered the mountain every where about, made the place both strong, and respectable for its height ; and by that means, in other respects, a very agreeable station, according to the taste of the ancients, who were fond of building upon high places. See Dionys.

by lot in Shiloh before the LORD, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. So they made an end of dividing the country.

## CHAP. XX.

*God commandeth, and the Israelites appoint, six cities of refuge.*  
[Before Christ 1444.]

THE LORD also spake unto Joshua, saying,

2 Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses :

3 That the slayer that killeth *any* person unawares *and* unwittingly may flee thither :

Halicarn. lib. i. c. 12. Here it was that Joshua settled with his family, concerning which we have no further information from the history : so true it is, that this great man neither thought of taking upon him the dignity of a sovereign, nor of aggrandizing his own house ! The Scripture, as Pelican observes, says nothing of Joshua's sons or daughters, because he considered all the Israelites as his children.

*Note* ; Joshua's dwelling-place was near the tabernacle : and in the choice of our dwelling, to be near a gospel-ministry should be the first recommendation.

*Ver. 51. So they made an end of dividing the country* Notwithstanding all the particulars of this division recorded in the present and foregoing chapters, it is impossible at this time to draw out a *perfectly exact* map of the land of Canaan, and the limits of each tribe. The country has undergone too many revolutions, and passed through too many hands, to allow us the gratification of describing the position of most of the places of which Joshua chiefly has preserved any account. The territories of the ten tribes, especially, cannot but be unknown in many respects ; for, on the return of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin from Babylon, they who came back found themselves hardly sufficient for re-peopling the single country of Judea ; and it even required consideration how to afford Jerusalem a sufficient number of inhabitants : Nehem. xi. Thus it was the furthest from their thoughts to take any account of the provinces which the other ten tribes had been obliged to quit ; and, the country being seized on by foreign nations, it became every day more difficult to mark out the precise limits of the land which had been possessed by each tribe. See Walton's Prolegom. and Shuckford's Connection, vol. iii. p. 417.

## CHAP. XX.

*Ver. 1—6. The Lord also spake unto Joshua, saying, &c.* The great work of distributing the lands being now finished, God orders Joshua to put the last hand to the settlement of the cities of refuge, upon the footing which he had specified to Moses. See on Numb. xxxv. and Deut. xix.

and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood.

4 And when he that doth flee unto one of those cities shall stand at the entering of the gate of the city, and shall declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city unto them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them.

5 And if the avenger of blood pursue after him, then they shall not deliver the slayer up into his hand; because he smote his neighbour unwittingly, and hated him not before-time.

6 And he shall dwell in that city, until he stand before the congregation for judgment, and until the death of the high-priest that shall be in those days: then shall the slayer return, and come unto his own city, and unto his own house, unto the city from whence he fled.

7 ¶ And they appointed Kedesh in Galilee in mount Naphtali, and Shechem in mount Ephraim, and Kirjath-arba, which is Hebron, in the mountain of Judah.

8 And on the other side Jordan by Jericho eastward, they assigned Bezer in the wilderness upon the plain out of the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilead out of the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan out of the tribe of Manasseh.

9 These were the cities appointed for all the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them, that whosoever killeth any person at unawares might flee thither, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood, until he stood before the congregation.

### CHAP. XXI.

*Eight and forty cities are given by lot out of the other tribes, to the Levites. God giveth rest unto the Israelites.*

[Before Christ 1444.]

**T**HEN came near the heads of the fathers of the Levites unto Eleazar the priest, and unto Joshua the son of Nun, and unto the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel;

The slayer was to stand at the gate of the city, ver. 4. as being the place where the courts of justice were held.

Ver. 9. *These were the cities appointed, &c.*] It is to be observed, that the six cities of refuge were given as a portion to the Levites. See the following chapter. So that those who were unhappily forced to retire thither, met with persons there whose authority could screen them from violence, whose wisdom could direct their proceedings, and whose piety might be useful to them in a variety of instances, during the stay they were obliged to make there till the death of the high-priest.

REFLECTIONS.—1. The cities of refuge were a common blessing for every Israelite, whose unhappy lot it might be to need their protection; and therefore it was every man's interest to have this provision made as soon as they had settled the division of the land. *Note;* The Gospel has provided for sinners, in Christ Jesus, a surer refuge from the avenging wrath of God; the soul that flies thither shall not only be freed from fear of death, but be refreshed with the consolations of the divine favour and love. 2. The three cities on the other side Jordan, Bezer, Ramoth, and Golan, had been appointed by Moses. These on this side Jordan, were Kedesh in Naphtali, Hebron in Judah, and Shechem in Ephraim; and they were so situated, as to stand at the most convenient distances, that all the tribes might be near one or other of them. *Note;* Salvation is near, and Jesus a very present help to all who call upon him. These were all Levite cities, where, if the poor banished manslayer was cut off from his friends and relations, he had the best of company, and peculiar oppor-

tunities of spiritual improvement. *Note;* It will reconcile us to every providential change of situation, to think more of the mercies we enjoy than of the comforts we lose. The names of these cities are very significative; Kedesh, holiness; Shechem, a shoulder; Hebron, fellowship; Bezer, a fortress; Ramoth, high; and Golan, joy. Thus, in the perfection of our Redeemer's merits, lies the security of the sinner's hope; on his shoulder the government is laid, so that no enemy can hurt us; the sweetest communion is that which can be enjoyed through faith in him; his arms of love are a strong-hold, and his exaltation is the pledge of our own; for he shall bring all who have fled to him for refuge, and cleave to him, to Zion, with everlasting joy upon their heads.

### CHAP. XXI.

Ver. 1. *Then came near the heads of the fathers of the Levites unto Eleazar*] Immediately after the designation of the cities of refuge, *the heads of the Levites*, i. e. the chiefs of the families of Levi, who descended from *Kobath, Gershom, and Merari*, came and presented themselves before Eleazar, Joshua, and the princes of the tribes, (Numb. xxxiv. 18.) whom God had commissioned to divide the country. They related the orders which God had formerly issued in their favour, Numb. xxxv. 2, &c. and therefore begged that the council at Shilo would be pleased to assign them cities in the several tribes. It is to be observed, that the Lord, displeased at the violence used by Simeon and Levi towards the Shechemites, had denounced against them, that *he would divide them in Jacob, and scatter*

2 And they spake unto them at Shiloh in the land of Canaan, saying, The LORD commanded by the hand of Moses to give us cities to dwell in, with the suburbs thereof for our cattle.

3 And the children of Israel gave unto the Levites out of their inheritance, at the commandment of the LORD, these cities and their suburbs.

4 And the lot came out for the families of the Kohathites: and the children of Aaron the priest, *which were* of the Levites, had by lot out of the tribe of Judah, and out of the tribe of Simeon, and out of the tribe of Benjamin, thirteen cities.

5 And the rest of the children of Kohath *had* by lot out of the families of the tribe of Ephraim, and out of the tribe of Dan, and out of the half-tribe of Manasseh, ten cities.

6 And the children of Gershon *had* by lot out of the families of the tribe of Issachar, and out of the tribe of Asher, and out of the tribe of Naphtali, and out of the half-tribe of Manasseh in Basan, thirteen cities.

7 The children of Merari by their families *had* out of the tribe of Reuben, and out of the tribe of Gad, and out of the tribe of Zebulun, twelve cities.

8 And the children of Israel gave by lot unto the Levites these cities with their suburbs, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses.

9 ¶ And they gave out of the tribe of the children of Judah, and out of the tribe of the children of Simeon, these cities which are *here* mentioned by name,

10 Which the children of Aaron, *being* of the families of the Kohathites, *who were* of the children of Levi, had: for their's was the first lot.

11 And they gave them the city of Arba the father of Anak, which *city is* Hebron, in the hill *country* of Judah, with the suburbs thereof round about it.

12 But the fields of the city, and the villages thereof, gave they to Caleb the son of Jephunneh for his possession.

13 Thus they gave to the children of Aaron:

*scatter them in Israel.* This sentence had been already executed towards the descendants of Simeon, whose portion was placed within that of Judah. It would have been the same with respect to the descendants of Levi, but for the fidelity of that tribe at the time of the idolatry of the golden calf. Without revoking, therefore, the sentence pronounced against Levi's posterity, the Lord so disposed matters, that what had at first been a disgrace to the Levites, became a mark of honour. By commanding that they should be *divided in Jacob, and scattered in Israel*, he had declared, that he himself would be *their portion*; and that being dispersed, as his ministers, among the rest of their brethren, they should be maintained by them, as the interpreters of his word and will. To effect this arrangement, so honourable to them, they here solicit Joshua and the commissioners with him on the subject.

*Ver. 4. Thirteen cities*] Providence caused to fall to the portion of the Kohathites, (i. e. to the branch of the house of Kohath, and of the whole tribe of Levi, which alone could pretend to the priesthood,) all those cities nearest to Jerusalem, in which the divine worship was one day to be fixed. By this plan the priests were, as much as it was possible, within reach of the regular performance of the service at the house of the Lord, and enabled to repair thither conveniently, each in his turn.

REFLECTIONS.—As the Levites were to have cities in all the tribes, they wait till the land is divided, and now put in their claim, founded on the divine appointment. *Note*: (1.) What we pray for, pleading the promise, we

may be confident shall be granted. (2.) Provision for a gospel ministry is a Divine institution. They who are backward to support it, not only defraud men, but rob God. (3.) The Levites were last provided for: worldly interests must be among the least and last concerns of a godly minister.

Their plea was immediately complied with, and each tribe, according to its extent, assigned a proportionable number of their cities, to make up the complement of forty-eight, which was God's appointment. These, with their suburbs, and a space of circumjacent land, were allotted them; and being thus dispersed through the tribes, they were a general blessing.

*Ver. 10—18. Which the Kohathites had; for their's was the first lot*] Thus the Levite priests had for their part, as well in Simeon as in Judah, Hebron, excepting the country about it, which was already given to Caleb; ch. xiv. 14. *Libnab, Jattir, Esbemoa, Holon, Debir, Ain, Juttah, and Beth-shebess*; and in the tribe of Benjamin, *Gibeon, Geba, Anatoth, and Almon*, all which cities have been mentioned before, particularly in ch. xv. Of these, as well as of the other cities assigned to the Levites, we have a catalogue in 1 Chron. vi. but that is imperfect; and, it should be observed, that the cities there are sometimes named otherwise than here. This may proceed from two causes: first, that, it being impracticable, to take some of these cities from the Canaanites, there was a necessity of substituting others in their stead, which are named in the list inserted 1 Chron. vi. Secondly, that some of these cities had probably two names, or else had changed their names



the priest Hebron with her suburbs, *to be* a city of refuge for the slayer; and Libnah with her suburbs,

14 And Jattir with her suburbs, and Eshtemoa with her suburbs,

15 And Holon with her suburbs, and Debir with her suburbs,

16 And Ain with her suburbs, and Juttah with her suburbs, *and* Beth-shemesh with her suburbs; nine cities out of those two tribes.

17 And out of the tribe of Benjamin, Gibeon with her suburbs, Geba with her suburbs,

18 Anathoth with her suburbs, and Almon with her suburbs; four cities.

19 All the cities of the children of Aaron, the priests, *were* thirteen cities with their suburbs.

20 ¶ And the families of the children of Kohath, the Levites which remained of the children of Kohath, even they had the cities of their lot out of the tribe of Ephraim.

21 For they gave them Shechem with her suburbs in mount Ephraim, *to be* a city of refuge for the slayer; and Gezer, with her suburbs,

22 And Kibzaim with her suburbs, and Beth-horon with her suburbs; four cities.

23 And out of the tribe of Dan, Eltekeh with her suburbs, Gibbethon with her suburbs,

24 Aijalon with her suburbs, Gathrimmon with her suburbs; four cities.

25 And out of the half-tribe of Manasseh, Tanach with her suburbs, and Gathrimmon with her suburbs; two cities.

26 All the cities *were* ten with their suburbs for the families of the children of Kohath that remained.

27 ¶ And unto the children of Gershon, of the families of the Levites, out of the *other* half-tribe of Manasseh *they gave* Golan in Bashan with her suburbs, *to be* a city of refuge for the slayer; and Beeshterah with her suburbs; two cities.

28 And out of the tribe of Issachar, Kishon with her suburbs, Dabareh with her suburbs,

29 Jarmuth with her suburbs, En-gannim with her suburbs; four cities.

30 And out of the tribe of Asher, Mishal with her suburbs, Abdon with her suburbs,

31 Helkath with her suburbs, and Rehob with her suburbs; four cities.

32 And out of the tribe of Naphtali, Kedesh in Galilee with her suburbs, *to be* a city of refuge for the slayer; and Hammoth-dor with her suburbs, and Kartan with her suburbs; three cities.

33 All the cities of the Gershonites according to their families *were* thirteen cities with their suburbs.

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names in the course of time. We also meet with differences in the names of the cities which fell to the Levites, on reading them in the version of the LXX. The copies printed from the Alexandrian manuscript render the Hebrew with the utmost exactness; but several names are there omitted. On the contrary, the copies which follow the Vatican manuscript omit very few names of cities, but those are mostly disfigured, or wholly different.

*Ver. 19.* All the cities of the children of Aaron, the priests, *were thirteen*] But why thirteen cities to the priests, it may be asked, who were then so few in number? To which we may reply, it is the right, the lordship of these cities which is given them, and that not according to what they then were, but with a view to what they should one day be, and to supply them plentifully with subsistence, when, according to the divine promises, they should be multiplied in the extraordinary degree that they afterwards were. See Pf. cxv. 12. 14. We are greatly deceived, if we think that the cities given to the Levites were given merely for their habitation, and to dwell in only by themselves: the right which they already had of selling the

houses in them, evidently supposes the contrary; and it is easy to conceive, that many private people took a delight in residing there, in order to have more of their acquaintance. Besides, it is plain from the history, that some cities of the Levites were almost entirely filled with Israelites of other tribes. *Geba*, in Benjamin, for instance, was constantly peopled by Benjamites, as appears from what happened to the Levite who lodged there, and whose concubine was dishonoured in so scandalous a manner, Judg. xix. All the other tribes declared war against the single tribe of Benjamin, without ever mentioning a word of the priests and Levites, who, probably, had no concern in this wickedness, and who were so few in number in that city, that no attention was paid to them. We afterwards see Saul and his whole family residing in this same city of *Geba*. David, and all his court, dwelt at Hebron during the first years of his reign; so that the Levites had the right of choosing for themselves the houses which suited them, in the cities appropriated for their use; and the rest of the houses were let to private persons in the tribe, to whose portion such or such a city fell out; and if the Levites rather chose to reside elsewhere, they were the masters,

34 ¶ And unto the families of the children of Merari, the rest of the Levites, out of the tribe of Zebulun, Jokneam with her suburbs, and Kartah with her suburbs,

35 Dimnah with her suburbs, Nahalal with her suburbs; four cities.

36 And out of the tribe of Reuben, Bezer with her suburbs, and Jahazah with her suburbs,

37 Kedemoth with her suburbs, and Mephaath with her suburbs; four cities.

38 And out of the tribe of Gad, Ramoth in Gilead with her suburbs, to be a city of refuge for the slayer; and Mahanaim with her suburbs,

39 Heshbon with her suburbs, Jazer with her suburbs; four cities in all.

40 So all the cities for the children of Merari by their families, which were remaining of the families of the Levites, were by their lot

twelve cities.

41 All the cities of the Levites within the possession of the children of Israel were forty and eight cities with their suburbs.

42 These cities were every one with their suburbs round about them: thus were all these cities.

43 ¶ And the LORD gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein.

44 And the LORD gave them rest round about, according to all that he swore unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand.

45 There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass.

masters, and might suit themselves; and we know, that after the building of the temple, most of the priests remained at Jerusalem, or in the places adjacent.

*Ver. 36, 37. And out of the tribe of Reuben, &c.]* These two verses are not in the oldest Hebrew copies. The Massorettes themselves say as much: they mention, however, that they are found in several very ancient copies; and the learned Hottinger, who has carefully entered into the subject, remarks, that they are found in the incomparable manuscript of the duke of Roan, found in Italy, A. C. 1495. See his *Theaur. Philolog.* lib. i. cap. 2. qu. 4. p. 181. Besides, the whole connection evidently shews that these two verses belong to the text; (see Bishop Walton's *Consulerator considered*, ch. vi. sect. 14.) and we read them in the version of the LXX. They are also found in other manuscripts. See Houbigant's note, and Kennicott's *Dissert.* vol. 1, &c.

*Ver. 41, 42. All the cities of the Levites—were forty and eight—with their suburbs]* Here we are to observe, 1. That Moses could never have assigned to the Levites beforehand the forty-eight cities contained in the list above-mentioned, without prejudicing the tribes, had he not been inspired by God in the determination of this number. Joshua, Caleb, and the other Israelites who had been with them to discover the country, could not have taken the dimensions of it, so as to be able to judge beforehand whether the Levites could have so many cities as are here given them. We must, therefore, once more acknowledge Moses to be immediately directed in this whole affair by the spirit of the Lord. 2. We are not to be surpris'd at this great number of cities assigned to the tribe of Levi, which, though least numerous of all, seems possessed of more cities than any of the rest. This is only so in appearance; for whereas the numeration of the Levitical cities is precise and exact, that of the cities of the other tribes is

not so; the historian contenting himself with naming the principal ones, as we have before remarked. Besides, the Levites had only their cities, with a small circuit of ground about them, without either villages or fields adjacent; and even these cities were peopled by as many of the laity as could settle there, as was observed on ver. 19. Their portion then was not by any means excessive; but it was worthy the liberality of God, whose ministers they had the honour to be.

REFLECTIONS.—The Levites were dispersed, that all the tribes might share the benefit of their instructions, and behold the exemplariness of their conduct. They were near in every division, that their brethren might shew them kindness, as commanded, Deut. xii. 19. and receive that counsel and instruction which, as daily more conversant in God's law, they were qualified to administer. Their portion of cities was great, and these too of the best; because God would have his peculiar servants honourably and comfortably lodged and cared for, that they might wait upon God without distraction, and be utterly inexcusable if they neglected their ministry, for which they were so liberally paid, and to which they were wholly dedicated.

*Ver. 45. There failed not ought of any good thing, &c.]* Whatever God had promised them was effected in proportion to the efforts they had made on their part, under sanction of the right which God had given them; and in order to the drawing down upon them his blessing by their obedience to his laws. On this obedience depended the final accomplishment of the divine promises in future times, according as their necessities required, and, to use Pelican's words, "all this process, in a very evident manner, shews the faithfulness of God, the confidence which his children should place in his promises, and the  
" reliance

## C H A P. XXII.

*Joshua dismisseth the two tribes and a half. They build an altar of testimony on the banks of Jordan; the purpose of which, being mistaken by the other tribes, is satisfactorily cleared up.*

[Before Christ 1444.]

**T**HEN Joshua called the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh,

2 And said unto them, Ye have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, and have obeyed my voice in all that I commanded you :

3 Ye have not left your brethren these many days unto this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of the LORD your God.

4 And now the LORD your God hath given rest unto your brethren, as he promised them : therefore now return ye, and get you unto your tents, *and* unto the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you on the other side Jordan.

5 But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the LORD charged you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.

6 So Joshua blessed them, and sent them away : and they went unto their tents.

7 Now to the *one* half of the tribe of Manasseh Moses had given *possession* in Bashan : but unto the *other* half thereof gave Joshua among their brethren on this side Jordan westward. And when Joshua sent them away also unto their tents, then he blessed them,

8 And he spake unto them, saying, Return with much riches unto your tents, and with very much cattle, with silver, and with gold, and with brass, and with iron, and with very much raiment : divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren.

9 And the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh re-

“ reliance they ought to have thereon even when he seems  
“ slow in the performance of them.”

REFLECTIONS.—The experience of God's Israel will ever confirm the faithfulness of his promises. The land which had been so long expected is now possessed ; their enemies are subdued, their habitations large and peaceable ; no foe remained to interrupt their quiet, or endanger their persons. Some Canaanites indeed were left, but they only were spared to keep possession against the beasts of the field, till Israel were multiplied to occupy the land ; and if they afterwards prevailed, the Israelites would have only to blame their own sloth, cowardice, unbelief, and sin, which robbed them of their portion. All the people solemnly acknowledge the exact accomplishment of the Divine promises ; which is repeated, 1 Kings, viii. 56. ; and all who are faithful to him shall find, to their everlasting comfort, that one jot or tittle shall never pass away from his word until the whole be fulfilled.

## C H A P. XXII.

*Ver. 1—4. Then Joshua called the Reubenites, &c.]* The war against the Canaanites being happily concluded, the conquered country divided, and the priests and people settled in the peaceable possession of the cities which had been assigned them ; Joshua thought it was just to dismiss the 40,000 men of the three tribes beyond the Jordan, who, for seven or eight years before, had generously quitted their families, and run all the hazards of war, to

assist their brethren in their conquest, as Moses had enjoined them. Accordingly, he sent for their chiefs, bore public testimony to their courage and fidelity, and in a solemn manner permitted them to return to their *tents*, i. e. to their *dwellings* or *houses* ; for, as the Israelites dwelt at first in tents, this word is in Scripture put indifferently for dwellings or habitations.

*Ver. 7. Now to the one half of the tribe of Manasseh Moses had given, &c.]* These words seem to be here inserted, 1. Merely by way of parenthesis, and as it were to bring back to the reader's view the present state of the tribe of Manasseh settled as well as the other on this side of the Jordan. 2. It may be a kind of introduction to what follows ; namely, Joshua's blessing the children of Manasseh ; for, from the manner in which the whole is worded, one would think that he blessed them separately.

*Ver. 8. Return with much riches, &c. and—divide the spoil—with your brethren]* Nothing could be more just than this command ; for, notwithstanding those who remained beyond Jordan had not shared in the dangers of the war, like those who had gone through it ; yet they had during that period watched over the families of the latter, and defended their possessions against the inroads of their surrounding enemies. This seems to have been constantly the custom among the Israelites : those who were detached upon any military expedition gave the rest of the army a share of the booty they had taken from the enemy : the pagans acted in like manner. God himself enjoined this practice after the war against the Midianites. Those who fought kept half the spoil of the enemy, and gave the

turned, and departed from the children of Israel out of Shiloh, which *is* in the land of Canaan, to go unto the country of Gilead, to the land of their possession, whereof they were possessed, according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses.

10 ¶ And when they came unto the borders of Jordan, that *are* in the land of Canaan,

the other half to the rest of the people. Probably the same proportion was observed upon this occasion: I mean, that the 40,000 fighting men of the Israelites who came from beyond Jordan, retained a moiety of the booty they had taken, and remitted the other moiety to be divided among those other fighting men of the two tribes and a half, who remained behind to guard the country; and who were 70,000 in number. David, on his return from pursuing the Amalekites, changed this custom into a law. 1 Sam. xxx. 24, 25.

REFLECTIONS.—The auxiliary forces, supplied by the tribe of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh, having fulfilled their engagement, are now dismissed by Joshua. And this,

1. With an honourable testimony to their obedience, patience, and piety. They had served him with as much fidelity as they obeyed Moses; they had waited, without offering or desiring to return, till the whole land was subdued, and the tribes divided to possess their inheritance; and they had kept the charge of the commandment of the Lord, not only in this instance of patient service, but also in their pious conduct in the camp. *Note;* (1.) The soldiers of Jesus Christ must object to no service that he enjoins them, but cheerfully and readily run at his bidding. (2.) Though our warfare be long, the faithful shall obtain an honourable dismissal at death, to return to their eternal inheritance. (3.) Jesus, at the day of his appearing, will remember and own, to their eternal honour, the faithful services of his people.

2. He gives them a solemn charge (equally applicable to every spiritual Israelite) to keep up their religion at home, when they were separated by Jordan from the tabernacle in Shiloh. *Take diligent heed* (for our spiritual enemies are ever lying in wait to deceive) *to do the commandment and the law of God;* this is our constant rule of duty, and must be conscientiously obeyed; *to love the Lord your God,* without which no obedience can be acceptable, or indeed practicable; *to walk in his ways,* strait, holy, and self-denying as they are, and *to cleave to him,* amid all the temptations which surround us, and would turn us aside; *and this with all your heart and soul.* God's service requires a willing heart, and his work will never be done, unless it be our delight.

3. He adds his blessing to his advice; prays for their prosperity, and wishes them a safe and comfortable journey, and a happy meeting with their families. Where there is a good will, there will be a good wish; those whom we love, we shall pray for.

4. They return with all diligence; it was a long absence, and, no doubt, a happy meeting. Here below, business, war, voyages, separate the dearest relatives; but they are glad to get home in peace. How much happier for the pilgrim's soul, when his warfare of life is ac-

complished, to cross Jordan, and meet his brethren in glory, the family of God!

*Ver. 10. And when they came unto the borders of Jordan, that are in the land of Canaan]* From the first reading of these words, one would conceive that the sacred writer means to say, that the Israelites built the altar, of which he proceeds to speak, on this side Jordan, before they had passed the river; but, from what follows, we shall soon be convinced that this cannot be the sense of the historian. Had the Israelites of the two tribes and a half built an altar on the west side of the river, they would not have executed their own design, which was, to shew by this monument that, though separated from their brethren, and from the altar of the Lord, by Jordan, they still made but one and the same people with them. Besides, is it likely that they would have ventured to erect this pile upon the territory of the other tribes? And even were this the case, how, in the verse following, could the altar in question be said to have been built *over-against the land of Canaan?* we must, therefore, necessarily suppose the author to have expressed himself here in such brief terms as leave something to be made out by the reader. It was evidently his intention to say, that the Israelites, on their coming up to the bank of the Jordan on the side of the land of Canaan, crossed that river, and built the altar beyond it in their own country. See Josephus. Hist. Jud. lib. v. cap. 1. and Rabb. in Seder.—Olam. c. xii. p. 32. We may add, that the Hebrew *Geliloth*, rendered in our version *borders*, may very probably be in this verse the proper name of a place situate on the side of the Jordan. The Vulgate translates, *on the heights of Jordan;* but the Vatican manuscript of the LXX has it *Gilead or Geliloth;* understanding it of a place near that where the Israelites crossed over the Jordan. The question then is, where Geliloth stood: if we understand by it the country of Gilead, the whole is clear; and then the Israelites, without any doubt, reared the altar after having passed the river. Le Clerc understands the matter very naturally, namely, that the Israelites *came to Jordan, which bounds the land of Canaan,* and, having crossed it, *built there* (i. e. on the other side,) the altar in question. This altar, we read, was of a remarkable size; such as might be perceived from afar. It was the work, not of an individual, but of a whole body of people, who thought they could not build it too magnificently. It was a heap of earth or stones. Bacchus, Hercules, Semiramis, Cyrus, and Alexander the Great, in after times, made others like it upon various occasions, to eternize the memory of their victories and travels. See Pliny, lib. vi. cap. 16, 17. Philostrat. Vit. Apollon. lib. ii. *ad fin.* See also Calmet and Clerc. By the stateliness and magnificence of this altar, it was rendered so different from that which Moses had dedicated to divine worship, that it is probable these Israelites thought it would therefore administer less occa-

the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh built there an altar by Jordan, a great altar to see to.

11 ¶ And the children of Israel heard say, Behold, the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh have built an altar over against the land of Canaan, in the borders of Jordan, at the passage of the children of Israel.

12 And when the children of Israel heard of it, the whole congregation of the children of Israel gathered themselves together at Shiloh, to go up to war against them.

13 And the children of Israel sent unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, into the land of Gilead, Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest,

14 And with him ten princes, of each chief

house a prince throughout all the tribes of Israel; and each one *was* an head of the house of their fathers among the thousands of Israel.

15 And they came unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, unto the land of Gilead, and they spake with them, saying,

16 Thus saith the whole congregation of the LORD, What trespass is this that ye have committed against the God of Israel, to turn away this day from following the LORD, in that ye have builded you an altar, that ye might rebel this day against the LORD?

17 Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us, from which we are not cleansed until this day (although there was a plague in the congregation of the LORD),

18 But that ye must turn away this day from following the LORD? and it will be,

sion to their brethren to suspect that it was intended for sacrifice, or to rival the other.

*Ver. 11. And the children of Israel, &c.]* That is, those who were in the land of Canaan to the west of Jordan. This is a proof of the observation we just now made, that there are many things to be supplied in this narration; for the Reubenites, Gadites, and half-tribe of Manasseh, were no less *children of Israel* than the former. They were informed of the building of this altar, when finished; a certain proof that it had not been reared within their territories, in which case they would have seen and opposed them. *The passage of the children of Israel* is so called, either as being the part at which they entered into the land of Canaan, or by which they returned from thence: perhaps it was the place where the river was commonly crossed.

*Ver. 12. And—the whole congregation—gathered themselves together at Shiloh]* That is, the elders and princes of the tribes came from their several cities thither to consult what, in consequence of this step of the two tribes and a half, was necessary to be done. On the first advice of the erection of so elevated an altar, the Israelites in general conceived that their brethren had abandoned the true religion. For, not to mention that the law forbade a plurality of altars, the prodigious height of the present denoted a monument dedicated to the pagan deities, for whose worship they were fond of the highest places, rather than one appropriated to the true God, who can as easily assist the most lowly, as those who are nearest the skies, and who had commanded that His altar should not exceed three cubits in height, and be without steps. See Deut. xii. and xiii. Exod. xxvii. 1. xx. 26. The congregation at Shiloh, therefore, in the first emotions of its zeal, thought that the Israelites beyond Jordan were fallen into idolatry, either by devoting themselves to the worship of false gods, or by presuming to worship the Lord in another place and

manner than he had appointed. Hereupon they consulted how it was necessary to act towards the supposed offenders; and the conclusion was, that they should proceed in strict conformity to the law of Moses; and that in case the 40,000 men had done as was presumed, it was necessary to go up to war against them, to avenge their insulted religion, and destroy them, as God had commanded, Deut. xiii. 12, &c. Many reflections might be drawn from this determination: we may boldly conclude, that it is not sufficient to have right intentions in what we undertake; but that in the execution of it, piety requires us to avoid, as much as possible, all appearance of evil. The 40,000 ought to have apprised the Israelites of Canaan of what they were about to do, and of their motive for so doing; their manner of proceeding could not but create disagreeable suspicions. But what noble sentiments did these suspicions produce in the hearts they animated! It is very pleasing to see the Israelites, scarcely delivered from the fatigues and dangers of so long a war, and but just beginning to taste the fruits of their conquests, determining immediately to resume arms, in obedience to the laws of their religion and commonwealth. An example of courage and zeal like this well deserves to be remarked.

*Ver. 17. Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us, &c.]* “Were not the abominable transgressions of which ye were guilty, respecting the idol of Peor, enough; and was it necessary, by adding sin to sin, to draw down fresh evils upon the nation, and shew yourselves to be so imperfectly cleansed, so badly cured of that fatal propensity to idolatry, which has already caused us so much affliction; though heaven has not yet punished us for the offence so highly as we deserve?” Phinehas, as we may see, supposes throughout, that the Israelites beyond Jordan had built altar against altar, with idolatrous views. To explain his mind, he recalls the unhappy affair

seeing ye rebel to-day against the LORD, that to-morrow he will be wroth with the whole congregation of Israel.

19 Notwithstanding, if the land of your possession be unclean, then pass ye over unto the land of the possession of the LORD, wherein the LORD's tabernacle dwelleth, and take possession among us: but rebel not against the LORD, nor rebel against us, in building you an altar beside the altar of the LORD our God.

20 Did not Achan the son of Zerah commit a trespass in the accursed thing, and wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel? and that man perished not alone in his iniquity.

21 ¶ Then the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasse answered, and said unto the heads of the thousands of Israel,

22 The LORD God of gods, the LORD God of gods, he knoweth, and Israel he shall know; if it be in rebellion, or if in transgression against the LORD, (save us not this day,)

23 That we have built us an altar to turn from following the LORD, or if to offer thereon burnt-offering or meat-offering, or if to offer peace-offerings thereon, let the LORD himself require it;

24 And if we have not rather done it for fear of this thing, saying, In time to come your children might speak unto our children, saying, What have ye to do with the LORD God of Israel?

25 For the LORD hath made Jordan a border between us and you, ye children of Reuben and children of Gad; ye have no part in the LORD: so shall your children make our

of Peor, which happened in the very country that had been assigned to these Israelites; that thus, after the zeal which he had displayed upon that occasion, his argument deduced therefrom might have the more peculiar weight.

Ver. 19. *Notwithstanding, if the land of your possession be unclean*] This fully justifies the piety, disinterestedness, and benevolent intentions of Phinehas: he even himself seeks out some plausible pretence for the step against which he inveighs. He supposes, that the Israelites beyond the river may have thought *their land would be defiled*; that it would not be a holy land, consecrated to God, and under his protection, unless they beheld there some token of his presence, some sacred edifice, which might publicly signify that the Lord was their God. And on this charitable supposition, he addresses them thus: "Did not you rear this altar, as thinking that the country in which you dwell would be an impure and profane land, unless this monument supplied the presence of the tabernacle and altar of the Lord at Shiloh, from which the Jordan divides you? If this be the case, come back, repass the river, and partake with us of our possessions. We would rather put ourselves to straits, by receiving you among us, than see you deviate into schism and revolt against God."

Note: (1.) Many a heavy charge is sometimes brought, where there is the purest innocence; and this even by those who have zeal for God. (2.) They who have smarted for sin, dread the thoughts of renewing their provocations. (3.) They who desire to recover their brethren from schism, must shew their charity towards them, and readiness to yield every thing that they lawfully may to a tender conscience, lest by unchristian violence the rent be made worse.

Ver. 21, 22. *Then the children of Reuben, &c.—answered—The Lord God of gods, &c.*] No sooner had Phinehas ended his discourse, than the president of the congregation of the two tribes and a half, to remove the suspicions that had been entertained of their faith, takes up the

conference, and begins by calling God to witness the purity of their intentions. "*The Lord God of gods,*" they begin; in which their design is first to shew, that they worshipped no other God than *Him*, whom their fathers had worshipped, that great Being, who, infinitely exalted above all the creatures, is the first and original cause of every thing that exists: after which, in a noble emotion of zeal, they immediately repeat the same appellation; *the Lord God of gods*: which flows as it were from an ardent desire to wash off the reproach that Phinehas had just cast upon them; and is a mark of the sincerity wherewith they dared to call God to witness their fidelity in his service. These lively and emphatical modes of expression are common to all languages.

*If in transgression against the Lord, save us not this day*] In proportion as the apologist for the Israelites of Gilead proceeds in his discourse, he speaks with more fire; displaying a soul, touched with the most sensible concern at the heavy reproach cast upon his fellow-citizens. He calls on the Deity to testify their integrity; he repeatedly invokes the Most High, and still this is not sufficient; waving, therefore, his address to Phinehas and the deputies his companions, he lifts up his voice to God immediately, and cries out with great emphasis, "O Lord, protect us not, if guilty of that revolt whereof our brethren have suspected us!" Perhaps this is one of those softened expressions, which have in reality more energy than one would at first imagine: as if he had said, "May heaven punish us on the spot, if we entertained the design charged upon us."

Ver. 23—25. *What have ye to do with the Lord God of Israel? &c.*] Not satisfied with justifying themselves from the crime imputed to them, of having dared to erect a new altar, to rival, as it were, the holy altar: not content with having submitted in that case to whatever the most formidable judgment of divine vengeance might inflict, *let the Lord himself require it*; (see Deut. xviii. 19.) the

children cease from fearing the LORD.

26 Therefore we said, Let us now prepare to build us an altar, not for burnt-offering, nor for sacrifice :

27 But *that* it *may be* a witness between us and you, and our generations after us, that we might do the service of the LORD before him with our burnt-offerings, and with our sacrifices, and with our peace-offerings ; that your children may not say to our children in time to come, Ye have no part in the LORD.

28 Therefore said we, that it shall be, when they should *so* say to us, or to our generations in time to come, that we may say *again*, Behold the pattern of the altar of the LORD, which our fathers made, not for burnt-offerings, nor for sacrifices ; but it *is* a witness between us and you.

29 God forbid that we should rebel against the LORD, and turn this day from following the LORD, to build an altar for burnt-offerings, for meat-offerings, or for sacrifices, beside the altar of the LORD our God that *is* before his tabernacle.

30 ¶ And when Phinehas the priest, and

the princes of the congregation and heads of the thousands of Israel which *were* with him, heard the words that the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the children of Manasseh spake, it pleased them.

31 And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the children of Manasseh, This day we perceive that the LORD *is* among us, because ye have not committed this trespass against the LORD : now ye have delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of the LORD.

32 ¶ And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, and the princes, returned from the children of Reuben, and from the children of Gad, out of the land of Gilead, unto the land of Canaan, to the children of Israel, and brought them word again.

33 And the thing pleased the children of Israel ; and the children of Israel blessed God, and did not intend to go up against them in battle, to destroy the land wherein the children of Reuben and Gad dwelt.

34 And the children of Reuben and the

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accused candidly explain what were their views in the step which had alarmed the other tribes ; an ill-grounded though a pious fear. " We apprehended," say they, " that in a course of time, on seeing ourselves separated by the Jordan from the place at which the sanctuary of the Lord is situated, we should be looked upon as strangers, as a people who had no share or right in the worship of the tabernacle, and that our posterity, biased and persuaded by speeches to this purpose, should absolutely grow relaxed, and turn aside from the fear and worship of the true God."

Ver. 29. God forbid that we should rebel against the Lord, &c.] They conclude, as they began, by protesting in the most sacred manner before God, that they have an utter abhorrence of the very idea, of the least tendency to rebellion against *Jehovah*; or, as the Chaldee paraphrase, both here and in the foregoing verses, has it, against the word of the Lord. Thus ended the conference in behalf of the Israelites beyond Jordan: how admirable is the mildness with which their judicious apologist repels the most dreadful suspicions, and the most ignominious accusations! using for this purpose no offensive retort, over-bearing arrogance, or affronting language. Happy they who can imitate the amiable example, and have virtue enough never to oppose to the false judgments passed upon them, and the groundless accusations they undergo, aught but proofs demonstrative of their innocence, and of the unjust treatment they meet with! A closer attention to this maxim

would often have spared Christians the shame of striving rather to rail at their adversaries, than to reclaim them by informing their understandings. See Divine Legat. vol. iv. p. 15, &c.

Note; (1.) We are to be careful not only to act simply before God, but to make our integrity appear before men. (2.) The perpetuating the means of grace to our posterity, is the best method we can take to secure them in the ways of God. (3.) They who neglect the ordinances of God's worship, will soon prove apostates from his truth.

Ver. 31. This day we perceive that the Lord is among us, because, &c.] Rejoiced to find by the answer of their brethren, that they were perfectly innocent, Phinehas and his associates think it their duty to acknowledge that God was among them; that they had done nothing unworthy of his protection; and that, consequently, neither of them had any thing to apprehend from the divine displeasure, as they had feared at seeing the altar on the bank of the Jordan: the latter clause might in this view be rendered thus; Now, therefore, behold, we are happily delivered from our fears. Jonathan, in his paraphrase, reads the whole sentence as follows: This day we perceive that the SHECHINAH is amongst you, because ye have not committed this trespass against the word of the Lord: thus ye have delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of the word of the Lord.

Ver. 33. Did not intend to go up] Or, Talked no more of going up.

Ver. 34. And the children of Reuben, and—Gad, called the

children of Gad called the altar *Ed*: for it shall be a witness between us that the LORD is God.

C H A P. XXIII.

*Joshua's exhortation to the Israelites before his death.*  
[Before Christ 1435.]

AND it came to pass a long time after that the LORD had given rest unto Israel from all their enemies round about, that Joshua waxed old and stricken in age.

2 And Joshua called for all Israel, and for their elders, and for their heads, and for their

judges, and for their officers, and said unto them, I am old and stricken in age:

3 And ye have seen all that the LORD your God hath done unto all these nations because of you; for the LORD your God is he that hath fought for you.

4 Behold, I have divided unto you by lot these nations that remain, to be an inheritance for your tribes, from Jordan, with all the nations that I have cut off, even unto the great sea westward.

5 ¶ And the LORD your God, he shall expel them from before you, and drive them

*the altar Ed*] The word *Ed*, is evidently wanting in the Hebrew, which only says *the children of Reuben, &c. called the altar; for it is, or shall be OD, i. e. a witness between us, that Jehovah is God; or as the LXX very well translate it, that the Lord is our God.* The Syriac, Arabic, and several modern versions supply the word *Ed*, as we do, and as the sense plainly requires; though it is omitted by the LXX, Jonathan, and the Vulgate. See Bishop Patrick, and Hallet's *Study of the Scripture recommended*, vol. ii. p. 18. Masius would render the passage thus: *they made an everlasting witness of their attachment to the Lord; and this conjecture he founds upon the Hebrew verb kara, which signifies commonly to call, to name, and sometimes to write: hence the Jews call the Holy Scripture, Karah and Mikrah; and hence the Arabic name of the Al-coran.* See Poole's Synopsis, and Kennicott's Dissert. vol. 1. We are not to be surpris'd at seeing Joshua's name nowhere throughout this whole narration: some, indeed, have pretended to infer from this, that Joshua was dead when the affair of the altar happened; but this is only the better to ground a conclusion that he cannot have been the author of this book. Such frivolous observations serve but to discover the inclination of their authors to weaken the authority of sacred writ; for, we need only read, to be convinced that the event in question happened immediately after Joshua had dismissed the 40,000 Israelites. The context leaves not the least room to suppose the contrary: and of this the LXX were so well satisfied, that in the Vatican, which is the most common edition of their version, they tell us, that it was Joshua who gave the altar its name: their words are, *Και ἐπωνόμασεν ο Ιησους τον θωμόν, &c.* It is impossible, as Le Clerc judiciously observes, that in so short a narration all the circumstances of the fact should be inserted. To raise a doubt about them because the author is silent, would be preposterous in any one who has read these books with a small share of attention.

REFLECTIONS.—Never was there a happier issue of religious controversy! Charity tempered the zeal of the complainants, and meekness adorned the integrity of the defendants; thus, when the matter was well explained, both sides were satisfied.

1. The princes' ambassadors are happy in being undeceived, and conclude that God is surely among them, when they discover such a zeal for his service and worship on both sides. They do not question their assertions, nor blame their rashness in not consulting them, but are glad to retract their warm expostulation. *Note;* (1.) Charity is easily persuaded, while censoriousness refuses to acquiesce, or be convinced. (2.) They who are satisfied in their brethren's simplicity, will overlook their little slips of inadvertence or want of complaisance. (3.) It gives real joy to the heart, to find our brethren more faithful than we feared.

2. The people were as readily satisfied with their report, and gladly laid down their arms, blessing God for the tidings of their brethren's fidelity. *Note;* They are often suspected to design a breach in the unity of the church, who are most diligently labouring to heal her divisions, and to preserve to posterity the purity of her doctrines and worship; but though mistaken zeal may cry, Down with them, yet shortly every dispute shall cease. In heaven at least we shall lay aside the arms of contention, and learn war no more.

C H A P. XXIII.

*Ver. 1. And it came to pass a long time after, &c.*] That is to say, fourteen years after the conquest of the land of Canaan, and seven after the division of the country among the tribes. See ch. xi. 23. xiv. 10. Dr. Wells is of opinion, that the assembly here mentioned met at Shiloh before the tabernacle. Joshua is before spoken of as being *old and stricken in years.* chap. xiii. 1. He was now, probably, in the last year of his life.

*Ver. 2. Joshua called for all Israel, &c.*] That is, he convoked them by their chief men, whose different quality is here specified: the *elders*, they who composed the great council of the nation, afterwards called the *Sanhedrin*; the *heads* of tribes and families; the *judges*, or city magistrates; and the *officers*, who executed the sentences pronounced by those magistrates. And, without doubt, all such Israelites as were desirous of assisting at this respectable assembly of the representatives of the nation, had liberty so to do.

*And said unto them, I am old, &c.*] "Being now grown old amongst you, at the head of your armies, and the helm



from out of your sight; and ye shall possess their land as the LORD your God hath promised unto you.

6 Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left;

7 That ye come not among these nations, these that remain among you; neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear by them, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them:

8 But cleave unto the LORD your God, as ye have done unto this day.

9 For the LORD hath driven out from before you great nations and strong: but as for you, no man hath been able to stand before you unto this day.

10 One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the LORD your God, he *it is* that fighteth for you, as he hath promised you.

11 Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the LORD your God.

12 ¶ Else if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you:

13 Know for a certainty that the LORD your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you.

14 And, behold, this day I am going the

“helm of the state; nothing remains for me, before my death, but to set before your view, all that the Lord hath done for you, and what you ought to do for him. Receive then this advice of an old man, which his age and experience, far more than his rank, should render dear and valuable to you.”

*Ver. 7—11. That ye come not among these nations, &c.]* Hold no familiarity; make no marriages with these idolatrous nations: never make the least honourable mention of the name of their false gods in your conversation, nor cause any one to swear by those idols, nor serve them yourselves, by offering victims to them, or by addressing prayers and vows to them in secret; nor shall ye prostrate yourselves before them, or render them any public worship: in a word, let nothing be able to draw you from God, or turn you aside from the execution of those designs, for which that great God has rendered you invincible even unto this day. Acquit yourselves thus of your duty, and ye will certainly engage the Lord ever to grant you victory and success.”

REFLECTIONS.—Joshua, now grown old, and having but a short time to live, is solicitous to improve it to the best purposes; his last words, it is to be presumed, would be heard with peculiar attention: wherefore, he summons those on whose carefulness and piety the well-being of the state chiefly depended, and whose examples must be most influential over the people; and thus addresses to them his discourse.

1. He reminds them of what God had done for them, to awaken a grateful return for such transcendent mercies. He had thrust out powerful nations, to make room for them; had given them success in every attack; neither city nor army ever was able to stand before them; and they were now in quiet possession of these valuable conquests. *Note;* We can never too frequently remember, nor too thankfully acknowledge, what great things God has done for us in our bodies or in our souls.

2. He assures them, that the same mercy and goodness was engaged to attend them in their future attempts; they had enough at present; but when they should be increased, the remaining Canaanites should fall as easy a prey, as their neighbours; nor needed they the assembled forces of Israel; one tribe would be sufficient for any conquest, when one Israelite should chase a thousand. *Note;* It is God who giveth us the victory; though our spiritual enemies appear never so numerous or strong, if God fighteth for us, we must be more than conquerors.

3. Hereupon he exhorts them to courage and faithful obedience. They may confidently go forth under the blessing of Jehovah; only let them take care to secure his favour; and, in order thereunto, they must be, (1.) Obedient to God's commands, careful to observe his instituted ordinances, and faithful in their adherence to him: they had been so, and this was an argument for their perseverance; they had experienced the comfort of it. (2.) They must avoid all connexion with the Canaanites who were among them. Idolatry being their besetting sin, and the most provoking to God, they must keep at the greatest possible distance from it. *Note;* They who would keep from evil must avoid temptation, especially in the case of their easily besetting sin.

*Ver. 12, 13. Else if ye do in any wise go back, &c.]* “But if, on the contrary, ye are capable of starting aside from God, and of giving way in any manner to idolatry; if ye cleave unto these nations, and communicate with them in their errors; if ye enter into any alliances, or mix yourselves with them by the tie of marriage; know, most assuredly, that from thenceforward the Lord will cease to drive out these nations, and to give you their inheritance; nay, they shall be snares and traps in your way. They shall subsist for your punishment, to be to you an occasion of falling and of sin; and continually more and more to draw you into their abominations: they shall be as scourges in your sides, as a whip, as a rod in the hand

way of all the earth : and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you ; all are come to pass unto you, *and* not one thing hath failed thereof.

15 Therefore it shall come to pass, *that* as all good things are come upon you, which the LORD your God promised you ; so shall the LORD bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you.

16 When ye have transgressed the covenant of the LORD your God, which he commanded

you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them ; then shall the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given unto you.

C H A P. XXIV.

*Joshua assembles the tribes; recounts God's blessings to them; renews the covenant with them, and afterwards departs this life. The bones of Joseph are buried in Shechem. Eleazar dies.*

[Before Christ 1434.]

**A**ND Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the

“ hand of Providence, grievously to wound and oppress you ; and as thorns in your eyes, to afflict you ; while, losing the favour of God, you shall finally draw down upon your heads the utmost inflictions of misery.”

*Further Reflections.*

In order to preserve them from that state of apostacy from God, which, with prophetic foresight, he justly apprehended,

1. Joshua exhorts them to take heed, and keep themselves in the love of God ; carelessness about his service would quickly bring ruin on their souls, and nothing can preserve them from falling away, but a principle of love engaging their hearts to God. *Note;* (1.) When we are surrounded with Canaanites, temptations on every side, we need constantly watch and pray. (2.) The love of God is the great preservative from all evil.

2. He reminds them of God's faithfulness, as the most powerful motive to engage their love ; nothing had failed of all his promises, therefore they were inexcusable if they forsook him. *Note;* God is faithful, and all who trust in him will find him so.

3. He speaks of his own departure as at hand, when his warning voice would no more be heard among them ; therefore the more attentively should it be now heard and pondered. He was going the way of all the earth. Death is the journey that we all must take ; the greatest of God's saints must tread this beaten road, in their removal from time into eternity. Happy they who, like Joshua, can speak of it with satisfaction, and are ready for their great change.

4. He warns them of the danger they were in, and the ruin which would ensue, if they joined the Canaanites in their abominations. The gradual steps of their departure from God he describes, in order that, avoiding the snare, they may keep from the danger : intercourse with the Canaanites would introduce more intimate connexions ; profane marriages with these idolaters then would follow, and, as the necessary consequence of being yoked with unbelievers, they would serve their idols, and thus violate the sacred covenant established between God and them. The

consequence of this must be, that God, in anger, would leave them to be ensnared in their own perverseness and folly ; those neighbours whom they cherished would be snakes in their bosom to sting them to death, first leading them into sin, and then bringing wrath upon them ; their tempters would turn their tormentors ; and God, in just judgment, would give them up to their enemies, to the utter ruin of their church and nation ; and the good land, wherein they dwelt so happily, should cast them out.

*Note;* (1.) No snare so fatal as being unequally yoked with unbelievers. (2.) It is just in God, to make them instruments in our punishment, whom we have made instruments of our sin. (3.) The mercy which sinners have rejected will aggravate their misery, and the knowledge of the bliss they have lost increase the torment they feel.

C H A P. XXIV.

*Ver. 1. And Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel*] Calmet thinks, that the discourse in the former chapter is to be considered only as the exordium or introduction to the present : which is nearly the opinion of Calvin. But the two discourses seem very distinct in the text, and we see no reason for putting them together.

*To Shechem*] Some copies of the LXX, particularly the Roman edition, and Alexandrian manuscript, read here, and in ver. 25. *to Shiloh*. What renders this reading very probable is, that we find the Israelites assembled before God ; that is, before the ark, which certainly resided in the tabernacle ; and that, undoubtedly, was at *Shiloh*. Of this opinion likewise are Grotius, Junius, Wells, and others. In answer to which it is to be considered, 1. That, according to Eusebius and St. Jerome, there were not less than ten or twelve miles distance between these two places. 2. Other copies of the LXX, as well as the Hebrew, Chaldee, and other eastern versions, read *Shechem*, and not *Shiloh* ; and to these we may add Josephus, Hist. Jud. lib. v. cap. 1. See Dr. Wall. 3. It is easy to account for this convocation of the assembly at *Shechem*. For, not to mention that this city was the capital of the tribe of Ephraim, and in the neighbourhood of *Tinnath-serah*, where Joshua resided, who, on account of his

elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God.

2 ¶ And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, *even* Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor: and they served other gods.

3 And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac.

4 And I gave unto Isaac Jacob and Esau: and I gave unto Esau mount Seir, to possess it; but Jacob and his children went down into Egypt.

5 I sent Moses also and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt, according to that which I did among them: and afterward I brought you out.

6 And I brought your fathers out of Egypt: and ye came unto the sea; and the Egyptians pursued after your fathers with chariots and horsemen unto the Red Sea.

7 And when they cried unto the LORD, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and brought the sea upon them, and covered them; and your eyes have seen what I have

done in Egypt: and ye dwelt in the wilderness a long season.

8 And I brought you into the land of the Amorites, which dwelt on the other side Jordan; and they fought with you: and I gave them into your hand, that ye might possess their land; and I destroyed them from before you.

9 Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and warred against Israel, and sent and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you:

10 But I would not hearken unto Balaam; therefore he blessed you still: so I delivered you out of his hand.

11 And ye went over Jordan, and came unto Jericho: and the men of Jericho fought against you, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and I delivered them into your hand.

12 And I sent the hornet before you, which drave them out from before you, *even* the two kings of the Amorites; *but* not with thy sword, nor with thy bow.

13 And I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards

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his great age, might very possibly be unable to go to Shiloh; it is probable, that he thought it proper to renew the divine covenant in the place where Abraham had first settled, and had erected an altar on his entering into the land of Canaan (Gen. xiii. 6, 7.); where the patriarchs were interred, Acts, vii. 16.; and where Joshua himself had first entered into covenant with the Israelites, chap. viii. 30, &c.; for Ebal and Gerizzim were very near Shechem. See Le Clerc and Calmet. We will presently consider the objection brought by some, that the assembly in question was held before God; observing here, that an able critic thinks, that the several opinions respecting the matter may be reconciled, by supposing the congregation to have met in the fields of Shechem, and that thence the people went in companies to Shiloh, as it were to confirm before God what they had promised to Joshua, who had received the assembly at *Timnath-serab*, his place of residence, situate between Shechem and Shiloh. See Shuckford's Connection, vol. iii. p. 427.

*They presented themselves before God*] That is to say, before his tabernacle. "But," say some, "this tabernacle was at Shiloh." It rested there, it is true; but we apprehend, that upon this grand solemnity it was removed from Shiloh to Shechem; and the kings and leaders of Israel certainly had a right to have the ark removed from

its usual station to any other place upon extraordinary occasions. See 1 Sam. iv. 3, 4. 2 Sam. xv. 24., and Bertram de Repub. Jud. c. xv. p. 249. This was such an occasion: The whole nation had been convened at Shechem to renew the divine covenant; Joshua, one hundred and twenty years of age, was come up from *Timnath-serab* to that city, his strength not allowing him a longer journey: and was not this sufficient to authorize the sending for the ark, that the people might thus assemble before the Lord? We must not, however, pass over the opinion of the learned Mede, who thinks that the Ephraimites had built at Shechem a *proseucha*, a kind of oratory or chapel, whither the people resorted to divine worship when they could not go so far as the tabernacle; and that it was before this house of prayer that the assembly was held. But for more respecting this ingenious conjecture, see on ver. 26.

*Ver. 2. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel*] This exordium indicates a prophetic discourse; so that Joshua was no less the prophet than the political head of the nation. It is not, therefore, so much he that speaks, as God by his mouth; and hence it is, that he expresses himself as the mere organ for the delivery of a discourse addressed by the Lord himself to all Israel.

*The flood*] i. e. The river Euphrates.

*Ver.*

and olive-yards which ye planted not do ye eat.

14 ¶ Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on

the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD.

15 And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, chuse ye this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers

*Ver. 14. Now, therefore, fear the Lord, &c.]* Here it is no longer Jehovah that speaks; Joshua himself addresses the Israelites, and, after all that he had just represented to them in the name of God, concludes with exhorting them to *fear Jehovah*; i. e. to open their whole heart to his religion, and to render him, *in sincerity and in truth*, with right and pure intentions, free from all hypocrisy, the worship due to him; and that without any mixture of idolatry, and according to his law, which is truth itself. "Put away from among you," says he, "those idols, the worship of which your ancestors, Terah, Nahor, Abraham, and others, formerly joined with the worship of the true God, while they remained on the other side of the Euphrates. Remove from you that unhappy propensity to idolatry which you acquired in Ægypt: in a word, resolve to serve God, and Him alone." To the idols of the Chaldees and Ægyptians, Joshua in the following verse adds the idols of the Amorites; and from the manner of his speaking, both here and in ver. 23. it is easy to discern, that the Israelites, notwithstanding all that the Lord had done for them, were by no means clear from the capital crime of idolatry. St. Augustin could not agree in this opinion; for, struck with the fine testimonies which Joshua himself bears to the faith of the Hebrews; and seeing it nowhere mentioned, that on account of the last exhortations of that holy sage, the people removed from them any idols; and being moreover unable to believe that God, who took vengeance of the Israelites for many lesser crimes, would have left their idolatry unpunished; this learned man has thought proper to interpret the words of Joshua conditionally, as if he had said; "If any one of you hath still the least inclination to idolatry, let him pluck it from his heart, and unreservedly devote himself to the worship of the only true God." See *Quæst. xxix.* in *Josh.* But it is certainly doing violence to Joshua's discourse, to give it so soft a sense. Besides, what greater difficulty is there in conceiving the Israelites to have given way to idolatry under the government of this general, than under that of Moses their legislator? And how, after all, can we controvert a fact so positively attested by the Holy Spirit in divers other passages of Scripture? Ezekiel, Amos, and St. Stephen warrant the truth of the offence here imputed to the Hebrews. See *Ezek. xxiii. 3, 8, &c. xx. 6, &c. Amos, v. 16. Acts, vii. 41.* Without doubt, the whole nation was not tainted with it, nor was the scandal of it yet public; but it appears evident, that among the multitude of the Israelites, there were many superstitious persons who privately joined the idolatrous worship of the people of Mesopotamia, Ægypt, and the land of Canaan, with the worship of Jehovah.

REFLECTIONS.—Joshua seems, at his last meeting of the congregation, to have expected his dissolution at hand; VOL. II.

but, God having spared him a little longer, he is glad to make use of the last moments of his life in one more solemn assembly of the heads of Israel. *Note;* (1.) Whilst God continues our lives, it is a sign that he has something for us yet to do. (2.) They whose hearts are faithful to God will be pleased with the returning solemnities, when they come to appear before the Lord. (3.) God is still in the midst of his people, whenever or wherever they assemble in his name.

The congregation being collected, Joshua opens his farewell sermon, commissioned from God to speak, and therefore deserving the most profound attention: he begins with a recapitulation of the signal mercies that, from the beginning until that time, God had shewn to their ancestors, and to them. Their ancestors, who dwelt beyond the Euphrates, were sunk, as other Gentiles, into gross idolatry; when God, in his infinite mercy, separated Abraham from them, and brought him out from thence into the land of Canaan, where they now were, multiplied his posterity in Ishmael, and gave him the promised seed in Isaac. When Rebekah's barrenness seemed to restrain the fulfilment of the promise, Jacob and Esau were born. Jacob, their great progenitor, with his increasing household, were driven into Egypt by famine; but when his seed were there multiplied and oppressed, with a mighty arm did God rescue them from thence, protecting them with his pillar of a cloud, and overwhelming their pursuers in the sea. Through the dreary wilderness he led them safely, defeated the plots of their enemies, and turned wicked Balaam's intended curse into a blessing. After this also, he wrought his wonders in the land of Gilead, at Jordan and Jericho, casting out their foes before them, not by their sword or bow, but by his army of hornets, which he sent before them; and now at last he brought them into possession of Canaan, where peace and plenty reigned. In return for which mercies, it was not more their bounden duty, than the dictate of gratitude, 1. That they should fear that God whose wonders they had seen, and with a reverential sense of his majesty and mercy walk before him. 2. That they should serve him in sincerity and truth; for he is a heart-searching God, who cannot be imposed upon, who hateth hypocrisy, and expects the soul in simplicity to be devoted to his service. 3. That they should put far from them strange gods. *Note;* (1.) God requires the heart in his worship; without this, we can do him no acceptable service. (2.) Neglect of God is not only foul disobedience, but base ingratitude. (3.) That is still our idol, to which our affections cleave more than to the blessed God.

*Ver. 15. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, &c.]* Satisfied that the Israelites, as a nation, are very far from falling into atheism, or being averse from serving God; Joshua cannot think them so blind and ungrateful

served that *were* on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

16 And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods;

17 For the LORD our God, he *it is* that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed:

18 And the LORD drave out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt

in the land: *therefore* will we also serve the LORD; for he *is* our God.

19 And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the LORD: for he *is* an holy God; he *is* a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.

20 If ye forsake the LORD, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good.

21 And the people said unto Joshua, Nay; but we will serve the LORD.

22 And Joshua said unto the people, Ye *are* witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the LORD, to serve him. And they said, *We are* witnesses.

as to desire to serve any other God than Jehovah. This, and nothing more, is his meaning in this place. He speaks like an orator; he invites them to choose, merely because he supposes the choice already made. Just as if he had addressed the Israelites thus: "Put away from you every object of idolatry, and determine only to serve the Lord. Ah! whom will ye serve, speak candidly, whom will ye serve, if ye refuse Him your homage? Where could you hope to find a god worthy to be compared to him? If the worship of those gods which your ancestors worshipped beyond the Euphrates has the sanction of antiquity, ye know, on the other hand, that Abraham openly abjured that worship; that from his heart he renounced those idols; and that, drawing down the benediction of the Most High, he obtained from his munificence, as his inheritance, the country of which you have now taken possession. As to the gods of the Amorites, I know that you are convinced how despicable those impotent idols are, whose worshippers you have subdued. Make your choice, however. Nothing should be more free than the preference given to a religion. But know, O Israelites! that the choice of Joshua no longer remains to be made; I and my house, I and all my family, if I am master of it, will serve the Lord; and will remain faithful to him even to death."

Ver. 16—18. *And the people answered*] The whole assembly, which represented the nation, cried out, *God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, &c.*—"Far be from us so abominable a thought! No; we acknowledge no other God than Jehovah, our Deliverer, our Benefactor, our Protector: our utmost desire is to worship and obey him."

Ver. 19. *And Joshua said unto the people, ye cannot serve the Lord, &c.*] These words may be understood two ways. 1. They may signify, "you will not serve the Lord; I foresee that ye will not keep your word:" in the same sense as it is said of Jesus Christ, that he could work no miracle at Nazareth, to express that he would not; or, as when he said to the Jews, *ye cannot bear my word; i. e. your prejudices and passions hinder you from desiring it.*

2. They may signify "the thing is difficult, it requires great courage, and will cost you more than you are aware, by reason of the temptations you will have to conquer in the attaining it." These two senses seem necessary to be united for the proper understanding of the passage. The intention of Joshua is certainly, not to insinuate to the Israelites that it will be impossible for them to serve God; for why then should he have exhorted them to serve him, as he had just done in ver. 14.? His design is evident: it is, to pique the zeal of the Israelites, to engage them seriously to reflect on what they promised, and to stimulate their protestations of fidelity, by seeming to doubt the sincerity of them: as if he had said, "You promise to serve God; but can you do so, whose inclinations to idolatry are so strong? And will you be firm and courageous enough to persevere sincerely in the desire so to do?"

*For he is an holy God; he is a jealous God, &c.*] As he has no equal, neither can he suffer a rival. To pay to idols that worship which he only deserves, or even to associate them with the homage which is paid to him, is to contest with him, to take from him a part of that perfect holiness which constitutes his glory, and is what the Scripture calls *profaning* his holy name. See Mede's Discourses, b. i. disc. 2.

Ver. 21, 22. *And the people said—nay, but we will serve the Lord, &c.*] To these fresh protestations of fidelity on the part of the whole assembly, Joshua replies, that he receives them as a holy and solemn declaration, which, thus publicly and deliberately made, will for ever witness against the Israelites, and condemn them if they become unfaithful to the Lord. In answer to this, they again express their consent, that if they ever forsake Jehovah their words may bear testimony against them. Thus we have a sacred renewal, an authentic confirmation of the covenant into which their forefathers had entered with God, as their king, Exod. xii. and xxiv.; a covenant, which, after this, they could not again infringe, without being in the highest degree guilty of perjury.

Ver.

23 Now therefore put away, *said he*, the strange gods which *are* among you, and incline your heart unto the LORD God of Israel.

24 And the people said unto Joshua, The LORD our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey.

25 So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.

26 ¶ And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak, that *was* by the sanctuary of the LORD.

27 And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the LORD which he spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God.

*Ver. 23. Now, therefore, put away—the strange gods.]* See ver. 14. All this evidently shews, that Joshua was a prophet, that he could penetrate the secret intentions of the Israelites, and was certain of their propensity to idolatry. Publicly they worshipped only the true God, but in secret they had their *penates* (as the Romans termed them), their household gods; idols which they worshipped clandestinely, *teraphim*, little statues, magical rings, and other such instruments of superstition. See Spencer de Leg. Heb. lib. iii. dissert. 1. cap. 3. Of these we have more than once had occasion to speak.

*Ver. 25. So Joshua made a covenant with the people, &c.]* The Israelites having a third time repeated that they were resolved only to serve the Lord, and being thereby bound more strictly than ever to obey him, Joshua, in order to bind, in the most indissoluble manner, those ties whercon their happiness depended, proposes to them a solemn renewal of the covenant which they had made first by the ministry of Moses, and afterwards by his own; in consequence of which, the Israelites rigorously swore to worship only the Lord, and to obey only his laws; while on his part, by the mouth of Joshua, God promises to continue the constant protector and benefactor of their nation. Most interpreters are of opinion, from the latter clause, that Joshua read to the Israelites the conditions and laws of the covenant, to which they assented. But it may also signify, that he gave to whatever had been concluded upon, all the force of a perpetual law, and an irrevocable ordinance, which was afterwards called *the covenant of Shechem*; inasmuch as there the Israelites had renewed their profession of an inviolable attachment to the Lord.

*Ver. 26. And Joshua wrote these words in the book, &c.]* To perpetuate the memory of this renewal of the covenant; to convince the Israelites of the reverence due to that obligation which they had assembled to enforce; and to leave such an immortal testimony as might witness against them for the Lord, in case they forsook his holy religion; Joshua caused a particular account of all that had passed to be written down, and added to the *book of the law* which Moses had ordered to be kept in the side of the ark. Deut. xxxi. 26. Possibly, he caused a copy of it to be transcribed at the same time into the *book of the law* which was to remain in the hands of the princes of Israel for the use of the tribes, ch. xvii. 18. To this monument Joshua added a second, to eternize the remembrance of the covenant renewed. He set up a great stone under an oak; and in all probability ordered an inscription to be engraven thereon, referring to the august solemnity, the memory of which he was desirous to perpetuate. People, from the earliest ages of the world,

used to rear stones for the like purpose in the case of important events. We find an instance of it in the history of Jacob, Gen. xxviii. 18. and another in the history of Joshua himself, ch. vi. 3. 20, 21. But what *sanctuary of the Lord* was this, placed by, or under an oak? The learned Mede answers, it certainly could not be the tabernacle, by reason of the laws specified so particularly Deut. xvi. 21, 22. and which are too positive for Joshua to have thought of controverting them by placing the tabernacle near an oak, and by setting up by it a pillar or monument of stone. The question then is, to know whether these laws (calculated to divert the Israelites from the delusions of the Gentiles, who thought that the Deity dwelt in forests, and who consequently revered the places where the ark had a settled residence) concerned also those places in which the ark was but occasionally deposited, and for a very little while? Be this as it may, our able critic concludes from these laws, that the *sanctuary* here mentioned was nothing more than an *oratory* or *house of prayer*, erected in this place by the Ephraimites; and he apprehends, that they had chosen this spot in preference to any other, as the place of their devotions, because there the Lord had appeared to Abraham, and promised to give the land of Canaan to his posterity. Our author goes on to say, that there were from all antiquity, besides the tabernacle, and, in later time, the temple, two sorts of buildings consecrated to religious worship; namely, *synagogues* in cities, and *oratories* in the fields; that the former were regular buildings, covered like houses at the top; but that the others were mere inclosures, commonly formed by trees, or under their shade. But for more on this subject we refer to Mede, b. i. dif. 18. observing, that, in the original, this is one of those transpositions familiar to the Hebrew language, and probably should be translated thus: *And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, which was in the sanctuary of the Lord: and he took a great stone and set it up there under an oak;* for an instance of such transposition, see Gen. xiii. 10. where, instead of translating, *and Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered, &c.—as thou comest unto Zoar;* it should evidently be translated, *and Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, as thou comest unto Zoar, that it was well watered, &c.* See Kennicott's Dissert. vol. ii.

*Ver. 27. For it hath heard all the words, &c.]* “If ever you so far forget yourselves, as to act as if you had not this day chosen the Lord for your God, this stone shall convince you of falsehood, and shall witness as strongly against you, as if it had heard all that I have been saying to you, and all that you have replied in answer; and had assumed

28 So Joshua let the people depart, every man unto his inheritance.

29 ¶ And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, *being* an hundred and ten years old.

30 And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-*serah*, which *is* in mount Ephraim, on the north side of the hill of Gaash.

31 And Israel served the LORD all the days

of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the LORD, that he had done for Israel.

32 ¶ And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for an hundred pieces of silver: and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph.

“assumed a voice to contradict you to your face.” How strongly figurative soever this discourse may appear, it is not too much so for the taste of the orientals, with whom it is common to give sentiments to the most insensible creatures, and, as it were, to animate all nature by their expressions. See for instance, Deut. iv. 26. xxxii. 1. Psal. xix. 1. Isai. i. 2. Jer. xxii. 29. Luke, xix. 40.

*Note;* (1.) If the service of God be not our deliberate choice, from conviction of its blessedness, and experience of its comfort, a constrained profession will last but a short time. (2.) Those who count the denial of their corrupt affections hard, and the restraints of religion burthen some, have already rejected the Lord from being their God. (3.) A good and great example is very influential. (4.) They, who resolve to serve God themselves, cannot but labour that all who are under their care may do so too. (5.) They, who are faithful to God, fear not to be singular, though all others are ashamed of his religion, or live a dishonour to it; their houses shall be the temples for daily prayer and praise, and their ways unconformed to the wicked world around them. (6.) We can never hesitate whose service to prefer, God or the world, Christ or Belial, if our minds are freed from the delusions of Satan, and the bias of corrupt affections.

*Ver. 29. And—after these things—Joshua—died*] Most probably within a short time after the holding of the assembly at Shechem. It is difficult to say positively how many years this great man governed the people of God in the land of Canaan. Some Jewish doctors say, that he lived *twenty-eight years* after the passage over Jordan; others confine his administration to *seven or eight*; some preserve a medium, and grant him *seventeen*. This, among others, is the opinion of Bonfrere, to whom we refer the reader.

*Ver. 30. And they buried him—in Timnath-serah*] This city, which he had built himself, and which had been assigned him by the nation, is elsewhere called *Timnath-heres*; or, *the rest of the sun*, Judg. ii. 9. This name, if we are to believe the Jews, was given it on account of an image of the sun engraved on Joshua's tomb, in memory of that famous day in which he stopped the sun, in his course, in order to finish the defeat of the Canaanitish kings. See Hottinger, in *Cippi. Heb.* p. 32. and in *Smegma Orientale*, c. viii. p. 523. Thus, in after-times, according to Cicero, the sepulchre of Archimedes was adorned with a sphere and a cylinder. Eusebius says, that the tomb of Joshua was to be seen in his time near *Thamna*; and Brochard

informs us, that there was, in the mountain of Leopards, (Cant. iv. 8.) a cavern twenty-six feet long, into which the Saracens were used to go, in memory of this holy man. *Gaash* is thought to have been a part of mount Ephraim, and to have faced *Timnath-serah* on the south.

*Ver. 31. And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua*] So long as this pious general was at the head of the people of Israel, idolatry durst not shew itself, and the Israelites in public adored only the true God. Moses did not enjoy the like happiness. Every one knows what a disturbance that depraved taste which the Hebrews had imbibed for idolatry in Egypt, produced in the affair of the golden calf: God, however, remedied it, by condemning the offenders to wander forty years in that wilderness, where, according to St. Chrysostom, all those perished who had been witnesses of that horrible apostacy; that thus there might remain no one among them capable of teaching them again so atrocious a kind of impiety. See Vitæ Monastic. Vitup. lib. 1.

*Ver. 32. And the bones of Joseph—buried they in Shechem*] See Gen. i. 25. Some are of opinion, that Joshua performed this duty soon after the passage over Jordan, immediately after he had built the altar on mount Ebal, near Shechem. Others think that it was not done till the peace which followed the conquest of the land of Canaan. They all conclude, that Joshua would not have longer deferred paying to the patriarch Joseph an honour so frequently enjoined. The reason; say they, that no mention of the ceremony occurs before, is, that it was thought proper to collect together, in this concluding passage, what respected the funerals of three great men. But there seems no difficulty in supposing Joshua to have discharged himself of this tribute to the remains of Joseph in the great assembly of the nation at Shechem. We might even suppose, that it was the design of interring the bones of that patriarch with greater solemnity, which determined Joshua to convene that assembly there, rather than at Shiloh.

*In a parcel of ground which Jacob bought, &c.*] See Gen. xxiii. 16. xxxiii. 18, 19. xlviii. 22. and i. 25. Joseph was not interred in Shechem, but, according to the ancient custom, in a field adjoining. Probably, the other children of Jacob received the like honour, each tribe taking care to bury its ancestor, either at *Machpelah*, or elsewhere, in the land of Canaan. Josephus asserts that it was so, upon the credit of an ancient tradition, Hist. Jud. l. ii. c. 4; and St. Stephen confirms the relation, Acts, vii. 16.

*Ver.*

33 ¶ And Eleazar the son of Aaron died ; Phinehas his son, which was given him in  
and they buried him in a hill that pertained to mount Ephraim.

*Ver. 33. And Eleazar—died]* This event, probably, happened soon after the death of Joshua. The *Samaritan Chronicle* says, that Eleazar called together the elders and heads of the people before his death ; and that after having exhorted them to piety, he stripped himself of his vestments, and put them upon Phinehas, his son and successor. We have no proof of this circumstance, but it is very probable.

*And they buried him in a hill that pertained to Phinehas his son]* A little hillock, or, according to some, a town : it may be rendered, agreeable to the Vulgate, LXX, and Jonathan, *they buried him in Gibeah of Phinehas ; this town, or hillock, went by the name of Phinehas, according to the custom in those times of giving the name of the eldest in a family to the possessions which belonged to it.*

*Which was given him in mount Ephraim.]* The Hebrew is doubtful. It does not immediately appear to whom this hill was given, whether to Eleazar or Phinehas : most probably it was to Eleazar ; that, as being the high-priest, he might reside nearer to Shiloh, where the tabernacle was erected, and as all the cities assigned to the priests were in the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Simeon, except one only, which lay in the tribe of Ephraim. See ch. xxi. 9. 17. 19. But against this there is one great objection ; namely, that the priests and Levites certainly received no portion on the division of the land : and therefore the Jews, to obviate this difficulty, are of opinion, that Eleazar, or Phinehas, held this estate in right of his wife as her dowry. See Selden de Success. Heb. c. 18. Grotius is of this opinion likewise ; and he produces a similar example from 1 Chron. ii. 21—23. But to this Masius replies, that heiresses could not marry out of their tribe, (Numb. xxxvi. 8.) whence he concludes, that the present inheritance had been an extraordinary gift to Eleazar out of respect to him, and to accommodate him more conveniently within reach of Joshua and the tabernacle. The chief-priest, it seems, might receive this distinction, without any infringement of the general law respecting the other ministers at the altar. See Calmet and Le Clerc. To the end of this chapter the LXX add: *And the children of Israel took the ark, and carried it about among them ; and Phinehas was high-priest till he died ; and they buried him in his own hill : and the children of Israel went to their homes. And they fell to worshipping Astarte and Ashtaroth : and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Eglon, king of Moab ; and he had the mastery over them eighteen years.*

REFLECTIONS.—We have the account of the death of Joshua and Eleazar, and the burying of the bones of Joseph. This is the end of all the glory of man ; and the best and greatest of God's saints are not exempt from the common lot of mortality.

1. Joshua's death and burial : soon after he had finished his work, he went to receive his everlasting reward, in a better inheritance than he left at Timnath-erah. He was a hundred and ten years old, and through life had approved himself a faithful servant, of which God bears him honourable testimony : his sepulchre was in Gaash, in a field of his own ; for then the public places of assembly, or the

house of God, were thought unfit receptacles of the corpses even of the blessed. Pity it is, that worse customs have since obtained.

2. Eleazar quickly followed Joshua ; one loss seldom comes alone.

3. As long as these worthies and their cotemporaries lived, who had seen God's wonders, religion flourished among the people ; but their sad decays will shortly appear : so much are good ministers missed, and so common is it to see the most flourishing congregations moulder away when their pastors are departed. But the residue of the Spirit is with our divine Joshua ; and though one people, or congregation, turn from him, he will revive his work in another, and never want a spiritual seed and a visible church upon earth.

N. B. The last five verses of this chapter are certainly written by a hand subsequent to Joshua. Perhaps Samuel, desirous of bringing down the thread of the history uninterrupted from Joshua to his own time, might think proper to make the addition, after having, in like manner, completed the Pentateuch by the order and under the direction of God. See on Deut. xxxiv. 1. This, however, is no argument that Joshua did not write the present book, any more than that Moses did not write the Pentateuch, because the like account given of his death and burial, in the conclusion of it, is given by another hand.

*Reflections on the Life and Character of Joshua.*

The names of Joshua and Jesus are scarcely more like, than their achievements. This captain, so famous in the sacred history, was nominated to be the successor of Moses, and ordained to this high post by God's command, in the presence of all the congregation of Israel. He received the name of Joshua before, when sent to spy out the land, his former name being Oshea ; and he is the first of the typical persons who was called by the very name, by which, in future ages, a greater Saviour than he was commonly known. Perhaps it was not without its meaning, that he was the servant before he was the successor of Moses ; for it might signify, that our Jesus was first to become the servant of the law, before he should abolish it. But passing this, let us take a more particular retrospect of the most memorable passages of his marvellous campaign.

The first thing that presents itself to our view is, his passing the Jordan, which was miraculously driven back, to afford a safe passage to the chosen people. In this river God was pleased, for the first time, to magnify his servant Joshua in the sight of all the tribes of Israel ; and in this river it pleased God to give the first and most public testimony to Jesus Christ, when the heavens seemed to open at his baptism, and the Holy Ghost descended in the likeness of a dove, and a voice from the excellent glory proclaimed his high character. But the chief thing to be observed here is, the resemblance between the passage of Israel over Jordan into the promised land, under the conduct of Joshua, and the passage of all the redeemed, through death, into the heavenly inheritance. Long had they traversed the vast and howling wilderness.



wilderness, the haunt of ravenous beasts and poisonous serpents, where their hearts, many a time, were like to faint for thirst and hunger; but now the land flowing with milk and honey receives them, and their wanderings in the pathless desert are for ever ended. Though Jordan overflows his banks, their march is not obstructed. O powerful presence of JEHOVAH! "The sea saw it, and fled, and Jordan was driven back." Pf. cxiv. 3. And now that they have taken their farewell of the dreary wilderness, we hear no more of the miraculous cloud which conducted them, nor of the manna which fed them forty years. Such is the safety of all true Israelites, when marching to their promised rest, under the conduct of the Captain of their salvation. Death is the Jordan through which they pass from the wilderness of this world into the blissful regions of immortality. But when they pass through these waters, they shall not overflow them; for he who dries up the waters of the sea by his rebuke, will be graciously present with them, till they gain the safe shore of Immanuel's land. Then shall the ordinances be discontinued, and the Bible superseded, which are so necessary in their wandering state to support their lives, and guide their paths; as the cloud vanished, and the manna ceased to fall, when the fine wheat of Canaan supplied the Israelites with food, according to the promise. It is not Moses, but Joshua, who leads through Jordan. Jesus, thou art the only conqueror of death. What will they do when they come to the swellings of Jordan, who are not under thy auspicious conduct? Thanks be to God, who giveth us this victory over death, not through Moses, or the law, but through Jesus Christ our Lord!

From the banks of Jordan, let us now come to the walls of Jericho, the accursed city. Never was town or garrison besieged in such a manner before or since. No mounts are raised; no battering rams are applied to the walls; no attempts are made to sap the foundations; but, by the direction of the Lord of hosts, the army marches in silent parade round the walls. Their martial music is not the sound of their silver trumpets, but of rams-horns blown by their priests. Ridiculous, weak, and foolish, as this new method of assault might seem to the unbelieving sinners of Jericho, they soon found that the weakness of God is stronger than men, and that the most contemptible means, when God ordains them, shall gain their end, in spite of all opposition. "What ailed thee, O sea, that thou fleddest? Jordan, that thou wast driven back?" Pf. cxiv. 5. and ye walls of Jericho, that ye fell flat to the ground, when compassed seven days? It was not owing to the sword of Israel, nor even to the sound of the trumpets; but to the power of Israel's God accompanying this feeble means, prescribed for the trial of their faith and proof of their obedience. For, O the power of faith! had their walls threatened the clouds, and been harder than adamant, firmer than brass, down must they tumble on the evening of the seventh day. Thus are the strong holds of sin, and every high thing that exalts itself against the New Testament Joshua, cast down by the mighty weapons of the Christian warfare, which are not carnal. The feeble voice of the gospel, when faithfully preached, though not with a silver sound, or with excellency of speech, shall be mighty, through God, to triumph over all opposition: so it was in the days of the apostles; so it has been in every distant age;

and so it shall be till the victory is complete. Thus, Babylon, shall thy proud towers be levelled with the ground, though seemingly fearless of assault. "For the day of the Lord shall be on every high wall, and on every one that is proud and lifted up." If. ii. 12. Though the kings of the earth should give their strength to the beast, our Joshua shall prevail by the foolishness of preaching, and the sound of the gospel trumpet; and at the appointed time the strong-armed angel shall cry, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen." Rev. xiv. 18.

The saving of Rahab and her household is the next remarkable occurrence. Who would have expected to find, in this city of destruction, even a strong believer, whose faith should be celebrated by one apostle, and her works by another, and who should also have the honour to make one of the illustrious line from whence the Messiah should arise? But so it was. Though once a notorious sinner, and called *Rahab the harlot* to this day, yet she was a believer of the promise that God made to Israel, and proved by her works that her faith was genuine; for, protecting the messengers of Joshua at the hazard of her life, she preferred the interests of the church of God to those of her country, which she very well knew could not be saved. Though we can by no means justify the dissimulation by which she saved the spies from the pursuivants of the king of Jericho, yet, as God has forgiven her for being once a harlot and a liar, so must we also forgive those blameable parts of her conduct, of which she has long since truly repented. Well does Joshua answer his name, in saving not the race of Israel only, but Rahab, though a cursed Canaanite, with all her household, though sinners of the Gentiles. Was it not a dark prelude of Jesus Christ, our better Joshua, of his saving the Gentile world from the wrath to come, as well as the preserved of Jacob? Might it not portend, that publicans and harlots, and such notorious sinners, should be received among the first into his heavenly kingdom? and that the harlot Gentiles, who formerly were serving divers lusts, and living in the most abominable idolatries, should be incorporated into the holy society of the church, and espoused as a chaste bride to Jesus Christ, as Rahab became a proselyte to the Jewish religion, and the wife of Naasson an illustrious prince in the chief of their tribes? Perhaps the scarlet thread, which, at the direction of the spies, she hung forth out of her window, as a discriminating signal, by which all under her roof were exempted from the dismal desolation; perhaps, I say, this might be an intimation, though a very obscure one, that the shedding of Christ's red blood should prove the means of salvation to the Gentile world, and of making peace between the Jews and them, who were formerly at variance, and harboured mutual hatred. Red was the colour of salvation to Israel in Egypt, when the sprinkling their doors with blood protected them from the destroying angel's word; and red is the colour of salvation to Rahab in Canaan, when the hanging a scarlet thread over her windows was her security from the destroying sword of Israel. Happy they who have the blood of Christ upon them, not for destruction, (as the Jews who murdered him, and imprecated this dreadful vengeance on themselves, and their posterity,) but for salvation, as all have who believe. Rahab's safety was confirmed by the oath of men; but theirs by the oath of God, for whom it is impossible

possible to lie. Destruction approaches not those doors, death enters not those windows where the blood of Christ is found.

In vain did the kings of Canaan conspire to oppose the victorious Joshua after the destruction of Jericho; for at last he bids his captains set their feet upon the necks of the hostile princes, in token of full conquest. Nor was it strange that he should be able to do this, when the very heavens befriended them, by casting down prodigious hailstones to kill his flying enemies; and their most glorious luminaries, the sun and moon were obedient to his voice, and stood still in their habitation, till the vengeance written was executed upon the devoted nations. Such is that complete victory over all the enemies of God and his people, which he shall gain who goes forth conquering, and to conquer! It is the distinguished honour of all the faithful soldiers of Christ, to tread upon the devil, the world, and

the lusts of the flesh. These are the dragons and the lions which they trample under their feet; these are the kings that they bind with chains; these are the nations that they shall dash in pieces, as a potter's vessel with a rod of iron. And a time is coming, when the upright shall have dominion over the wicked; for so is his will, whom not only the sun and moon, but all the numerous hosts of heaven and earth obey.

At last, the favoured nation of the Jews are brought into their promised rest, under the conduct of their valiant general. He puts them in quiet possession of that happy country which he had before spied out for them. This Moses could not do. So Jesus Christ has introduced us, not into a temporal rest, like thine, O Joshua, but into a spiritual and eternal rest, an incorruptible and undefiled inheritance, which the law could not do, having become weak through the flesh.

THE  
B O O K of J U D G E S.

THIS Book is called Shophtim, שׁוֹפְטִים Suffetes, which word signifies an avenger, a deliverer. See *Prideaux's Connect.* vol. i. p. 92. The book is generally divided into two parts; the first, comprising the history of the judges, from Othniel to Samson; the second, containing a narrative of several illustrious exploits, which happened in or about the time of the judges. It is not agreed who was the author of this book: the most probable opinion, and that which has the majority of critics on its side, is, that it was written by Samuel; but, for more on this subject, we refer to *Bishop Patrick and Calmet.*

C H A P. I.

*The tribe of Judah, having conquered Adoni-bezek, take Jerusalem, and Hebron, which is given to Caleb. Othniel takes the city of Kirjath-sepher. The other tribes spare the Canaanites, to their own disadvantage.*

**N**OW, after the death of Joshua, it came to pass, that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them?

2 And the LORD said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand.

3 And Judah said unto Simeon his brother,

Come up with me into my lot, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I likewise will go with thee into thy lot. So Simeon went with him.

4 And Judah went up; and the LORD delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand: and they slew of them in Bezek ten thousand men.

5 And they found Adoni-bezek in Bezek: and they fought against him, and they slew the Canaanites and the Perizzites.

6 But Adoni-bezek fled; and they pursued after him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs and his great toes.

7 And Adoni-bezek said, Threescore and

C H A P. I.

*Ver. 1. Now, after the death of Joshua, it came to pass*] It is related in this chapter, in what state each of the tribes was after Joshua was dead; and some things, by the way, are resumed which had happened before, and which we have read in the Book of Joshua; as the taking of the cities of Hebron and Kirjath-sepher, &c. It is not possible to fix the exact date of the war here narrated. It is most probable, that the Israelites did not think of attacking the Canaanites till some years after the death of Joshua, when those nations which they had imprudently spared began to get the upper hand. We should be cautious, however, not to place the event too far back, since Othniel, the first judge of the Israelites after the death of Joshua, had been advantageously spoken of during the life of that general. By the children of Israel's asking the Lord, is meant, the heads of the tribes applying to Phinchas, the high-priest,

to consult the Lord by Urim and Thummim. See *Lowman*, ch. ii.

*Ver. 2. Judah shall go up*] This was the most numerous and most valiant of the tribes, Gen. xlix. 8.; and is commanded to go up, says *Houbigant*, because those nations were to be subdued which were in the lot of this tribe, as appears from the third verse, *Come up to me into my lot.*

*Ver. 4. In Bezek*] *Bezek* was a city of the tribe of Judah, and is thought to have been at a small distance from Bethlehem and Jerusalem. See 1 Sam. xi. 8. and *Wells's Geogr.* vol. ii.

*Ver. 5. They found Adoni-bezek*] *Adoni* signifies Lord, or Master; so that *Adoni-bezek* was evidently the King, or Lord, of *Bezek*. See *Bochart's Hieroz.* pars i. lib. 2.

*Ver. 6. And Adoni-bezek fled*] It is evident, that after the battle the king shut himself up in *Bezek*; that then this place was besieged; that the two confederated tribes took it; but that *Adoni-bezek* having escaped thence; they sent

ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered *their meat* under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me. And they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died.

8 ¶ (Now the children of Judah had fought against Jerusalem, and had taken it, and smitten it with the edge of the sword, and set the city on fire.)

9 And afterward the children of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites, that dwelt in the mountain, and in the south, and in the valley.

10 ¶ And Judah went against the Canaanites that dwelt in Hebron: (now the name of Hebron before *was* Kirjath-arba:) and they slew Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmai.

11 ¶ And from thence he went against the inhabitants of Debir: and the name of Debir before *was* Kirjath-sepher:

12 And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife.

13 And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife.

14 And it came to pass, when she came to him, that she moved him to ask of her father

a field: and she lighted from off *her* ass; and Caleb said unto her, What wilt thou?

15 And she said unto him, Give me a blessing: for thou hast given me a south-land; give me also springs of water. And Caleb gave her the upper springs and the nether springs.

16 ¶ And the children of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, went up out of the city of palm-trees with the children of Judah into the wilderness of Judah, which *lieth* in the south of Arad; and they went and dwelt among the people.

17 ¶ And Judah went with Simeon his brother, and they slew the Canaanites that inhabited Zephath, and utterly destroyed it. And the name of the city was called Hormah.

18 Also Judah took Gaza with the coast thereof, and Askelon with the coast thereof, and Ekron with the coast thereof.

19 And the LORD was with Judah; and he drave out *the inhabitants* of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron.

20 And they gave Hebron unto Caleb, as Moses said: and he expelled thence the three sons of Anak.

21 ¶ And the children of Benjamin did

sent detachments after him, who overtook and brought him back to the camp of the conquerors; *and they cut off his thumbs, and his great toes.* This was but a just requital, as he himself acknowledged, of the barbarity that he had committed upon so many other princes. By treating Adonibezek thus, they disabled him from handling arms, or supporting himself in flight, two things essential in a warrior. This is not an unknown punishment in prophane history; for Ælian, in his Hist. Var. lib. ii. c. 9. relates, that the Athenians cut off the thumbs of the inhabitants of the island of Egina, that those islanders might not dispute with them the empire of the sea.

*Ver. 8. Now the children of Judah had fought against Jerusalem, &c.]* The strong fortrefs on mount Sion continued in the hands of the Jebusites till the time of David. See Joseph. Hist. b. vi. c. 7.

*Note;* (1.) God often repays the wicked in their own coin. (2.) The proudest are not too high for God to humble; let kings remember that they are in slippery places. (3.) When God's judgments awaken the conscience, we shall own his righteousness, and stand self-condemned before him.

*Ver. 10—15. And Judah went against the Canaanites]* See on Josh. xv. 18, 19. The expedition against Hebron

seems placed here by way of recapitulation, on account of the other conquests of the tribe of Judah. The whole of this passage, perhaps, had better be rendered in the plural; *Caleb had said, &c.*

*Ver. 16. The children of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law]* The Kenites descended from Jethro had followed the Israelites into the land of Canaan, and were at first settled near the City of Palms, which is commonly thought to be the same with Jericho, celebrated for its palm-trees. See Shaw, vol. ii. p. 68. and Numb. x. 29. *And they went and dwelt amongst the people,* might be rendered, perhaps, more properly, *and they went and continued with the people;* i. e. of Israel or Judah.

*Ver. 19. But could not drive out the inhabitants, &c.]* *But proceeded not to drive out, &c.* Jun. Tremel. Wat. This version gives us the true sense of the passage. We are not to suppose that chariots of iron rendered the inhabitants of the valley invincible to a people aided and protected by Almighty God; but only that these tribes, content with their former victories, and terrified at the formidable appearance of the enemy, wanted confidence in the Lord, and dared not to attack the Philistines; insomuch, that, being unworthy of God's succour, they were left to themselves, to their false policy and shameful timidity: and

hence,

not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem unto this day.

22 ¶ And the house of Joseph, they also went up against Beth-el; and the Lord was with them.

23 And the house of Joseph sent to descry Beth-el. (Now the name of the city before *was* Luz.)

24 And the spies saw a man come forth out of the city, and they said unto him, Shew us, we pray thee, the entrance into the city, and we will shew thee mercy.

25 And when he shewed them the entrance into the city, they smote the city with the edge of the sword; but they let go the man and all his family.

26 And the man went into the land of the Hittites, and built a city, and called the name thereof Luz: which *is* the name thereof unto this day.

27 ¶ Neither did Manasseh drive out *the inhabitants of* Beth-shean and her towns, nor Taanach and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Ibleam and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns: but the Canaanites would dwell in that land.

28 And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out.

29 ¶ Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer; but the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them.

30 ¶ Neither did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, nor the inhabitants of Nahalol; but the Canaanites dwelt among them, and became tributaries.

31 ¶ Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Accho, nor the inhabitants of Zidon, nor of Ahlab, nor of Achzib, nor of Helbah, nor of Aphek, nor of Rehob:

32 But the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: for they did not drive them out.

33 ¶ Neither did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Beth-sheMesh, nor the inhabitants of Beth-anath; but he dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: nevertheless, the inhabitants of Beth-sheMesh and of Beth-anath became tributaries unto them.

34 ¶ And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountain: for they would not suffer them to come down to the valley:

35 But the Amorites would dwell in mount Heres in Aijalon, and in Shaalvim: yet the hand of the house of Joseph prevailed, so that they became tributaries.

36 And the coast of the Amorites *was* from the going up to Akrabbim, from the rock, and upward.

hence, perhaps, they abandoned Gaza, Askelon, and Ekron, which they had before taken. See ch. iii. 3.

Note; (1.) They who do the work of the Lord unfaithfully will surely suffer for it. (2.) A favourable opportunity neglected can very rarely be recovered. (3.) Unbelief of God's promises is the cause of all our complaints.

Ver. 22. *The house of Joseph*] Instead of בית beth, house, the Cambridge Manuscript reads, *beni*, the children, which seems to be the better reading, as the context is, *and they ascended*, &c. The LXX and Arabick read *children*.

Ver. 26. *The man went into the land of the Hittites, and built a city, and called the name thereof Luz*] The land of the Hittites, probably, means some colony of that people settled in Syria or Arabia. The man, most likely, was himself a Hittite. His building a city is a certain proof that he was allowed to retire with his family and effects; and these circumstances respecting him appear to be related to do honour to his memory: for it is well known to have been the practice of all good writers to eternize the remembrance of the founders of cities. Bochart observes, that Luz had its name from the great plenty of *almonds* growing there.

Ver. 28. *They put the Canaanites to tribute*] Generally

speaking, nothing could have prevented the Israelites from extirpating these nations, and, indeed, nothing could have excused them from doing so: but, preferring present peace to the obedience which they owed to God, they contented themselves with receiving a tribute from them, soothing to their indolence, and requiring no warlike efforts on their part.

Ver. 29. *Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites*] So far from it, they suffered them to enjoy among them all the privileges of a free people, even as if they had been allied; which is the meaning of the expression, to dwell among them, see 2 Kings, iv. 13.

Ver. 36. *And the coast of the Amorites was from—the rock*] By *the rock*, the Vulgate understands the city of Petra, in the Hebrew סֶלַע selang, which stood upon the confines of Idumæa, and was the capital of Arabia Petrea; Amaziah called it *Jokbeel*, 2 Kings, xiv. 7. It is remarkable, that some of the old inhabitants continued there till after our Saviour's time. See Bishop Patrick.

From the whole we may observe, that sloth and covetousness, unbelief of God's power, and want of detestation of idolatry, were still too much rooted in this stiff-necked people; yet God wonderfully bore with them.

## C H A P. II.

*Joshua being dead, the Israelites revolt to strange gods: are oppressed by the Canaanites, and weep, being rebuked by an angel: God afterwards sendeth them judges, who subdue the Canaanites; but after their death the Israelites return to their wickedness, and are punished.*

[Before Christ 1432.]

**A**ND an angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you.

2 And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice:

## C H A P. II.

*Ver. 1. And an angel of the Lord*] This should be rendered, *and the angel of the Lord*; for it is plain beyond all controversy, from the context, that this angel was the great messenger of the covenant, the same who led the children of Israel out of Egypt, and concerning whom we have spoken so often in the foregoing notes. *He came up from Gilgal to Bochim.* Probably he had made his first appearance at *Gilgal*, and had there communicated to some persons of distinction his commission. *Bochim*, doubtless, means the same as *Shiloh*. The reason of the former name is given in *ver. 5*.

REFLECTIONS.—Such a glaring violation of the divine command as they had committed in their treatment of the Canaanites could not fail of a divine rebuke. Accordingly, when they were assembled, probably at one of the solemn feasts at Shiloh, God sends them a solemn message.

1. The person who brought it is called an angel of the Lord, the glorious angel of the covenant, the eternal Redeemer, Jesus the Son of God, who speaks in his own name. He came from Gilgal, in some glorious manner probably, which attracted their notice, and was the same person who had before appeared there to Joshua as the captain of the Lord's hosts.

His expostulation with them is sharp and pointed. He reminds them of his mercies in bringing them from Egypt; of his gracious covenant, which on his part had been, and would have been for ever, if they had been faithful, punctually fulfilled. He mentions the reasonable expectations he had, that they should comply with his orders in erasing every monument of idolatry, and utterly destroying the people. In direct opposition to which, they had spared the Canaanites, and connived at their worship; for all which they were without excuse. Therefore, as the just punishment of such neglect and disobedience, God will stay the current of their victories; will make those very sinners whom they have spared their scourge, and

why have ye done this?

3 Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you.

4 And it came to pass, when the angel of the LORD spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept.

5 And they called the name of that place Bochim: and they sacrificed there unto the LORD.

6 ¶ And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land.

7 And the people served the LORD all the

leave them to follow those gods whose altars they refused to destroy. *Note;* (1.) Sinners are without excuse. (2.) They who expect advantage from friendship with the enemies of God will be utterly deceived. (3.) Those corruptions to which we allow the lowest measure of indulgence will soon gain strength, and quickly prove our conquerors. (4.) They, who offend God by one sin, provoke him to give them up to a greater.

3. Struck with the alarming message, and confounded by the presence of their Lord, the tears of penitential sorrow burst from their eyes. They cried aloud for mercy, that they might avert the judgments which were threatened; offered sacrifices, that, by the blood of atonement they might obtain pardon of their sin; and called the name of the place Bochim, *weepers*, to perpetuate the memory of their humiliations. *Note;* (1.) They, who have felt the bitterness of sin, are no strangers to the tears of penitence. (2.) When God's word makes the heart tremble, there is hope; for to that man will God look. (3.) The sins that we lament we must reform, else our repentance will be hypocrisy. Many melt under the terrors of God's word, who quickly return to their iniquities, as the dog to his vomit. (4.) Not all our tears are available to wash away our sins; the blood of the Lamb which was slain is alone able to make us pure from our iniquity.

*Ver. 6—9. And when Joshua had let the people go*] This is an important passage, and by some interpreters misunderstood; they have fancied, that in it the historian continues the relation of what had happened since the death of Joshua: upon this foundation, Houbigant conceives that there is a transposition; and accordingly he begins this chapter with *verses 6, 7, 8, 9, 10*, following them with *verses 1, 2, 3, 4, 5*, and then goes on with *verse 11*; an alteration, for which, says Mr. Chais, there appears no necessity: the series of the chapter evidently destroys the supposition above advanced. The sacred writer, having just related the reproaches delivered by the angel of the Lord against the Israelites, would now shew his readers how and when

days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel.

8 And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, *being* an hundred and ten years old.

9 And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the mount

of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash.

10 ¶ And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.

11 And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim:

the nation had incurred those reproaches. To this end, he carries the matter as far back as possible; and first he ascends to that happy period when, Joshua having finished the division of the conquered country of the Canaanites, the Israelites went each to his inheritance and possessed it, and dwelt in the portion of the land which had fallen to his lot. This division was, in fact, the immediate work of Providence. Lots were cast before the Lord; he had presided over them, and, without doubt, Joshua, who had used such fine exhortations to the two tribes and a half beyond Jordan, when they set out to take possession of their territories, failed not strongly to recommend religion and obedience to the other tribes, on settling them in the lands which had been assigned to them; which he repeated before his death in the most affecting manner. See on Joshua, xxiv. All of them therefore, equally instructed, and impressed with gratitude, had entered upon their estates with intentions promising a constant fidelity. But the love of this world seduced them: they soon thought only of their private interest, how to extend and aggrandize themselves; and, speedily losing sight of the public good, shamefully neglected the sacred duties of religion. To make this more clear, it would be better to read the beginning of the 6th verse thus: *Now when Joshua had let, &c.*

*Ver. 10. And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers]* The sacred writer means evidently to speak not only of those of the Israelites who had seen the *works of God* in Ægypt, and in the wilderness, but those also who had seen the Jordan crossed over with dry feet, the walls of Jericho overthrown with the sound of the trumpet, the sun stopped at the command of Joshua, &c.; prodigies, the impression of which had powerfully attached them to the service of the Lord, and with them bound to him their cotemporaries. The generation immediately following that of Joshua was of quite another character than the foregoing. Solely occupied with the care of settling themselves, of building houses, planting vineyards, and improving their estates, these new Israelites were little, if at all, engaged in the care of knowing the Lord, or studying his religion. Not having been eye-witnesses of the wonders which the great God had wrought to deliver the nation, or to facilitate its conquest of the land of Canaan, they paid them but a superficial attention. We see them without scruple form the closest connections with the Canaanites, whom they had orders to destroy. In the midst of peace, prosperity intoxicated their hearts. It is commonly thus: the Greeks and Romans, each in their turn, fatally experienced the like. Happy the people who

are never reduced to the disgraceful necessity of applying to themselves the words of the famous Latin poet: *the evils we suffer are the fruit of a long peace!* Juven. Sat. vi. ver. 293.

*Ver. 11. And served Baalim]* The objects of false worship were called by the general name *Baalim*, or *Lords*; and indeed, as St. Paul remarks, the Pagans had *gods many and lords many*; the first and chief of which, and from whom the rest seem to have derived this name, was *Baal*, or the Lord, the Sun; as *Ashtaroth*, or *Astarte*, seems to have been the *Moon*; worshipped in different countries under the names *Juno*, and *Venus*, ver. 13.; see Selden de Diis Syr. et Vossius de Orig. et Prog. Idol. The reason why the Israelites so often lapsed into idolatry may easily be deduced from the common notion of *tutelary deities*, which they had imbibed during their residence in Ægypt, the fruitful parent of idolatry. One generally-received opinion was, that the peculiar or tutelar deity of any country could not be neglected without impiety, and that this impiety would certainly meet with punishment from the deity who was thus neglected. The Israelites therefore, unwilling to expose themselves to the vengeance which the tutelary deity was supposed to take on those who, inhabiting his land, yet slighted his worship; unwilling likewise to leave their paternal God, they incorporated the worship of both; and served not only the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but likewise the *Baalim*, or local tutelary deities of the countries wherein they were settled. In process of time, this weakness increased to such a degree, that the rights of the tutelary deity were acknowledged to be superior to those of the gentilitical god of the conquerors. This might arise from the common opinion, that the favours of the local deity were particularly attached and confined to one certain spot; or from an apprehension of the strength of the inhabitants among whom they were settled; who would not have endured to have their God slighted, without vindicating his honour, and endeavouring to extirpate the offenders. This piece of complaisance and condescension the Israelites seem to have been guilty of, when they are said "to have forsaken the Lord God of their fathers, and "to have followed other gods, the gods of the people that "were round about them." Their defection from the God of Israel did not, however, consist in rejecting Him as a false god, or in renouncing the law of Moses as a false religion; but only in joining foreign worship and idolatrous ceremonies to the ritual of the true God. The bias to the idolatries of Canaan was, a prevailing principle, that the tutelary god of the place should be worshipped by its inhabitants; and their motive for all other idolatries, a vain

12 And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that *were* round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger.

13 And they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroth.

14 ¶ And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies.

15 Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed.

16 ¶ Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them.

17 And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them:

they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; *but* they did not so.

18 And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: (for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them.)

19 And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, *that* they returned, and corrupted *themselves* more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way.

20 ¶ And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and he said, Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice;

21 I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died:

vain expectation of good from the guardian gods of famous and happy nations. Div. Leg. vol. iv. p. 44.

Ver. 16. *The Lord raised up judges*] The theocracy was at first administered by Moses and Joshua, who were expressly appointed by God himself, and acted as his deputies. When they were taken away by death, the same mode of government was continued; for God, as the King of the Israelites, expressly nominates the succeeding magistrates, which is implied in these words, *the Lord raised up judges*. Their principal employ was, to command the armies, as appears in this verse: beside which, they had the administration of justice; and, being the ministers of a theocracy, they endeavoured to prevent the spreading of idolatry, and to preserve the purity of religion, as appears from the next verse: *They would not hearken unto their judges, but went a whoring after other gods*. Some have supposed, that their office continued for life; others, that it lasted only so long as the occasion required, like the dictatorship at Rome. See Bertram on the Jewish Republic, chap. ix. and Bishop Patrick's Commentary.

Ver. 18. *For it repented the Lord, because of their groanings*] That is, the Lord acted as men do when they repent; he changed his conduct towards them. Seeing them afflicted for their offences, and returning to duty, he heard their voice, ch. iii. 9. 15.; He *broke* their chains, and restored them to liberty. See Gen. vi. 6.

Ver. 21. *I also will not henceforth drive out*] We have in these verses the great reason why the Lord did not wholly extirpate the people of Canaan. They were suffered to

remain, in punishment of his people's infidelity and disobedience, and to prove and exercise their faith in future.

REFLECTIONS.—We have here,

1. A recapitulation of what was mentioned before concerning the death and burial of Joshua, and the piety which was preserved in Israel during his life and the lives of the elders who survived him, who had seen God's almighty works. *Note*; The life and power of religion have seldom flourished in one place for more than one generation at a time.

2. The generation which arose after the elders were dead, greatly declined from their godly walk and conversation. They forgot the good instructions delivered to them, and, yielding themselves up to the indulgence of their appetites in that land of plenty, neglected God's worship, and, strange to tell! with base ingratitude, impious perfidy, and blind stupidity, went a whoring after dumb idols, and worshipped Baalam and Ashtaroth, the sun and the moon, and the hots of heaven. *Note*; (1.) Forgetfulness of God is the door at which every abomination enters. (2.) Nobody knows how brutish in sin he may become, if once given up to his own heart's lusts.

3. The anger of God was justly provoked by such abominations committed by a people so favoured. In just judgment, therefore, he gave them up into their enemies' hand; every where they were vanquished by those whom they had before enslaved, and forced to fly from those of whom



22 That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not.

23 Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out hastily; neither delivered he them into the hand of Joshua.

### C H A P. III.

*An account of the nations which were left to prove Israel; by communion with whom they commit idolatry, and are punished. Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar, are raised up to deliver them.*

[Before Christ 1394.]

**N**OW these *are* the nations which the LORD left, to prove Israel by them, (*even* as many of *Israel* as had not known all the wars of Canaan;

2 Only that the generations of the children of Israel might know, to teach them war, at

the least such as before knew nothing thereof;)

3 *Namely*, five lords of the Philistines, and all the Canaanites, and the Sidonians, and the Hivites that dwelt in mount Lebanon, from mount Baal-hermon unto the entering in of Hamath.

4 And they were to prove Israel by them, to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the LORD, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses.

5 ¶ And the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, Hittites, and Amorites, and Perizzites, and Hivites, and Jebusites:

6 And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods.

7 And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and forgot the LORD their God, and served Baalim and the groves.

whom one Israelite had chased a thousand. Thus spoiled, oppressed, and insulted by the meanest of the surrounding nations, they were distressed beyond measure, without power to help, or strength to relieve themselves. *Note;* (1.) They, who sell themselves to work wickedness, will find their plague in their sin. (2.) They who forsake God have only themselves to blame for the miseries which ensue.

4. In their state of helpless wretchedness God pitied them. Their groaning, though not so much the cry of sorrow for sin, as of anguish for suffering, came before him, and he repented him of the evil. Soon he changed his dispensations towards them; and, though he might justly have left them to perish in their iniquities, yet, as beloved for the father's sake, and for purposes of his own glory, he raised them up judges, men extraordinarily qualified to deliver them from their oppressors, and recover them from their backslidings. With these God vouchsafed his presence, blessing their labours, and giving success to their undertakings. *Note;* (1.) In the Church's great distress and degeneracy, God does usually raise up some teachers eminently qualified, and as eminently zealous for his service, and the salvation of men's souls. (2.) Whom God calls to his work, he will distinguish with his blessing.

5. Many, it should seem the most of them, under mercies as well as judgments, continued as impenitent as ever: even during the administration of the judges they were refractory, would not hearken to their reproofs, nor be guided by their counsels; and if, for a moment, they seemed to relent, they turned quickly again to their old evil ways. Their reformation vanished as the early cloud, and as the morning dew. At farthest, at the judge's death the nation with a general revolt returned to their former abo-

minations, and grew worse and worse, more deeply sunk in idolatry, which is spiritual adultery, and more brutish and barbarous in the worship of their strange gods. *Note;* (1.) They, who are not converted by the word of God, are hardened under it. (2.) They, who apostatize from the profession of religion that they have made, usually grow more abandoned than any others.

### C H A P. III.

*Ver. 2. Only that the generations of the children of Israel]* The sacred writer having declared in the former verse the reason why certain of the Canaanites were left, namely, to prove the Israelites; and also who of the Israelites were thus to be proved, namely, that generation which was born after the taking of Palestine; proceeds in the present verse to give another reason why the Canaanites were spared. The verse would be better rendered thus, after Houbigant: *and by this means it came to pass that that generation of the children of Israel might learn war, because they had before known nothing thereof.* Had no enemies remained, the children of Israel would have given themselves up wholly to the arts of peace, and would have totally forgotten the art of war: but thus they were taught to neglect nothing necessary for their defence; happy had they not neglected what was of the greatest consequence, their allegiance to the Lord of Hosts.

*Ver. 5—7. And the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, &c.]* We learn from these verses, that the children of Israel offended in three particulars: *First*, In suffering to remain among them that people whom they ought to have destroyed. *Secondly*, In contracting alliances with them, contrary to the express prohibition of the Lord, Deut. vii. 3, &c. *And thirdly*, In worshipping their idols. The words *Baalim, and the groves*, undoubtedly mean

8 ¶ Therefore the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Chushan-rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia: and the children of Israel served Chushan-rishathaim eight years.

9 And when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, *even* Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.

10 And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to

war: and the LORD delivered Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed against Chushan-rishathaim.

11 And the land had rest forty years; and Othniel the son of Kenaz died.

12 ¶ And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the LORD.

13 And he gathered unto him the children

mean the same, as *Baal* and *Astaroth*, in the 13th verse of the former chapter. We have frequently had occasion to remark, that the ancient idolaters worshipped their Baalim in groves: but it seems very probable, that the word rendered *groves* should be differently rendered; for the *groves* were not worshipped, but the *gods* to whom the groves were consecrated. By the addition of a single letter, the Hebrew word will be *Astharoth*, as Houbigant very ingeniously remarks; and accordingly the greatest part of the versions render it so.

REFLECTIONS.—We have here the sad account of Israel's apostasy from God, by means of the Canaanites, who were left to prove them, whether they would continue faithful, and to keep the rising generation from that effeminacy which ease and affluence might produce. The five lords of the Philistines stood firm, and again recovered those three cities which had been taken. The northern Canaanites, Zidonians, and Hivites, in mount Lebanon, kept their possessions; whilst, in every part of the country, there continued multitudes of the devoted nations, whom Israel, through sloth and covetousness, had spared, and suffered still to dwell among them. With these they soon mixed, joined in marriages, and, as the consequence thereof, followed after their idols, worshipped *Baalim*, and the groves, i. e. the idols which were placed there, and forgot God. *Note*; (1.) A wife of the daughters of Canaan is the most dangerous snare that the devil can put in the way of God's Israel. (2.) Forgetfulness of God is a besetting sin; and when he is forgotten, the reins are let loose upon the neck of every lust.

*Ver. 8. Chushan-rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia*] King of Mesopotamia, appears to be the interpretation of *Chushan-rishathaim*. Mesopotamia was situated between the Tigris and Euphrates, and thence had its name [between the rivers]: the Assyrians or Syrians were the inhabitants; and, instigated either by hatred or ambition, they passed the Euphrates, and fell upon the Israelites. We have very little light from prophane history concerning this king. He made the children of Israel tributary for eight years, which is the meaning of the word *served* in this place. Their subjection, says Calmet, consisted in paying a tribute; or, to speak in the style of Scripture, in making presents and rendering services to the king of Mesopotamia.

*Ver. 10. And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him*] He

was moved by an extraordinary impulse from God to take upon him the government of the people; which none dared to do, unless appointed by God himself, who was the King of the nation. Josephus says, that God appeared to Othniel, so that he could not doubt of the divinity of his mission. The Chaldee Paraphrast seems to favour this opinion; for he says, that *the spirit of prophecy was upon Othniel*. Doubtless he, as well as the other judges, had not only an inward incitement to undertake the deliverance of God's people, but was likewise endowed with an extraordinary degree of courage and conduct. Respecting the chronological difficulties arising from the words in the 11th verse, we refer to Bishop Usher.

REFLECTIONS.—The children of Israel are scarcely settled before they forget God, and turn aside after idols; but their sufferings follow quick on their sins. We have here.

1. Their distress. Because they sold themselves to work wickedness, God sold them into the hand of the king of Mesopotamia. *Note*; If our troubles be even long or heavy, they are yet less than our iniquities deserve.

2. They who forget God in prosperity cry to him in their distress. It is by affliction that God usually brings home to him his back-sliding Israel. No doubt, they cried long and often before the mercy came, God exercising their faith and patience by keeping them for eight years waiting for the mercy. *Note*; We must always pray, and not faint. Though we do not always succeed at first; yet, if we persevere, we are sure not to be disappointed at last.

3. God heard and answered their prayer. Othniel, Caleb's son-in-law, whose valour was before recorded, is raised up for their deliverer. The Spirit of God moving him to undertake their work, and assisting him in the accomplishment of the undertaking, he judged Israel, re-proved them for their iniquities, and brought them back to the worship of the true God; and under his hand the power of their oppressors was broken, and they had rest forty years. *Note*; (1.) There is a Saviour at hand for those who groan under the burden of sin. (2.) If we would have Christ to deliver us from outward troubles, be it our care to put away inward iniquity. (3.) They, who have Christ for their Saviour, shall find a longer rest than forty years, even to the years of eternity.

*Ver. 12. Strengthened Eglon*] It is the opinion of many commentators, that Eglon was the successor of Balak. As the

of Ammon and Amalek, and went and smote Israel, and possessed the city of palm-trees.

14 So the children of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years.

15 But when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised them up a deliverer, Ehud the son of Gera, a Benjamite, a man left-handed: and by him the children of Israel sent a present unto Eglon the king of Moab.

16 But Ehud made him a dagger which had two edges, of a cubit length; and he did gird it under his raiment upon his right thigh.

17 And he brought the present unto Eglon

king of Moab: and Eglon *was* a very fat man.

18 And when he had made an end to offer the present, he sent away the people that bare the present.

19 But he himself turned again from the quarries that *were* by Gilgal, and said, I have a secret errand unto thee, O king: who said, Keep silence. And all that stood by him went out from him.

20 And Ehud came unto him; and he was sitting in a summer-parlour, which he had for himself alone. And Ehud said, I have a message from God unto thee. And he arose out of *his* seat.

the Israelites were so prone to worship the gods of the people round about them, God, in just punishment of their offences, armed those very people against them. The sacred writer says, that God *strengthened the king of Moab*, to shew that he gave success to his enterprize against the Israelites.

*Ver. 15. Ehud—a man left-handed*] Mr. Saurin has taken great pains to shew that this expression signifies a man who was *ambidexter*, i. e. one who could use his left hand as well as his right; and what would lead one very much to prefer this interpretation is, that the same quality is ascribed to seven hundred chosen men of the tribe of Benjamin, chap. xx. 16. all of whom one can hardly believe to have had no use of their right hand, as some interpreters suppose was the case with Ehud. But indeed, from 1 Chron. xii. 2., Mr. Saurin's interpretation seems perfectly justified; for it is there said of the Benjamites, that *they were armed with bows, and could use both the right hand and the left*. The Vulgate renders it here, *who used both his hands for a right hand*; and the LXX, *who could use both his hands alike*. This qualification is often spoken of by the heathen poets as possessed by their heroes. See Iliad, book vii. ver. 237.

*Ver. 17. Eglon was a very fat man*] The LXX render it, *a very polite man*; with a view probably to account for the civility wherewith this prince admitted Ehud to an audience: but our translation is more agreeable to the Hebrew, as well as to the context. See ver. 22.

*Ver. 18. When he had made an end to offer the present*] There is often in the Eastern countries, says the author of the *Observations*, a great deal of pomp and parade in presenting their gifts; and that not only when they are presented to princes or governors of provinces, but where they are of a more private nature. Thus Dr. Russell tells us, that the money which the bridegrooms of Aleppo pay for their brides is laid out in furniture for a chamber, in clothes, jewels, or ornaments of gold for the bride, whose father makes some addition, according to his circumstances; which things are sent with great pomp to the bridegroom's house three days before the wedding. The like arrangement obtains in Egypt, where these gifts are carried with great pomp to the bridegroom's house on the

marriage-day itself, and immediately before the bride: carpets, cushions, mattresses, coverlets, *pignates*, dishes, jewels, trinkets, plate, every thing down to the wooden sandals wrought with mother of pearl, which they call *cobeal*; and, through ostentation, they never fail to load upon four or five horses what might easily be carried by one. In like manner, as to the jewels and other things of value, they place in fifteen dishes what a single plate would very well hold. See Maillet, let. x. p. 86. Something of this pomp seems to be referred to in this place, where we read of *making an end of offering a present*, and of a number of people who bare it; all which apparently points out the introducing, with great distinction as well as ceremony, every part of the present sent to Eglon, and the making use of as many hands in it as might be, conformably to the modern ritual of the Eastern courts. See 2 Kings, viii. 9.

*Ver. 19. The quarries that were by Gilgal*] Both here, and in the 26th verse, says Houbigant, we take the word פסילים *psilim*, rendered quarries, for the name of a place. The Vulgate and LXX render it graven images, which some suppose were erected here by the Moabites. The phrase *keep silence* means, that Ehud should awhile refrain from speaking, until the princes of the court were retired. It is in the Syriac, the king said, *Do ye withdraw*; and they that were present withdrew.

*Ver. 20. In a summer parlour*] Beside the platforms which were upon the ancient houses of the East, and which are found there to this day, it is probable that heretofore, as well as at present, most of the great houses had a smaller one annexed, which seldom consisted of more than one or two rooms and a terrace; others, built as they frequently are over the porch or gateway, have, if we except the ground-floor, all the conveniences belonging to the house properly so called. There is a door of communication from them into the gallery of the house, kept open or shut at the discretion of the master of the family; besides another door, which opens immediately from a privy flight of stairs, down into the porch or street, without giving the least disturbance to the house. In these back houses strangers are usually lodged and entertained: hither the men are wont to retire from the hurry and noise of their families, to be more at leisure for meditation or

diversions;

21 And Ehud put forth his left hand, and took the dagger from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly.

22 And the haft also went in after the blade; and the fat closed upon the blade, so that he could not draw the dagger out of his belly; and the dirt came out.

23 Then Ehud went forth through the porch, and shut the doors of the parlour upon him, and locked them.

24 When he was gone out, his servants came; and when they saw that, behold, the doors of the parlour *were* locked, they said, Surely he covereth his feet in his summer-chamber.

25 And they tarried till they were ashamed: and, behold, he opened not the doors of the parlour; therefore they took a key, and opened *them*: and, behold, their lord *was* fallen down dead on the earth.

26 And Ehud escaped while they tarried, and passed beyond the quarries, and escaped unto Seirath.

27 And it came to pass, when he was come, that he blew a trumpet in the mountain of Ephraim, and the children of Israel went down with him from the mount, and he before them.

28 And he said unto them, Follow after me: for the LORD hath delivered your enemies the Moabites into your hand. And they went down after him, and took the fords of Jordan toward Moab, and suffered not a man to pass over.

29 And they slew of Moab at that time about ten thousand men, all lusty, and all men of valour; and there escaped not a man.

30 So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest fourscore years.

diversions; and they are often used for wardrobes and magazines. The Arabs call these houses *oleah*, which exactly answers to the Hebrew word עֲלִיָּה *alyiah*, found in this place; and, without doubt, such was the apartment wherein Eglon received Ehud; by the privy-stairs belonging to which he escaped, after he had avenged Israel upon the king of Moab. See Shaw's Travels, p. 214.

The doctor further tells us, that the doors of the Eastern buildings are large, and their chambers spacious; conveniences, as he observes, very well adapted to these hotter climates: but in the present passage, something more seems to be meant; at least there are now other contrivances in the East to give *coolness* to particular rooms, which are very common; and though Eglon's time is acknowledged to be of very remote antiquity, we are to remember, that he was a prince; and in the palaces of such as these, contrivances, no doubt, began. In Ægypt, the cooling of their rooms is effected by openings at the top, which let in the fresh air. Maillet tells us, that their halls are made extremely large and lofty, with a dome at the top, which towards the north has several open windows, so constructed as to throw the north-wind down into the rooms; and by this means, though the country is excessively hot, they can make the coolness of these apartments such, as often not to be borne without being wrapped in furs. Egmont and Hayman speak of *chambers* cooled after this manner, as well as halls. Eglon's was a chamber; and to contrive to mitigate the heat of it was the more necessary, as he appears to have kept his court at Jericho, (ver. 13. 28.) where the heat is so excessive as sometimes to have proved fatal. See *Observations*, p. 88.

Ver. 22. *So that he could not draw the dagger—and the dirt came out*] The Hebrew word rendered *dirt* is found

only here. It is after the Chaldee that we render it *dirt* or *excrement*. This account is so short, that it is no wonder various conjectures have been formed upon it, with which it would be as useless as tedious to acquaint the reader.

Ver. 24. *He covereth his feet*] Some have supposed, that this is a modest expression for one of the necessities of nature; but it more probably, I should imagine, means in this place, *lying down to rest*, which is usual in the Eastern countries during the heat of the day. The Arabic and Syriac versions render this expression, *by going to sleep*, 1 Sam. xxiv. 3. Josephus too gives it the same sense in this place. See *Observations*, p. 90.

Ver. 26. *Ehud' escaped while they tarried*] It has been asked, how this action of Ehud can be at all justified. It is certainly among the number of those which are not to be imitated without that which gave it all its sanction; namely, a divine commission. The text expressly says, *the Lord raised up Ehud*; and it is well known, that all the deliverances which the Jews had under the judges were directed and conducted by the immediate hand of God, according as the people by their repentance became fit to receive them. A divine warrant, in such a case, is a clear foundation to go upon: it can, however, be no precedent for others to go upon, who have no divine warrant at all, but quite the contrary. What is reason and understanding given us for, but to discriminate cases and circumstances? See Grotius de jure Belli ac Pacis, lib. 1. cap. 24. and Barbeyrac's note on Puffendorff's Law of Nature and Nations, lib. vii. cap. 8.

Ver. 29. *All lusty*] The word שָׁמַן *shamen*, rendered *lusty*, signifies, properly, one that *abounds in strength, robust, strong*: so the Vulgate, *robustus*. The word in the next verse rendered *subdued*, is, in the French version, *humilié, humbled*, which is more agreeable to the Hebrew.

P

Ver.

31 ¶ And after him was Shamgar the son of Anath, which slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox-goad: and he also delivered Israel.

#### CHAP. IV.

*Deborah and Barak deliver Israel from Jabin and Sisera: Jael puts Sisera to death.*

[Before Christ 1294.]

**A**ND the children of Israel again did evil in the fight of the LORD, when Ehud was dead.

2 And the LORD sold them into the hand of

Jabin king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor; the captain of whose host was Sisera, which dwelt in Harosheth of the Gentiles.

3 And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD: for he had nine hundred chariots of iron; and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel.

4 ¶ And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time.

5 And she dwelt under the palm-tree of Deborah between Ramah and Beth-el in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.

*Ver. 31. After him was Shamgar, &c.]* It is uncertain of what tribe Shamgar was, and when he commenced judge of Israel; nothing being mentioned concerning him, but this exploit against the *Philistines*, in which he *slew six hundred men with an ox-goad*; i. e. the instrument by which oxen are broken to the plough and managed. An observation of Mr. Maundrel will justify our version. He says, that in Palestine he observed them to use *goads* of an extraordinary size. "Upon measuring of several, I found them about eight feet long, and at the bigger end six inches in circumference. They were armed at the lesser end with a sharp prickle for driving the oxen, and at the other end with a small spade, or paddle of iron, strong and maffy, for cleansing the plough from the clay that encumbers it in working. May we not from hence conjecture, that it was with such a goad as one of these that Shamgar made that prodigious slaughter related of him, *Judg. iii. 31.*? I am confident, that whoever should see one of these instruments would judge it to be a weapon, not less fit, perhaps fitter, than a sword for such an execution. Goads of this sort I saw always used hereabouts, and also in Syria; and the reason is, because the same single person both drives the oxen, and holds and manages the plough; which makes it necessary to use such a goad as is above described, to avoid the incumbrance of two instruments." See *Journey from Aleppo*, p. 110. One cannot help remarking, upon a view of this and the preceding chapters, how soon the Israelites forgot the wonders which God had done for them, revolted from his law, and fell into idolatry.

**REFLECTIONS.**—Far from being suitably affected by their late deliverance, after Othniel's death the long enjoyment of ease and affluence plunged them again into their old sins, and provoked God to give them up to new oppressors.

1. The king of Moab, who in vain, in former years, attempted to stand against them, now that God is no longer their defence, arises to war, strengthens himself by the forces of Ammon and Amalek, and prevails against them. The Israelites, unable to resist, are every where beaten, their strong-holds taken, and the city of palm-trees, a fort near Jericho, is garrisoned to keep them under the yoke. Eighteen years they endured this servitude, and paid tribute

to their oppressors. *Note;* (1.) When we return to sin, we may expect that God will return to judgment. (2.) If lighter corrections are ineffectual, God will make them longer and heavier. (3.) No instrument so despicable, but God, whenever he pleases, can make it the rod of his anger.

2. Israel had again recourse to prayer; and, though their suffering was prolonged, at last God pities and delivers them by the hand of Ehud. *Note;* (1.) The greatest dangers do not intimidate, nor the greatest difficulties entangle, those whom God arms with holy courage, and supplies with the spirit of wisdom. (2.) It is a great mercy to have rest from our spiritual enemies; let us improve it by diligence to grow in grace, that we may be better prepared for their reception when they shall renew their attacks.

#### CHAP. IV.

*Ver. 2. Jabin, king of Canaan.]* Canaan here means the Canaanites properly so called. Jabin was, doubtless, a descendant of the Jabin spoken of Joshua, xi. 1, &c. and Jabin, probably, (like Pharaoh,) was the common name of these kings. From the formidable number of his chariots, ver. 3. we may conclude that he had little or no infantry; and as the Israelites were forbidden the use of chariots, their fears might have arisen more naturally from this circumstance.

*Ver. 4, 5. Deborah, a prophetess, &c.]* Like Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, Deborah was enriched with the gifts of heaven, necessary to instruct, to direct, and to govern: besides which, God excited her by the Holy Spirit to declare his will to the people, as appears by the following part of this history. Her name signifies a *Bee*, which has been given by other nations to illustrious women; as among the Greeks, the nymph said to be the nurse of Jove, is called *Melissa*, and the wife of Periander, king of Corinth, had the same name. See *Witsii Miscel. Sac. tom. i. lib. i. cap. 23.* The Hebrew renders it doubtful whether she was *the wife of Lapidoth*, or *a woman of Lapidoth*, but the first is the most common opinion. *She judged Israel at that time;* i. e. had the supreme authority: well known to be divinely inspired, she was respected as such, and the people submitted to her judgment. *She dwelt under the palm-tree of Deborah;* or, as the

6 And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedesh-naphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the LORD God of Israel commanded, *saying*, Go and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun?

7 And I will draw unto thee to the river Kishon Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand.

8 And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, *then* I will not go.

LXX and Vulgate understand it, *She sat under the palm-tree which was called by her name*, where she administered justice. Calmet says, that it may be rendered *a forest of palms*.

*Ver. 6, 7. And she sent and called Barak, &c.*] In virtue of her supreme authority, which was uncontested by the whole nation, she sent for Barak; concerning whom we know no more than that he was born or dwelt in the city of *Kedesh*, in the tribe of *Naphtali*. *Tabor*, towards which Barak was ordered to draw his forces, was a famous mountain not far from *Kedesh*, in the tribe of *Zebulun*, and upon the confines of *Issachar* and *Manasseh*; which had a large plain at the top of it, where an army might be drawn up and exercised commodiously. Modern travellers confirm this. "Mount Tabor," says Maundrell, "stands by itself, about two or three furlongs within the plain of *Esdraelon*: after a very laborious ascent, which took up near an hour, we reached the highest part of the mountain: it has a plain area at the top, most fertile and delicious, of an oval figure, extending about one furlong in breadth, and two in length. This area is inclosed with trees on all parts, except towards the south. It was anciently environed with walls and trenches, and other fortifications, of which it exhibits many remains at this day.—From the top of Tabor you have a prospect which well rewards the labour of ascending it. It is impossible for man's eye to behold a higher gratification of this nature. On the north-west you discern at a distance the Mediterranean; and all around you have the spacious and beautiful plains of *Esdraelon* and *Galilee*, which present you with the view of many places memorable for the resort and miracles of the Son of God. At the bottom of Tabor westward, stands *Daberah*, a small village, supposed to take its name from *Deborah*. Near this valley is the fountain of *Kishon*." See *Journey from Aleppo*, p. 114. Concerning *Kishon*, *Dr. Shaw* tells us, "In travelling under a south-east brow of *Carmel*, I had an opportunity of seeing the sources of the river *Kishon*, three or four of which lie within less than a furlong of each other, and are called *Raf-el-Kishon*, or *the head of Kishon*. These alone, without the lesser contributions, nearer the sea, discharge water enough to form a river half as big as the *Isis*. During the rainy season, all the water which falls on the eastern side of the mountain, or upon the rising ground to the southward, empties itself into it in a number of torrents, at which conjunctures it overflows its banks, acquires a wonderful rapidity, and carries all before it. It might be at such a conjuncture as this when the *stars* are said to fight against *Sisera*, (ch. v. 21.) by bringing an abundance of rain, whereby the *Kishon* was occasionally fo

"high and rapid, as to sweep away the host of *Sisera* in attempting to ford it. But these inundations are ex-temporaneous only, without any duration; for the course of the *Kishon*, which is but about seven miles in length, runs very briskly, till within half a league of the sea, where it loses itself." See *Travels*, p. 274.

*Ver. 8. And Barak said unto her*] Does not Barak shew here some degree of incredulity, ill agreeing with that eulogy given of him by *St. Paul*, *Heb. xi. 32*? Certainly not: his is not the language of incredulity, but of prudence and precaution. He doubts not that *Deborah* speaks to him in the name of the Lord; he refuses not to undertake what she enjoins; but he is solicitous that she should attend him, both to assist him with her advice, and to inspire his soldiers with the courage necessary for so hazardous an undertaking. See *Calmet*. *Deborah* tells him, *ver. 9.* (according to *Mr. Saurin's* exposition,) that if she was in his army, it was to her that they would attribute the victory, and that it would be a kind of dishonour for him, that a woman should carry away that glory which ought to be the ambition of the general; but I should rather think that the words of *Deborah* allude to *Jael's* exploit.

REFLECTIONS.—Twenty years the iron yoke of *Jabin* lay heavy upon *Israel*; when now at last God hears his people's cry, and comes to deliver them. *Deborah*, a prophetess, the wife of *Lapidoth*, at that time judged *Israel*. She was raised up by the spirit of God, endued with wisdom, and favoured with prophetic foresight. All these gifts, as her name implies, she industriously employed for the public; sweet to her friends, but armed with a sting to smite her enemies. To her the people resorted for judgment in their controversies, and for direction in their religious concerns. Her abode, or rather her seat of justice, was under a palm-tree in mount *Ephraim*. Grieved at the sufferings of the people, she here, under a divine impulse, forms plans for their rescue; but being, as a woman, unfit to head the armies in the field, she calls *Barak* to her assistance. Him she directs what forces to levy, points out the encampment, and assures him from God, that strong as the hosts of *Jabin* were, yet they and their captain should both fall into his hand. *Barak* hesitates; yet, if she will go with him, consents to undertake the expedition; her presence, as a prophetess, being more his dependence than the sword of his soldiers: *Note*; (1.) When we go to war against our spiritual enemies, it is a great encouragement to have the advice and prayers of those upon whose experience and piety we can depend. (2.) When God will destroy his enemies, their resistance is in vain; and their gathering to battle, is only rushing into the snare.

9 And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the LORD shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh.

10 ¶ And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh: and he went up with ten thousand men at his feet: and Deborah went up with him.

11 Now Heber the Kenite, *which was* of the children of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, had severed himself from the Kenites, and pitched his tent unto the plain of Zaanaim, which *is* by Kedesh.

12 And they shewed Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam was gone up to mount Tabor.

13 And Sisera gathered together all his chariots, *even* nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people that *were* with him, from

Harosheth of the Gentiles unto the river of Kishon.

14 And Deborah said unto Barak; Up, for this *is* the day in which the LORD hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: is not the LORD gone out before thee? So Barak went down from mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him.

15 And the LORD discomfited Sisera, and all *his* chariots, and all *his* host, with the edge of the sword before Barak; so that Sisera lighted down off *his* chariot, and fled away on his feet.

16 But Barak pursued after the chariots and after the host unto Harosheth of the Gentiles: and all the host of Sisera fell upon the edge of the sword; *and* there was not a man left.

17 ¶ Howbeit, Sisera fled away on his feet to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber, the

*Ver. 10. At his feet*] Deborah and Barak first went to Kedesh to levy the necessary forces, ver. 9.; which collected, they set forward for mount Tabor, ver. 6. Barak having the men *at his feet*; i. e. following him as their general.

*Ver. 11. Now Heber the Kenite*] This verse is a parenthesis, to render more intelligible what follows in the 17th verse. The Kenites lived after the manner of the Midianites, from whom they descended, in *tents*, not in *houses*. Zaanaim was in the tribe of Naphtali, where there was a *plain*, or rather an *oak grove*.

*Ver. 15. And the Lord discomfited Sisera*] Though the expression in the text may be well understood according to the Scripture idiom, without any miraculous interposition; yet it is generally supposed, from the signification of the original word ירהם *vayaham*, (which imports a terror by the noise of thunder and lightning; see Schultens Orig. Heb. lib. i. p. 140.) that the Lord interposed miraculously: see 1 Sam. vii. 10. Josh. x. 10.; and something of this kind seems to be acknowledged by Deborah in her song, ver. 20. Josephus, who is of this opinion, greatly aggrandizes the affair. He says, that as soon as the armies were engaged, there arose a prodigious tempest of hail and rain, which drove in the faces of the Canaanites, and occasioned a total rout of them. See Antiq. lib. v. cap. 5.

REFLECTIONS.—Barak, at Deborah's command, having quickly raised the ten thousand men, chiefly out of the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali, encamped on mount Tabor; and Deborah, according to her promise, accompanied him. Sisera is soon informed of these military preparations, either by the Canaanites or the Kenites, who lately removed into this part of the country out of Judah, and were at peace with Jabin. He immediately collects

his army, with his nine hundred chariots of iron, in which his strength lay, and against which ten thousand footmen were a very unequal match. When the armies were thus encamped, the one at the brook beneath, and the other in the mountain above;

1. Deborah issues the order for the battle to begin. Barak and the people might well tremble at the sight before them; but she assures them that they need not fear; God is with them, and this very day should they see his great salvation. The victory is already won, since God has promised it. *Note*; If God be for us, let us never fear who are against us.

2. Barak obeys. He trusts not to his encampment on the mountain, nor waits there to be attacked; but, trusting on the divine promise, boldly descends. Struck with a panic fear, the army of Sisera dares not to abide his coming, but, discomfited of God, seek in vain by flight to save themselves from the sword of Barak. *Note*; (1.) They who go forth in faith must return victorious. (2.) When God pursues the sinner, flight is vain.

3. A total overthrow is given to these numerous hosts. They are pursued to the very gates of their city, and not a man spared from the sword: both chariots and horses are fallen, and Sisera alone escapes on foot, only to fall more ignominiously in the tent of Jael. *Note*; (1.) When God begins in earnest with his enemies, he will also make an end. (2.) We do well to prosecute our successes against our corruptions, and quicken our diligence the more we prevail against them.

*Ver. 17—20. Sisera fled—to the tent of Jael*] The common Arabs so far observe the modes of the east, as to have a separate apartment in their tents for their wives, made by letting down a curtain, or a carpet, upon occasion, from

Kenite: for *there was* peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite.

18 And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said unto him, Turn in, my lord, turn in to me; fear not. And when he had turned in unto her into the tent, she covered him with a mantle.

19 And he said unto her; Give me, I pray thee, a little water to drink; for I am thirsty. And she opened a bottle of milk, and gave him drink, and covered him.

20 Again, he said unto her, Stand in the door of the tent, and it shall be, when any man doth come and inquire of thee, and say, Is there any man here? that thou shalt say, No.

21 Then Jael, Heber's wife, took a nail of

the tent, and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground: (for he was fast asleep and weary.) So he died.

22 And, behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said unto him, Come, and I will shew thee the man whom thou seekest. And when he came into her tent, behold, Sisera lay dead, and the nail was in his temples.

23 ¶ So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the children of Israel.

24 And the hand of the children of Israel prospered, and prevailed against Jabin the king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin king of Canaan.

from one of their pillars; though they are not so rigid as some of the eastern people in these matters. Dr. Pococke tells us, that his conductor, who was an Arab, led him two or three miles to his tent, where there was an encampment of Arabs; and that there he sat down with his conductor's wife and others round the fire.—“The Arabs,” says he, “are not so scrupulous as the Turks about their women; and though they have their *harems*, or woman's part of the tent, yet *such as they are acquainted with* come into them. I was kept in the *harem* for greater security, the wife being always with me; no stranger ever daring to come into the woman's apartment, unless introduced.” According to the custom of the present Arabs, therefore, it was not absurd in Sisera to hope that he might be received into Jael's tent, the *harem* of Heber. It appears too, that her tent was a much safer place than any other in that encampment, wherein to secrete himself, as it would have been a much greater insult to this Kenite Emir, for any Israelite to have attempted to search for him there, than in any other of his tents. *Observations*, p. 79.

*Ver. 21. Then Jael, Heber's wife, &c.]* This nail was one of those great pins with which they fastened the tents to the ground. Bishop Patrick upon this event observes, that the night as well have let Sisera lie in his profound sleep till Barak took him, if she had not felt a Divine power moving her to this, that the prophecy of Deborah might be fulfilled. Nothing but this authority from God could warrant such a fact, which seemed a breach of hospitality, and to be attended with several other crimes; but was not so, when God, the Lord of all men's lives, ordered her to execute his sentence upon Sisera. It can scarcely be doubted, says Dr. Waterland, that Jael had a divine direction or impulse to stir her up to this action. The enterprise was exceedingly bold and hazardous, above the courage of her sex. The resolution she took appears very extraordinary, and shows the marks and tokens of its being from the extraordinary hand of God. In this view all is clear

and right, and no objectors will be able to prove that there was any treachery in it: for she ought to obey God rather than man; and all obligations to man cease, when brought in competition with our higher obligations towards God. But we are to consider, that what is done in very uncommon cases, and upon occasions very extraordinary, is not to be judged of by common rules. See *Scrip. Vind.* p. 75. They, who would enter into a more complete justification of this affair, will find satisfaction in Dr. Leland's answer to *Christianity as old as the Creation*, p. 2.

REFLECTIONS.—The army being destroyed, we have here an account of the death of their general.

1. His flight. His chariot was now no longer his safety; and though, in this confidence, he drew near to battle, he finds by experience how vain a thing is this to save a man. Creature-dependances thus usually fail us.—The tents of the Kenites seemed to promise a safe retreat; and as there was peace between Jabin and them, he flees thither for protection.

2. His reception here was seemingly as hospitable as he could wish. Jael, the wife of Heber, stood at the tent-door; invited him in, to repose in her apartment; refreshed him, thirsty with his flight; and covered him up as weary, for sleep as well as for concealment. Having wished her to deny others entrance there, and by a lie to divert his pursuers, he thinks he may now lie down in peace, and take his rest. How delusive are appearances! how often is our danger nearest, when we conceive ourselves most secure, and our ruin meditating by those in whom we place the greatest confidence! *Note*, They who trust in man will usually be disappointed; they who trust in God, never.

3. His death. Fatigued with his flight, his senses were soon locked up in sleep, and Jael, on divine warrant, meditates and performs the fatal deed.—Stealing softly to him, with one of the nails of the tent and a hammer in her



## C H A P. V.

*The song of Deborah and Barak.*

[Before Christ 1294.]

**T**HEN sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day, saying,  
 2 Praise ye the LORD for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves.

3 Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes; I, even I, will sing unto the LORD; I will sing *praise* to the LORD God of Israel.

4 LORD, when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water.

5 The mountains melted from before the

her hand, as he lay on his side, she smote him through both his temples, and fastened him to the ground: so he fell, as was foretold, by the hand of a woman. *Note;* God often chooses the weak things of the world to confound the mighty.

4. Barak comes, and finds Sisera slain. Jael welcomes him to her tent, and shews him his enemy fallen, to their common joy. *Note;* The death of an oppressive tyrant is a general mercy.

5. From that day Israel pursued the blow, subdued Jabin, and destroyed his people and cities; and thus, taught by experience, acted more conformably to the divine command and their own advantage, in utterly destroying this devoted people. *Note;* (1.) It is wisdom to improve under past experience. (2.) God's commands and our real interests are inseparable.

## C H A P. V.

*Ver. 1. Then sang Deborah, &c.]* According to the usual custom of those times, a triumphant *song* or ode was composed by the prophets Deborah, and sung by her and Barak, the people, most probably, bearing their part with them. Dr. Lowth produces this as an example of the most sublime ode; and as such it has always been admired. Like the other pieces of sacred poetry which we have heretofore reviewed, it is composed in metre, to which, among other learned men, the Reverend Mr. Green has ingeniously reduced it. An attention to this particular will enable us to understand it the better. It consists of three parts; an exordium, a relation of events which preceded as well as accompanied the victory, and a more complete description of the last event, adorned with all the elegancies of poetry, namely, the death of Sisera, and the disappointed expectations of his mother. See Bishop Lowth's 28th Praelection.

*Ver. 2. Praise ye the Lord]* Full of gratitude for this signal mark of divine favour, Deborah begins her song with a noble acknowledgment of God's assistance, and, as usual in poems of this kind, bursts forth in the next verse into a fine apostrophe, with all that variety of change in numbers and persons, which so eminently distinguishes the Hebrew poetry. Houbigant renders this clause,

Because the leaders of Israel undertook the war,  
 Because the people willingly offered themselves, praise ye the Lord.

In which version, as he observes, the clauses correspond, as is usual in this kind of poetry.

*Ver. 4. Lord, when thou wentest out of Seir]* The argument of this ode is, the delivery of the people of Israel, by the assistance of God, from bondage; which the sacred writer briefly proposing at the beginning, and having summoned the kings and princes of the neighbouring nations to take note of so great an event, she enters upon the praises of God, not from the recent benefit, but from the miracles performed of old, at their departure out of Ægypt.

O JEHOVAH! when thou wentest out of Seir,  
 When thou marchedst out of the land of Edom,  
 The earth trembled; the heavens thundered;  
 The clouds dropt down water.

*Ver. 5. The mountains flowed down at the presence of Jehovah,*  
 Even Sinai at the presence of Jehovah, the God of Israel.

See Hab. iii. 6. Isaiah, lxiv. 1, &c. Psalm lxxviii. 8, 9. Deut. i. 19, 20. An introduction so unexpectedly made from such great topics, breathes the free and fervent spirit of the ode. Nor is there, notwithstanding, the least obscurity, either in the connection or the tacit comparison of the benefit now received with that stupendous delivery from Ægypt. We would just observe, that the word which we render *March*, signifies literally to *march with pomp*, with majesty; and in like manner, the Hebrew word which is rendered *wentest out*, signifies emphatically to go out with eclat, with glory. See the Dissert. of Mr. G. J. Lette, p. 16, and Seneca's Troades, v. 171.

REFLECTIONS.—The grateful heart of Deborah, big with thankfulness, in strains more sublime, more tender, than Sappho or Homer ever sung, under the guidance of the true inspirer, dictates and leads the song among the victorious hosts of Israel on *that day*, either the very day of battle, or on the occasion of it in some future solemnity; Barak and the people with joy united their voices, and praised with the glorious God of hosts. *Note;* Praise is comely, and as pleasing to God as comfortable to ourselves.

1. She opens with exultation, Praise ye the Lord; and abundant reason is given, in the wondrous interposition which appeared when vengeance overtook their enemies. As God, after such a length of deserved servitude, had in mercy again stirred up the people's heart to shake off the galling yoke; therefore, to Him, the Lord Jehovah, the God of irresistible Power, the Lord God of Israel, their Covenant-God, I, so bound in duty, so filled with gratitude, I, even I, will sing. *Note;* God must have all the glory

LORD, *even* that Sinai from before the LORD God of Israel.

6 In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through by-ways.

7 *The inhabitants* of the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel.

8 They chose new gods; then *was* war in the gates: was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?

9 My heart *is* toward the governors of Israel, that offered themselves willingly among the people. Bless ye the LORD.

10 Speak, ye that ride on white asses, ye that sit in judgment, and walk by the way.

11 *They that are delivered* from the noise of

glory of his own work; for, although he uses instruments, yet the praise for the success is purely his own.

2. She demands attention from the great ones of the earth; whether the neighbouring kings and princes, who should hear and tremble; or the great men of Israel, who should rejoice with her.

3. She describes the glorious appearances of God in time past; when at Sinai the mount trembled, and a mighty tempest was stirred up round about him; or when, invading the country of Sihon, such terror went before them, and the hearts of the people shook with fear: their nobles, compared to the heavens, were weak as water; and the kings of Canaan, though high as the mountains, melted before the ark of God. He is still the same, wonderful in power, and glorious in majesty, his people's safeguard, his enemies' destroyer.

*Ver. 6, 7. In the days of Shamgar*] The prophets in these verses gives us a description of the wretched state of Israel during the time of that captivity, from which she, by the assistance of God, delivered them. It is very easy, says the author of the *Observations*, (p. 216.) to turn out of the roads in the east, and go to a place by winding about over the lands, when that is thought safer. Dr. Shaw takes notice of this circumstance, observing, that in Barbary they found no hedges, mounds, or inclosures, to retard or molest them. To this Deborah doubtless refers, though the Doctor does not apply his remark to the present passage. Bishop Pococke's account of the manner in which the Arabs, under whose care he was, conducted him to Jerusalem, illustrates this with great liveliness. It was by night, not by the *high road*, but through the *fields*; and I observed that he avoided, as much as he could, going near any village or encampment, and sometimes, as I thought, to hearken. "And just in that manner people were obliged "to travel in Judea in the days of Shamgar and Jael." Bishop Patrick would render the first line, *from the days of Shamgar*. Mr. Green supposes, that *Jael* here mentioned, was not Jael the wife of Heber; and he justly observes, that the phrase, *In the days of Jael*, implies time past, and supposes that Jael was dead, as well as Shamgar. Besides, what honour could redound to the prophets from such a comparison? Is it worthy of a boast, that she, who was *Judge* in Israel, had done more in delivering them from the enemy than Heber's wife, who was only a *sojourner in Israel*, and whose husband was at peace with the enemy? The Jael here mentioned, therefore, seems to have been a prophetess, raised up before Deborah to judge Israel, but

who died without delivering them. It is true, indeed, the name of this prophetess is not mentioned before; but neither are any of the transactions of the time in which she is supposed to have lived, recorded; nor is Shamgar's name mentioned more than once, ch. iii. 31. and then principally on account of that single exploit of slaying six hundred Philistines with an ox-goad. *Deborah* is called *a mother in Israel*, for the same reason as every deliverer of his country is called the *father* of it.

*Ver. 8. They chose new gods*] This verse is differently rendered. Some interpreters suppose that the meaning simply is, that in consequence of the Israelitish idolatry, war and destruction overtook them: forsaking God, they were forsaken of him, and given up into the hand of their enemies; who, to prevent them from regaining their liberty, disarmed them, as the Philistines did afterwards in the days of Saul; (see 1 Sam. xiii. 19. and Cæsar's Comment. lib. ii. cap. xxxi.) or rather, that the Israelites were disarmed by their own pusillanimity, and so dispirited, that a shield or spear was not *seen* in their hands to oppose their enemies. If I might hazard a conjecture, I should conceive, that this verse refers to the present delivery by Deborah, and not to the past state of things. In the two former verses Deborah has set forth the melancholy condition of Israel till she arose its deliverer: it is reasonable, therefore, to expect, that she should immediately speak of that deliverance; and in this view the verse might be rendered;

The Lord hath chosen new things, [a renovation of his former mercies]

Then, or accordingly, there is war in the gates. Shall not a spear and a shield be among the forty thousand in Israel?

After which she proceeds in the next verse to applaud those warriors, who thus, at the call of the Lord, seized the shield and the spear, and offered themselves willingly for the rescue of their country. It may be necessary to remark, that the Vulgate, Syriac, and Arabic versions render the first clause of this verse, *the Lord hath chosen or will choose, new wars, or a new thing*.

*Ver. 10. Speak, ye that ride on white asses*] These are supposed to have been asses of the Zebra kind צְהָרָה *zachar*. The author of the *Observations*, however, (p. 268.) is of opinion, "that these asses are not called *white* on account of their natural colour, but rather from their *caparisons*, according to the custom among the Arabs "to this day, who use saddles of wood in riding, and "have always, as a part of their riding furniture, a cloth

archers in the places of drawing water, there shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the LORD, *even* the righteous acts *towards the inhabitants* of his villages in Israel: then shall the people of the LORD go down to the gates.

12 Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake,

utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam.

13 Then he made him that remaineth have dominion over the nobles among the people: the LORD made me have dominion over the mighty.

“ which they call the *hiran*, about six ells long, which “ they fold up and put upon the wooden saddle, in order “ to sit with greater ease; and which they use when they “ bait, as a sort of mattrass to repose themselves upon.” The clause, *ye that sit in judgment*, explains the preceding. *Ye who walk by the way*, seems evidently to mean the merchants or traffickers, who might now safely travel about their business, which they could not do before this deliverance, (ver. 6.) and for which Deborah calls upon them to *speak*, i. e. give thanks to God. Thus the passage may be interpreted, as it stands in our Bible. But as the word rendered *speak ye*, שִׁחַי *Sichu*, is the last in this sentence, and as many words are obliged to be inserted at the beginning of the 11th verse, I apprehend that there should be no stop; and that the passage might be rendered in some such manner as this: *ye that ride on white asses, ye that sit in judgment, and ye who walk by the way, pursue your meditations, free from the noise of archers in the places of drawing water. There [in those places late so hostile and dangerous] they shall relate the righteous acts of the Lord; his righteous acts for the villages in Israel; and then shall the people of the Lord [safely] go down to their cities.* I would just observe, that the word שִׁחַי rendered *speak ye*, signifies properly to meditate, reflect deeply; and that in the eastern countries the places of drawing water being much frequented, and of the greatest utility, the prophets could not express herself more strongly, than by saying, that they might meditate free from danger there, where the enemy would in times of danger be sure constantly to plant themselves. Dr. Shaw, p. 20. tells us of a beautiful rill in Barbary, which is received into a large basin, called *Shrub we krub*, i. e. *drink and away*, from there being great danger of meeting there with rogues and assassins. If such places are proper for the lurking of murderers in time of peace, they must be proper for the lying in ambush in times of war; the circumstance of which Deborah here takes notice. In the *Gesta Dei per Francos*, p. 27, the writer, speaking of the want of water which the Croisade army felt so severely at the siege of Jerusalem, gives us a still more perfect comment on the present passage; for he complains, that, besides being forced to use stinking water and barley bread, their people were in continual danger from the Saracens, who, lying hid near all the fountains and places of water, every where destroyed numbers of them, and carried off their cattle. See *Observations*, p. 341.

REFLECTIONS.—Deborah now mentions with delight the deliverance that God had wrought by her means; not out of pride or vain conceit of her work or agency in it, but to the glory of God, who had enabled her for, and called her to, the blessed service. Herein she acknowledges the ready assistance of those governors who willingly offered

themselves to fight the Lord's battles. Her heart was towards them in love for their fidelity, and drawn out to God in praise for having incited them to follow her. *Note*; They who boldly stand up for the cause of God, justly deserve the regard of man. 2. She enjoins the several ranks of men to praise God for the happy change. The nobles, who were distinguished by riding on white asses; the judges, who sat in the gate; the plowman, that now securely broke the sod; the traveller, who safely trod the lately unoccupied path; the drawer of water, who drank before at the peril of his life; all must unite their hearts and voices to adore the great Deliverer, and to bless the Lord, who had done for them such marvellous things. *Note*; Every man in his station has peculiar mercies to be thankful for.

Ver. 12, 13. *Lead thy captivity captive—Then he made him, &c.*] I conceive that this passage is to be understood totally different. The word rendered *have dominion*, in the 13th verse יָרַד *ierad*, is in the 14th very properly rendered *came down*, which is its true meaning, and agreeably to that which it ought to be rendered in this 13th verse. In the 12th verse, Deborah, in an exulting strain of praise, excites herself and Barak to consider the instruments of this great victory which God had vouchsafed for Israel; and we may look upon these words as if addressed to her and Barak by the Lord, calling upon them to undertake the great exploit, *Arise, arise, Deborah! arise, arise! speak the inspiring song. Arouse Barak, thou son of Abinoam, and lead thy captivity captive.* In consequence of this incitation, the prophetess goes on to say, *Then he who remained from the nobles of the people came down: the Lord came down for me against the mighty; in the former clause speaking of Barak, in the second of herself, in the most modest manner.* Mr. Green interprets the passage something in the same way. He renders it, *then the people that remained came down after the nobles,—JEHOVAH's people came down after me against the mighty.* Whichever version may be most agreeable to the original, this mode of interpretation is certainly right, as is evident from the connection with the next verse, in which Deborah proceeds to speak of the tribes. *Out of Ephraim*, says she, *came down those who were planted in Amalek.*—After thee, O Benjamin, among thy people,—out of Machir came down governors,—and out of Zebulun those who rule with the sceptre, as Mr. Green well renders it; justly observing, that שֵׁבֶט *sbebet*, sceptre, never signifies a pen throughout the Scriptures. See Gen. xlix. 10. where *sbebet*, *sceptre*, is equivalent to מַחְקֵק *mehkek*, *lawgiver*, or *governor*, in the former. We follow Mr. Green's interpretation of the words, ver. 14. *out of Ephraim was there a root of them against Amalek*: words which greatly perplex the commentators; most of them taking

14 Out of Ephraim *was there* a root of them against Amalek; after thee, Benjamin, among thy people; out of Machir came down governors, and out of Zebulun they that handle the pen of the writer.

15 And the princes of Issachar *were* with Deborah; even Issachar, and also Barak: he was sent on foot into the valley. For the divisions of Reuben *there were* great thoughts of heart.

16 Why abodest thou, among the sheepfolds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks? For the divisions of Reuben *there were* great searchings of heart.

17 Gilead abode beyond Jordan: and why did Dan remain in ships? Asher continued on

the sea-shore, and abode in his breaches.

18 Zebulun and Naphtali *were* a people *that* jeoparded their lives unto the death in the high places of the field.

19 The kings came *and* fought, then fought the kings of Canaan in Taanach by the waters of Megiddo; they took no gain of money.

20 They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.

21 The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon. O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength.

22 Then were the horse-hoofs broken by the means of the prancings, the prancings of their mighty ones.

23 Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the

taking *Amalek* here to be the name of a people, whereas it is the name of a place in the tribe of Ephraim, as the LXX understand it. The idea of *planting* is frequently used for the settlement of the Israelites in the land of Canaan. See Psalm, xlv. 2. lxxx. 8. Those then who were planted in *Analek*, must mean the people who were settled by Joshua in the hill called by that name. See chap. xii. 15. The prophetess seems to give this people, who were of the tribe of Ephraim, and the tribe of Benjamin, the precedence in her muster, because she administered justice upon their confines, chap. iv. 5.; and found them most ready to engage in this service.

Ver. 15—18. *And the princes of Issachar*] Mr. Green, transposing the concluding word of the last verse, *seper*, to the beginning of this, reads, *The princes of Issachar were numbered with Deborah and Barak, when Barak was sent on foot into the valley.* See ch. iv. 10. After having commended those who gloriously engaged in this war, Deborah proceeds to express her disapprobation of those who withheld themselves from it. She in a beautiful manner apostrophises the Reubenites, (ver. 16.) whose unhappy *divisions* prevented them from joining with their brethren in the common cause, and, as she finely repeats, occasioned *great searchings of heart.* *Gilead*, i. e. the *Gadites*, ver. 17. abode inactive beyond Jordan; those of Dan continued intent upon their merchandises, while their brethren hazarded their lives in the field: Asher too (which tribe, like that of Dan, was situated on the sea shore,) refused to join their brethren in the common cause, intent upon their mercantile affairs, and busied in their several ports and havens; while Zebulun and Naphtali, with a most heroic courage, engaged as one man to hazard their lives and fortunes for the recovery of their liberty.

Ver. 19. *The kings came and fought*] Several kings of Canaan, most probably, had united themselves with Jabin in this expedition. *Taanach* and *Megiddo* were two cities belonging to the Manassites, Josh. xvii. 11. *They took no gain of money*, is variously interpreted. "The simple sense," says Bishop Patrick, "seems to be, that they were kings of such bravery, as fought not for money,

"but for glory and dominion." Houbigant, after the Vulgate, understands it, that they got nothing but blows; no prey or spoil at all, as they expected: and agreeably hereto, Mr. Green renders it, *for lucre of money, which they carried not off.* The prophet, says he, uses the figure called *meiosis*, by which more is intended than expressed. Her meaning is, that the kings of Canaan were so far from carrying off the booty they came for, that they did even escape with their lives; and if we consider how sarcastically the prophetess makes the Israelitish spoil engage the attention of Sisera's mother, we may probably think that she meant this too as a sarcasm upon the kings of Canaan for their lucrative views in fighting against Israel. See Calmet.

Ver. 20. *They fought from heaven*] This would be rendered more properly, *the stars fought from heaven: they fought from their orbits [their paths or courses] against Sisera.* See on ch. iv. 14, 15. It is no unusual thing for the sacred writers to speak of inanimate things as engaged in war against the enemies of Jehovah. See Hab. iii. 11. Concerning the river Kishon, mentioned in the next verse, we refer to the note on chap. iv. 6. Some have supposed, that by the *stars* here are meant the angels, see Job, xxxviii. 7. Perhaps, as the Canaanites were worshippers of the Host of Heaven, the prophetess may mean to say, that the stars in the firmament, recognizing their great Master, declared at his command for the Israelites; and, in some extraordinary manner, assisted at the discomfiture of their false worshippers. The beautiful energy of the repetition in the next verse scarcely need be hinted; any more than the fine apostrophe at the close; wherein we see, that Deborah was so full of the important subject, that she is no longer able to pursue a regular train, but bursts forth into that elegant exclamation, to which, perhaps, there is nothing superior in the finest writings of the heathen poets.

Ver. 22. *Then were the horse-hoofs broken*] The word *prancings* destroys the whole force of this passage. The sacred writer means to inform us of the extreme haste and precipitation with which the vanquished fled. The

LORD, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty.

24 Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent.

word דָּבָר *dabar* is used but once more in Scripture, Nahum, iii. 2. where, from the words it is joined with, it must mean the clattering of the horse on full speed. The prophetess, denouncing God's judgments, tells the people, that they should themselves be given up a prey to the Chaldeans, whose army God would send against them; and that then they should hear the noise of the chariotter's whip, of the rattling wheels, the clattering horse, and jumping chariot. The rendering of the margin, *trampling, or plunging*, is better than the text. Perhaps the meaning of it cannot be better expressed than by this celebrated line of Virgil's,

*Quadrupedante putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum.*  
Æn. viii. ver. 596.

Dr. Waterland, very properly, for *of their mighty ones*, reads *of their mighty horses*; an expression which greatly adds to the force of the passage, as they were not common horses, but their best and strongest, whose hoofs were broken on this occasion. See Green on the place, and Bochart Hieroz. p. i. l. ii. c. 6. We should just remark, that anciently it was not the custom to shoe their horses; nay, indeed, at present in Arabia and Tartary they have excellent horses which are never shod. See Tavernier, vol. i. b. ii. c. 5. and Montfaucon, tom. i. p. 79. Houbigant renders this verse, *Then were the horse-hoofs broken, their riders flying away with precipitate speed.*

Ver. 23, 24. *Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord*] It is plain from the corresponding clause, that Meroz was a city, the inhabitants whereof refused to assist in this war, and therefore are thus solemnly devoted by the angel of the Lord. See Josh. v. 14. *Against the mighty*, at the close of this verse, is rendered by Houbigant, *with the mighty*; with those warriors of the Lord, who freely offered themselves in this enterprise. From this curse the prophetess passes, by a beautiful transition, to the blessing of Jael, whose exploit is recorded in the foregoing chapter. The passage is so truly elegant and poetical, that our translators have insensibly fallen into two fine heroic lines in the 25th verse:

He asked water, and she gave him milk;  
She brought forth butter in a lordly dish.

The word translated *dish* would be more properly rendered *bowl* (see ch. vi. 38.); a large and capacious vessel, in which she brought him perhaps cream, or the best milk. See Æneid i. The liquid here presented by Jael to Sisera was *butter-milk*. Few people, I believe, would think *cream* very proper drink for one that was thirsty. M. D'Arvieux informs us, that the Arabs make their butter by churning in a leathern bottle; that they drink sometimes sweet milk, and sometimes make froth of it; but

25 He asked water, and she gave him milk;  
she brought forth butter in a lordly dish.

26 She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workmen's hammer; and with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote off his head, when he had pierced and stricken through his temples.

that, when it curdles, they put the juice of an herb to it to make it sourer: they also put some of it upon their pilaw, or boiled rice, and eat it mixed together. If then the Kenites made butter as the modern Arabs do, (and there does not appear any refinement in the present Arab custom, which retains strong marks of the ancient simplicity,) the supposing Jael to have been just churning will account for the present passage, and chap. iv. 19. Sisera, being thirsty, asked for water; she opens a *bottle* (a *skin*, according to the original), i. e. the leathern bottle with which she had been just churning; and pouring its contents into a *basin*, fit to be presented to a man of Sisera's quality, and doubtless the best in her tent, she offers him this butter-milk to drink. This gave occasion to Deborah to speak of *milk* and *butter* both. Sour milk is esteemed by those people as more refreshing than that which is sweet. Thus then, instead of water, she gave him a better liquid; the most refreshing, we may believe, that she had by her. Dr. Pococke, vol. ii. p. 25. says, that during the time of his entertainment by the Arabs, in the Holy Land, they brought cakes which were four, and fine oil of olives to dip them in: but, perceiving that he did not like this, they served him up some four *butter-milk* to drink; and every meal was finished with coffee. This, we are to observe, was the entertainment of people who treated him in the most respectful manner they could; and was produced, when they found that what was before prepared for him was not so agreeable, being desirous of doing every thing they could to accommodate him. So, in the account of Commodore Stewart's embassy to redeem some British captives, in 1721, we are told, "that butter-milk is the chief *dessert* of the Moors; and that when they would speak of the extraordinary *sweetness* of any thing (I suppose *agreeableness* is meant), they compare it with butter-milk." *Observations*, p. 152. The following verses (26, 27) are equally elegant and poetical with ver. 25. The description is so minute, that we, as it were, behold the very action.

REFLECTIONS.—Deborah, proceeding in her seraphic song, kindles as she recites the righteous acts of the Lord, and calls up all the faculties of her soul to stretch their utmost powers in uttering his praise. Let Barak now arise, and lead the captive nobles of Canaan bound to his chariot-wheels; and let the meanest of the Israelites who have survived their oppressors trample on the necks of the mighty: yea, Deborah herself, though a woman, shall triumph in the dominion that God has given her. With just praise, she mentions the brave warriors who assisted her; with wonder, the mighty foes who fell before them; and with just indignation, stamps with infamy the coward tribes

27 At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down: at her feet he bowed, he fell: where he bowed, there he fell down dead.

28 The mother of Sifera looked out at a window, and cried through the lattice, Why is his chariot *so* long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots?

29 Her wife ladies answered her, yea, she returned answer to herself,

30 Have they not sped? have they not divided the prey; to every man a damsel or two; to Sifera a prey of divers colours, a prey of divers colours of needle-work, of divers colours of needle-work on both sides, meet for

the necks of *them that take the spoil?*

31 So let all thine enemies perish, O LORD: but *let* them that love him *be* as the sun when he goeth forth in his might. And the land had rest forty years.

CHAP. VI.

*The Israelites are oppressed seven years by the Midianites: Gideon is raised up by the Lord for their deliverance. The miracle of the fleece of wool.*

[Before Christ 1267.]

AND the children of Israel did evil in the fight of the LORD: and the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years.

tribes that sat unconcerned spectators of the war. *Note:* (1.) They who are zealous for God, shall assuredly hear of it shortly to their everlasting honour. (2.) When we go to war with the enemies of our souls, we had need be determined, since conquest or death eternal must be the issue. (3.) The whole creation is armed to avenge God's quarrel against his own and his people's enemies. Jael, the wife of Heber, receives her deserved encomium for that noble deed against the enemy of God and his Israel. Lulled into security by her invitation and treatment, Sifera, without suspicion, drank of her cup, and lay down to sleep; when, stirred up by a divine impulse, her manly soul approached the devoted victim, and, with unrelenting steadiness, she struck the deadly blow. Awaking, at her feet he fell: the shadows of death hung heavy on his eye-lids, he bowed, he fell; he bowed, he fell down dead, not in the bed of honour, nor slain by the devouring sword, but by the hand of a woman, surprised without the power of resistance. The terror of the mighty now lies low, and pride is humbled to the dust: thus will it shortly be with those who now are sunk in sin, and asleep in security; soon the arrows of the Almighty will stick fast in them; they must bow under the stroke of vengeance, and fall, not into the arms of Death only, but into the belly of Hell!

*Ver. 28—30. The mother of Sifera looked out, &c.]* Dr. Lowth produces this passage as a most beautiful example of the propopœia: "We have, in the first place," says he, "the most striking image of maternal solicitude, and of a mind divided between hope and fear, both in the behaviour and words of Sifera's mother:

- "The mother of Sifera looked out at a window;
- "She cried through the lattice,
- "Why is his chariot so long in coming?
- "Why tarry the wheels of his chariots?

"Immediately, impatient of delay, she prevents the comfort of her companions, elate in mind, and bursting forth into female levity and jactation, impotent to hope for any thing, and drunk with her good fortune;

"Her wife ladies earnestly answered her,

- "Yea, she immediately returned answer to herself;
- "Have they not sped? Have they not divided the spoil?
- "We see how consonant to the person speaking is every idea, every word. She dwells not upon the slaughter of the enemies, the number of the captives, the valour and great exploits of the victor, but (burning with the female love of spoils) on those things rather which captivate the light mind of the vainest woman, damsels, gold, garments. Nor does she dwell upon them only; but she repeats, she accumulates, she augments every thing. She seems, as it were, to handle the spoils, dwelling as she does upon every particular:
- "Have they not sped? have they not divided the prey?"
- "A damsel, yea, two damsels to every man;
- "To Sifera a prey of divers colours,
- "A prey of divers colours, of needlework,
- "Finely coloured, of needlework on both sides,
- "A spoil for adorning the neck?"
- "To enhance the beauty of this passage, there is, in the poetic conformation of the sentences, an admirable neatness; in the diction, great force, splendor, accuracy; in the very redundancy of the repetitions; the utmost brevity: and, lastly, the most striking disappointment of the woman's hope, tacitly insinuated by that fudden and unexpected apostrophe,

"So let all thine enemies perish, O JEHOVAH!"

"is expressed more fully and strongly by this silence, than could have been painted by any colouring of words." See Dr. Lowth's 13th Prælection, Prov. iv. 18, 19. and the note on Josh. vii. 21. We cannot do better than conclude this chapter with the words of Pelican: "Let a Homer or Virgil go and compare his poetry, if he be able, with the song of this woman; and, if there be any one who excels in eloquence and learning, let him celebrate the praises and learning of this panegyrick more copiously than I am able."

CHAP. VI.

*Ver. 1. The hand of Midian]* See ch. vii. 24, 25. viii. 4. The Midianites were the ancient enemy of the Israelites;

2 And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel: *and* because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them the dens which *are* in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds.

3 And *so* it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them;

4 And they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass.

5 For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude: *for* both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it.

6 And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the LORD.

7 ¶ And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD because of the Midianites,

8 That the LORD sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage;

9 And I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drave them out from before you, and gave you their land;

10 And I said unto you, I *am* the LORD your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not obeyed my voice.

11 ¶ And there came an angel of the LORD, and sat under an oak which *was* in Ophrah, that *pertained* unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide *it* from the Midianites.

12 And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD *is* with thee, thou mighty man of valour.

13 And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where *be* all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.

14 And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?

Israelites; they joined with the Moabites to seduce them to idolatry, and were almost extirpated by them. See Numbers, xxxi. But having now recruited themselves, and re-peopled their country, they were, no doubt, well disposed to take a sharp revenge of the Israelites, being joined for that purpose with some other people, ver. 3.

Ver. 3. *Children of the east*] *Children of Kedem*, i. e. *Ismaelites*. Hiller. Onomastic, p. 534.

Ver. 8. *The Lord sent a prophet unto the children of Israel*] It is probable, that God, at this time, continued other prophets among the Israelites beside the high-priest to put them in mind of their duty, and to call them to repentance when they forsook him. We see an illustrious prophetess in the person of Deborah; which shews, that upon special occasions, at least, God raised up such persons among them.

Ver. 11. *There came an angel of the Lord, &c.*] It is very evident from the context, that this *Angel of the Lord* was the same great *Messenger of the Covenant*, the JEHOVAH, of whose appearance we have so often spoken. See ver. 14. 16. 22, 23, &c. *Ophrah* was a city of the half-tribe of Manasseh. Gideon's threshing corn gives us an idea of those old Romans who were called from the plough to the dictatorship. Dr. Shaw, speaking of the modern Arabs, says, "It is here no disgrace for persons

" of the highest character to busy themselves in what we  
" should call menial employments. The greatest *prince*  
" (like Gideon and Araunah of old) assists in the most labo-  
" rious actions of husbandry; neither is he ashamed to  
" fetch a lamb from his herd and kill it, whilst the  
" *princess* his wife is impatient till she has prepared her  
" fire and her kettle to *seethe* and dress it. In this manner  
" we find Achilles and Patroclus employed, Hom. Iliad.  
" xi. 205, &c.

" Achilles at the genial feast presides;  
" The part transfixes, and with skill divides;  
" Meanwhile Patroclus sweats the fire to raise.

" POPE." See Travels, p. 237.

Ver. 12. *And said unto him, the Lord is with thee*] The Targum translates it, *the word of the Lord is thy help*; which shews, that the ancient Jews looked upon this Angel as the LORD himself, and this is confirmed by the Targum translation of the following verse; *Is the SCHECHINAH of the Lord our help? whence, then, hath all this happened unto us?* a paraphrase, which shews that they took the *word of the Lord* to be the same with the *Schechinah* of the Lord.

Ver. 13. *And Gideon said, &c.*] There is rarely a faith so strong as to preserve and nourish hope under a lasting and powerful

15 And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house.

16 And the LORD said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.

17 And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then shew me a sign that thou talkest with me.

18 Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and set it before thee. And he said, I will tarry until thou come again.

19 And Gideon went in, and made ready a

kid, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour: the flesh he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and brought it out unto him under the oak, and presented it.

20 And the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay them upon this rock, and pour out the broth. And he did so.

21 Then the angel of the LORD put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the LORD departed out of his sight.

powerful calamity. Great oppression and misery dazzle the eyes, and corrupt the memory, that it cannot call to mind what has been done in the like cases. It gave Gideon courage rather to expostulate with the angel, than to believe him, that the Lord would be with him: *Oh my Lord, &c.*

*Ver. 15. And I am the least in my father's house:]* Thus God is often pleased to choose the weak things of the world to confound the strong. But the humility of those who know their own weakness, and confide in his strength, will never be any obstacle to their obtaining the victory over every enemy. Happy the man who, with Gideon, confesses himself *least* in his own fight! he shall be blessed with that encouraging promise of the Lord, *surely I will be with thee*, ver. 16. We need not point out the similarity of circumstances between the conduct of Gideon and that of Abraham on the like occasion. Gen. xviii.

*Ver. 19. And Gideon—made ready, &c.]* All roasted meat is a delicacy among the Arabs, and rarely eaten by them. Stewed meat likewise is only to be met with at their feasts and great tables, and is consequently a delicacy also; the common diet being only boiled meat, with rice, potage, and pilaw, *stewed meat with the soup, &c.* This soup, or something very much like it, we may believe was the broth which Gideon presented to the angel, whom he took for a mere mortal messenger of God. It may have been wondered, why he should bring out his broth, from an opinion that it would have been better kept within, and given to the poor after the supposed prophet should be withdrawn; but these passages explain the fact. The broth, as our translators imagine it, was, I conclude, the stewed savoury meat that he had prepared, with such fort of liquor as the eastern people at this day bring their stewed meat in to the most dignified and honourable persons. What then is meant by the *flesh put into the basket*? Dr. Shaw seems entirely to have cleared up the matter in p. 12 of his preface, where he says, “ Besides a bowl of milk, and a basket of figs, raisins, or dates, which upon our arrival were presented to us, to stay our appetites, the master of the tent fetched us from his flock, (according to the number of our company) a kid or a goat, a lamb

“ or a sheep; half of which was immediately seethed by his wife, and served up with *cuscusoo*: the rest was made kab-ab; i. e. cut to pieces, and roasted; which we reserved for our breakfast or dinner next day.” May we not imagine, that Gideon, presenting some slight refreshment to the supposed prophet, according to the present Arab mode, desired him to stay till he could provide something more substantial; that he immediately killed a kid, seethed part of it, made kab-ab of another part; and when it was ready, brought out the *stewed meat* in a pot, with unleavened cakes of bread which he had baked; and the kab-ab in a basket, for his carrying with him, to serve him for some *after-repast* in his journey? Nothing can be more conformable to the present Arab customs, or a more easy explanation of the text; nothing more convenient for the carriage of the reserved meat than a light basket; as Thevenot informs us, he carried his ready-dressed meat with him in a *maund*. What others may think of the passage, I know not; but till I met with these remarks I never could account for Gideon's bringing out the meat to the angel in a basket. With respect to his leaving the supposed prophet under a tree while he was busied, (instead of introducing him to some apartment of his habitation,) and bringing the repast out to him there, I would here observe, that not only Arabs who live in tents, and their dependents, but those also who live in houses, as did Gideon, practise it still. Dr. Pococke frequently observed it among the Maronites, and was so struck with their conformity to ancient custom, that he could not forbear taking particular notice of it; laymen of quality and ecclesiastics, the patriarch and bishops, as well as poor obscure priests, treating their guests in the same manner. Travels, vol. ii. p. 95, 96. 104. See *Observations on Scripture*, p. 178.

*Ver. 21. Then the angel—put forth the end of the staff, &c.]* This divine person, appearing, most probably, in the form of a traveller, with a staff in his hand, just touched the cakes and the flesh, &c. with that staff, when immediately fire arose up out of the rock and consumed them: a miracle, no doubt, as great as if fire had come down from heaven, as on the sacrifices which Moses, Elijah,



22 And when Gideon perceived that he *was* an angel of the LORD, Gideon said, Alas, O LORD GOD! for because I have seen an angel of the LORD face to face.

23 And the LORD said unto him, Peace *be* unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die.

24 Then Gideon built an altar there unto the LORD, and called it Jehovah-shalom: unto this day it *is* yet in Ophrah of the Abi-ezrites.

25 ¶ And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Take thy father's young bullock, even the second bullock of

seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that *is* by it:

26 And build an altar unto the LORD thy God upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt-sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down.

27 Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the LORD had said unto him: and *so* it was, because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city, that he

Elijah, and others offered. Thus the faith of Gideon was confirmed; he had no doubt of the Divinity of the person who appeared, and he placed an absolute reliance on his promises. It is said at the close of this verse, that *the angel of the Lord departed out of his sight*; but it is evident from the subsequent verses, that Gideon still stood before, and conversed with him. We must therefore suppose, that, though no longer visible, the Lord made Gideon know that he was still present with him, by speaking in an audible voice. With respect to the next verse, see Gen. xvi. 13.

*Ver. 24. Gideon built an altar*] Upon the rock where this miracle happened. This altar was not for sacrifice, which would have been directly contrary to the law; but as a memorial of the vision with which God had favoured him, and of the miracle wherewith it was accompanied. *And he called it Jehovah-shalom; i. e. the Lord sent peace. Until this day*, signifies that it was remaining when this Book of the Judges was written; i. e. most likely, till the time of Samuel. See Thefaur. Philolog. tom. i. p. 418.

REFLECTIONS.—While God is leaving the people to ruminate upon the message that he had sent them, he begins to interpose for their deliverance by the hand of Gideon. To him the angel of the everlasting covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ, appeared in a human form, as he was threshing wheat by the wine-press, to hide it from the Midianites; for such was the distress to which they were reduced, that the very bread they ate must be secreted. *Note*; When our case appears most desperate, then is the time that God chooses to glorify his power in saving us. Let us take a view of what passed between the angel of the Lord and Gideon. 1. The angel accosts him with a very comfortable salutation, *the Lord is with thee*, thou mighty man of valour. Probably, in mournful meditation over Israel's griefs, and fervent ejaculations for speedy help, Gideon was lifting up his heart to God, and now he is answered; this unexpected visitant assures him of God's presence with him. *Note*; However blest we may be with natural gifts, unless God be with us we possess them in vain. Without him, the valiant are weak, and the mighty soon brought low.

2. Gideon, indulging his melancholy views of the hard oppression that his people now suffered, doubts the truth of the message, and seems to call in question the former

miracles which were recorded; because, for a time, as the just punishment for their sins, God had left them under the power of Midian. *Note*; (1.) It is sometimes difficult to reconcile afflictive experiences with great and specious promises, and not to say, "If this be true, why am I thus?" (2.) We are not to question the truth of past miracles because they continue not still to be wrought.

3. The Lord answers his doubts, by giving him orders to accomplish the people's deliverance from the hand of Midian. With a look of complacency, and with a solemnity which added weight to his word, He, who can qualify him for the service, bids him go, and assures him of success. Jehovah speaks; let Gideon hear and believe. *Note*; (1.) It is the Lord's work alone to fit us for that which he commands. (2.) Nothing inspires the heart with such earnestness to contend against our spiritual enemies, as the assurance that we shall at last be more than conquerors.

4. Gideon is not provided either with men or money to support a war against Midian; his family reduced, and himself inconsiderable, he hesitates at the command, and, through distrust of God, or rather modest diffidence of himself, expresses his apprehension of his inability for such an undertaking. *Note*; (1.) Those who are little in their own eyes, God delights to exalt. (2.) When we find our own weakness, and spread it in prayer before God, then shall we, like Gideon, out of weakness be made strong.

5. God can give us no greater confirmation than his word of promise. Therefore, he repeats it, for Gideon's satisfaction, with a solemn asseveration, *Surely*, I will be with thee; and then his poverty, or his want of human help, shall be no bar to his complete victory over the host of Midian. *Note*; If God be for us, it is of no consequence who are against us; the day is ours.

6. As the commission was extraordinary, for his own and others' satisfaction, he asks a sign, as an assurance of the truth of what was said to him; and begs him to stay whilst he sent him some refreshment, and treated him as a messenger from God. The angel consents to stay; the plain repast is quickly provided, and Gideon returns with it from his father's house. *Note*; (1.) They who follow the comfort of communion with God, or fellowship with his saints, will contrive to prolong the visit. (2.) Christians must use hospitality, and break their bread with cheerfulness

could not do *it* by day, that he did *it* by night.

28 ¶ And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was cast down, and the grove was cut down that *was* by it, and the second bullock was offered upon the altar *that was* built.

29 And they said one to another, Who hath done this thing? And when they enquired and asked, they said, Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing.

30 Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son, that he may die: because he hath cast down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the grove that *was* by it.

31 And Joash said unto all that stood against him, Will ye plead for Baal? will ye save him? he that will plead for him, let him be put to death whilst *it is yet* morning: if he be a god, let him plead for himself, because *one* hath cast down his altar.

fulness to the hungry. (3.) They who give but a cup of cold water, with regard to God, shall in no wise lose their reward.

7. Instead of spreading the table for repast, this divine stranger enjoins him to lay the meat on a rock near them, and pour the broth upon it. Gideon without hesitation obeys; when, lo! the sign he asked, appears: the angel, who seemed like a traveller, with his staff gently touched the provision as it lay, when instantly fire bursts forth, and consumes the offering; and thereupon Jehovah disappears, leaving Gideon the strongest evidence of the truth of what he had told him.

8. Gideon, though a man of valour, and though from every circumstance he might conclude the gracious design of all that he had seen and heard, trembles at the thought of having seen the angel of the Lord; and, as Jacob before, and Manoah after, fears that he shall die.

9. The Lord silences his fears by an audible voice: though he could not see him, he could hear him say, Thou shalt not die, fear not. *Note;* Though every message from the world of spirits justly makes man, as a sinner, to tremble; yet when by faith our hearts have rested on God's promises, we have from thenceforth nothing to fear, but every thing to hope for.

Lastly, Gideon sets up an altar on this rock for a memorial, and calls it very properly, Jehovah-Shalom; for the Lord had spoken peace to him when he was troubled, had brought him a message of peace for his afflicted brethren, and would give him peace from all their enemies round about. *Note;* They who have God at peace with them are happy indeed, bound to erect the grateful altar, and offer him the sacrifices of never-ending praise.

*Ver. 29. They said, Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing*] There seems to be no doubt, from God's choice of him, that Gideon was no worshipper of Baal; and therefore the people, knowing this, very readily concluded that he had been guilty of this sacrilege as they deemed it, and consequently was worthy of death, ver. 30.

*Ver. 31. Joash said unto all that stood against him*] That is, against his son. There is something rational and noble in this apology which Joash makes; and it seems very likely, that the reason which he here uses had influenced his own mind; for it appears from ver. 31. that he was an idolater, till convinced by this indignity which his son offered to Baal, that the latter was a wretched idol unable

to help himself. Joash, in his indignation, observes, that so far from putting Gideon to death for dishonouring Baal, the man who should be so absurd as to plead for him, ought immediately himself to be put to death; since it was evident that *he* could be no god, by his not avenging his own cause. *While it is yet morning*, Houbigant renders, *whoever shall defend his cause till the morning, let him die*; which order the Syriac and Arabic follow.

REFLECTIONS.—To proceed in our review of this beautiful history.—Before God will advance Gideon as judge in Israel, he will put his piety as well as his courage to the test. Therefore,

1. The same night after he had appeared to him at the wine-press, he speaks to him in a vision on his bed, and commands him to overthrow the altar of Baal, which his father had erected, and at which the men of the city paid their devotions; to cut down the grove around it, or perhaps the image upon it; then build an altar on the rock where the Lord had caused the fire to break forth, and offer there his father's young bullock, designed for Baal, the second in the stall; or, *and the second*, another of seven years old, the two best of the herd; and this with the wood of the grove, or image, which he had cut down. *Note;* (1.) God often chooses unlikely instruments, as now in raising up an eminent reformer out of a house devoted to idolatry. (2.) When the blood of atonement is shed, there are comfortable hopes that the sin will be pardoned, and the affliction will end. (3.) Christ is both our rock and altar; those will be acceptable sacrifices which are offered through him. (4.) It is a wise improvement of the unrighteous mammon, when, like these monuments of idolatry, we can make it subservient to the work and service of God.

2. Gideon no sooner hears than he obeys. The same hour, probably, he arose; and, as the night best favoured his designs, and prevented interruption, before the morning, by the help of his faithful servants, whom he summoned to attend him, Baal's altar was laid in the dust, and God's new raised altar smoking with the grateful sacrifice. *Note;* (1.) In an idolatrous house, some are often found who bow not the knee to Baal, but, though in secret, cleave unto the Lord their God. (2.) He feared not his father's nor the people's displeasure: where the fear of God is, it swallows up every other concern. (3.) When we are called to God's work, it becomes us to make haste, and delay not. What thou doest, do quickly.

3. The

32 Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, Let Baal plead against him, because he hath thrown down his altar.

33 ¶ Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel.

34 But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abi-ezer was gathered after him.

35 And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh; who also was gathered after him: and he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali; and they came up to meet them.

36 ¶ And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said,

37 Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said.

38 And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water.

39 And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: let me prove, I pray thee, but

3. The morning soon disclosed the scene. The men of Baal, hastening to their devotions, are surprised to find their grove and altar ruined. Gideon soon bears the suspicion, from his known disaffection to their God: enraged even to madness, nothing will satisfy them but his blood. To this end, they call on Joash, his father, to deliver him into their hands. *Note;* (1.) They who will be zealous for God against men's sins, must still put their life in their hands. (2.) How early was Baal's altar visited? Shall not their false worship rise up in judgment against those who neither early nor late bow their knees before the true God?

4. Joash boldly refuses to comply with so cruel and unreasonable a request: whether out of natural affection for his son, or, more probably, convinced of the evil of the abominable idolatry in which he had lived. He, therefore, justly rebukes them for pleading for Baal, in opposition to the Divine command; and, instead of giving up his son, justly threatens (for which he might plead the express law of God,) the person who should dare speak a word for this idol with instant death. He also contemptuously challenges Baal, if he were a god, to plead for himself; in order to convince the people, from Baal's impotence, of their folly as well as sin in trusting in him. *Note;* (1.) If we have been zealous in a bad cause, we should with greater zeal seek to amend what we have done amiss, by our open appearance for the truth. (2.) Nothing must prevail on us to give up the innocent, whoever combine to destroy them. (3.) Though it may be highly dangerous to reprove a wicked people, we must do our duty, and trust God with the event.

*Ver. 32. He called him Jerubbaal]* Houbigant renders this, and perhaps more nearly to the Hebrew, *Nomen fecerunt ei Jerubbaal; On that day they gave him the name of Jerubbaal;* for he supposes, that his countrymen, not his father, gave him that name; the meaning of which is expressed in the next words. The Phœnicians call him Jerombalus, as appears from Sanchoniathon; and Porphyry says, that he received certain commentaries from *Jerombalus*, the priest of the god *Jewo*, which can be nothing but

the Book of Moses, as Bishop Huet has fully shewn in his *Demonst. Evang. Prop. iv. c. 2.*

*Ver. 34. The spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon]* Or, according to the Hebrew and the LXX, *the spirit of the Lord clothed Gideon.* He was replenished with courage and all other qualities necessary for a great commander.

*Ver. 36, &c. And Gideon said unto God, &c.]* This request, no doubt, was made to God in prayer, and was rather for the confirmation of their faith who joined Gideon, than from any incredulity or doubt in himself. The first miracle was certainly striking; but, in order to obviate any objection drawn from the quality inherent in wool to imbibe moisture, Gideon humbly requests that the miracle may be reversed; and the wool being dry, notwithstanding the ground round about it was wetted by a copious dew, contrary to its known quality of imbibing moisture, was such a miracle as his confederates could not resist.

REFLECTIONS.—The harvest being ready for reaping, we have here, as during the preceding years,

1. An inroad made by the confederate hosts of Midian, Amalek, and the Arabians, who, confident of success, were come to collect the spoil. Thus emboldened by success, the sinner usually advances, till God, from the pinnacle of his felicity, hurls him down into the depths of misery.

2. God stirs up Gideon to oppose them; *the spirit of the Lord came upon him, or clothed him;* a spirit of unusual courage roused him with zeal to better himself. He blows the trumpet, invites all volunteers to his standard; and those who would have stoned him yesterday, are to-day the first to follow his orders. Of Manasseh chiefly he composed his army, though Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali also generously lent their assistance. *Note;* (1.) In a common cause, we should be ready to share the danger with our brethren. (2.) In the men of Abi-ezer, we see what changes God can work. Thus has Divine Grace, often at a stroke, changed persecutors into preachers, and the most abandoned into converts of truth and holiness. (3.) When God gives us a spirit of grace and courage, however strong our corruptions within, or spiritual enemies without, he will subdue them under our feet.

this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew.

40 And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground.

C H A P. VII.

*Gideon, by the command of God, selects a small number out of his army to go against the Midianites, who are put to flight, and destroy each other. Their two princes, Oreb and Zeeb, are taken and slain.*

[Before Christ 1267.]

**T**HEN Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, and all the people that were with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Harod: so that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley.

2 And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands,

3. Gideon hereupon, for the confirmation of his own faith, or rather, perhaps, for the encouragement of those who were with him, asks of God a sign, to assure him of victory over the numerous hosts of the Midianites. God consents to it: Gideon lays the fleece on the floor, and on the morrow, according to his own proposal, the fleece is filled with water, and the ground dry around it. *Note;* It is a blessed token for good in a minister's labours, when his own soul, like Gideon's fleece, is replenished with the dew of divine grace.—Once more he presumes to ask, ashamed of his own boldness, and begging pardon for his request: let the sign be inverted; the fleece dry, the floor wet. God consents, and it is done; thus silencing every doubt of the certainty of his success.

C H A P. VII.

*Ver. 2. The people—with thee are too many for me* It is equal to Omnipotence to save by many or few; but, designing in this case to make it alike conspicuous to the Israelites and the neighbouring nations, that the victory was wholly owing to his interposition, God was pleased to order it in such a manner, as to prove, beyond doubt, that he alone was the author of it.

REFLECTIONS.—Gideon, now fully convinced of his mission, is in haste to execute it. At early dawn he rises, his army is drawn out, and his camp fixed near the well of Harod. Diligence in duty must follow faith in the promise. The disproportion was very great, indeed, between the hosts of Midian and Israel; but, instead of lessening, VOL. II.

left Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.

3 Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand.

4 And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go.

5 So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink.

6 And the number of them that lapped,

God will have it increased, that they may see it was not their own arm which saved them. For this purpose, God commands,

1. Proclamation to be made through the camp, for the fearful and faint-hearted to depart before the next morning. Gideon obeys, and more than two-thirds of this little army shamefully turn their backs, and embrace the offer. Probably they had run together in haste at first; but when they saw the numerous host of Midian, wished themselves safe at home again. *Note;* (1.) Many take up with the profession of Christ's service, who have never weighed the consequence, and therefore quickly start aside like a broken bow. (2.) They who are enslaved by the fear of man, are better out of God's camp than in it, as their fearfulness is apt to be contagious, and to discourage the faithful.

2. Ten thousand remained, and these were yet too many: they might think their valour made up for the want of numbers, and ascribe the victory to themselves; therefore, another separation is made, by bringing them to the water to drink, and selecting those who lapped out of their hands from those who kneeled down to drink, which reduced their numbers to 300 men, and all the rest were dismissed. Thus Gideon's faith was eminently displayed, and his readiness to trust the matter entirely with God appeared. *Note;* (1.) God's ways are often mysterious, and he reduces his people to the greater straits, that his own glory may the more be magnified in their preservation. (2.) When faith is in exercise, no difficulties will make us stagger at the promise.

3. The 300 that remain when their brethren have been dismissed, are also in no wise accounted as combatant.

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putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water.

7 And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the *other* people go every man unto his place.

8 So the people took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets: and he sent all *the rest of* Israel every man unto his tent, and retained those three hundred men: and the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley.

9 ¶ And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Arise, get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered it into thine hand.

10 But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host:

11 And thou shalt hear what they say; and afterward shall thine hands be strengthened to go down unto the host. Then went he down with Phurah his servant unto the outside of the armed men that *were* in the host.

12 And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels *were* without number, as the sand by the sea-side for multitude.

13 And when Gideon was come, behold, *there was* a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along.

14 And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: *for* into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host.

15 And it was *so*, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise: for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian.

16 ¶ And he divided the three hundred men *into* three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers.

17 And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be *that*, as I do, so shall ye do.

18 When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that *are* with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, *The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.*

19 ¶ So Gideon, and the hundred men that *were* with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that *were* in their hands.

20 And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow *withal*: and they cried, *The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.*

21 And they stood every man in his place round about the camp: and all the host ran,

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They are armed with trumpets instead of swords, and carry their victuals in their hands, as if God had designed that they should spend the day with music and feasting, instead of meeting their enemies in a field of battle. *Note*: (1.) God's work is often accomplished by the most unlikely means. (2.) When God commands to arms, and appoints our weapons, we may safely advance against our most formidable enemies, though armed only with a trumpet, or five smooth stones.

*Ver. 13. And when Gideon was come, behold, &c.*] However extraordinary this dream, and the interpretation of it, may appear; we must remember, that it was immediately inspired by God himself, to encourage Gideon, who was

sent to the Midianitish host by the Lord, on purpose to hear it; and, in this view, we can find no difficulty in the interpretation given of it by the Midianitish soldier.

*Ver. 18. The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon*] Though the word *sword* is not in the Hebrew in this place, yet, as it is read in the 20th verse, our translators have very properly added it. It is evident, says Houbigant, that in these words Gideon alludes to the interpretation of the dream given in the 14th verse. As the *three hundred men* were divided into three companies, detached to different parts of the Midianitish camp, Gideon, as appears from the next verse, was attended only by one hundred men.

*Ver. 21. They stood every man in his place round about the camp*] Not one of the three hundred men stirred a foot from

and cried, and fled.

22 And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the LORD set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host: and the host fled to Beth-shittah in Zererath, and to the border of Abel-meholah, unto Tabbath.

23 And the men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphtali, and out of Asher, and out of all Manasseh, and pursued after the Midianites.

24 ¶ And Gideon sent messengers throughout all mount Ephraim, saying, Come down against the Midianites, and take before them the waters unto Bethbarah and Jordan. Then all the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and took the waters unto Bethbarah and Jordan.

25 And they took two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb; and they flew Oreb upon the rock Oreb, and Zeeb they flew at the wine-press of Zeeb, and pursued Midian, and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side Jordan.

C H A P. VIII.

*Gideon pacifies the Ephraimites; he takes the two kings, Zeba and Zalmunna, prisoners. He refuses the kingdom offered to him, and dies, being the father of seventy children.*

[Before Christ 1267.]

AND the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? And they did chide with him sharply.

from his place, but stood still without striking a blow, as if they had been only torch-bearers to give light to the army to see their way to the camp, and to do execution. The work was the Lord's; the stratagem had been in vain without his concurrence. He can make the meanest and most unlikely instruments subservient to the welfare of his people, and productive of the desolation of their enemies.

REFLECTIONS.—We have here an account,

1. Of the manner in which Gideon made the attack upon the Midianites. His little army is divided into three companies, each of an hundred men, armed not with sword or bow, but with a trumpet in one hand, and lamps concealed in pitchers, in the other. A little past midnight they advanced, just as the watch was set, to give the speedier alarm; and the order is, to follow Gideon's example: when lo! in an instant, the trumpets are blown, the pitchers broken, the lights blazing on every side, and they shout aloud, The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon! *Note;* (1.) By the trumpet of the everlasting gospel, and the light held forth from the earthen vessels of faithful ministers, the powers of Satan's kingdom are shaken. (2.) Though the work be of men, the excellency of power is of God; if Gideon has the honour to wield the sword, it is God who tempers its edge, and directs its point. (3.) If these pitchers, trumpets, and shoutings, thus dismayed the hosts of Midian, how much greater terrors will overwhelm the sleeping sinner, when startled with the midnight cry, the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, he shall, astonished, behold the sword of justice drawn, and stand unable to escape amidst the flames of dissolving elements, before the dread tribunal of an offended God.

2. The Midianites awake affrighted, apprehending, no doubt, the army of Israel in their camp, and seized with panic fears, they cry out, and run they know not whither; but in their haste to fly, counting every one they meet a foe, each man's sword is set against his fellow, and

Gideon and his army have only to stand still, and see the great salvation of God; the few who escape, hurry on to a place of safety, as if the sword of Gideon was at their heels. *Note;* (1.) The wicked fleeth when no man pursueth. (2.) In violent frights the exercise of reason is, for a time, suspended, and men act in direct opposition to their own preservation. (3.) God often sets his people's enemies at variance, and punishes them by their own hands. (4.) Though now there is hope to escape from the sword of the Lord, if we fly to Jesus, our true city of refuge; yet if the present moment be lost, in the next it may be too late.

*Ver. 24. And Gideon sent messengers throughout all mount Ephraim.* He was desirous, as Bishop Patrick observes, that others should have some share with him in finishing this work, though he alone, with some few, began it, and was exposed to all the danger. "Would to God," says Peter Martyr on this occasion, "that we were of this spirit in the church of Christ! that when any noble work is begun, we would call in all to help to perfect it! but Gideons are rare; and it is but too common to see the best undertakings defeated by a base jealousy."

*Ver. 25. They took two princes of the Midianites.* Two of their princes or generals, for the Hebrew word may signify either. Oreb, in the Hebrew, signifies a crow, and Zeeb, a wolf. It was anciently the custom for great men to take the names of their families from the animal world. So we find the *Gracchi*, *Corvini*, and *Aquilini*, among the Romans; names, which were either used as fortunate omens, or as monuments of their courage and dexterity in military achievements. The rock and the wine-press, no doubt, had their names from these princes. Their heads were carried to Gideon, as was usually done in after times. Thus Pompey's head was brought to Cæsar, and Cicero's to Mark Antony.

2 And he said unto them, What have I done now in comparison of you? *Is* not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abi-ezer?

3 God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb, and Zeeb: and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that.

4 ¶ And Gideon came to Jordan, and passed over, he, and the three hundred men that *were* with him, faint, yet pursuing *them*.

5 And he said unto the men of Succoth, Give, I pray you, loaves of bread unto the people that follow me; for they *be* faint, and I am pursuing after Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian.

6 And the princes of Succoth said, *Are* the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thine army?

7 And Gideon said, Therefore when the LORD hath delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into mine hand, then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers.

8 And he went up thence to Penuel, and spake unto them likewise: and the men of Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth had answered *him*.

9 And he spake also unto the men of Penuel, saying, When I come again in peace, I will

break down this tower.

10 ¶ Now Zebah and Zalmunna *were* in Karkor, and their host with them, about fifteen thousand *men*, all that were left of all the hosts of the children of the east: for there fell an hundred and twenty thousand men that drew sword.

11 And Gideon went up by the way of them that dwelt in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and smote the host: for the host was secure.

12 And when Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued after them, and took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and discomfited all the host.

13 ¶ And Gideon the son of Joash returned from battle before the sun *was up*,

14 And caught a young man of the men of Succoth, and enquired of him: and he described unto him the princes of Succoth, and the elders thereof, *even* threescore and seventeen men.

15 And he came unto the men of Succoth, and said, Behold, Zebah and Zalmunna, with whom ye did upbraid me, saying, *Are* the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thy men *that are weary*?

16 And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and with them he taught the men of Succoth.

#### CHAP. VIII.

*Ver. 2. Is not the gleaning, &c.]* The Ephraimites, displeased that they had not been called to share the glory of this enterprise with their brethren of the tribe of Manasseh, to whom they judged themselves superior, sharply expostulate with Gideon upon the occasion. He gives them a soft and gentle answer, which had the due effect, *abating their anger towards him*, ver. 3. (See Prov. xv. 1.) He magnifies their service, as greatly superior to his own; disarming their insolence by his humility; their anger by his meekness; a singular instance of modesty and prudence in a man of Gideon's carriage. See chap. xii. The words, *Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim, &c.* mean, that what the tribe of Ephraim had, as it were, gleaned and picked up after the victory, particularly their capture of Oreb and Zeeb, was far more than all which Gideon and his host had done. Abi-ezer was the chief of the family from which Gideon descended. See ch. vi. 11. Josh. xvii. 2.

*Ver. 6. Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine*

*hand]* This was an insulting irreligious taunt, which shewed at once that these persons believed not the divine interposition in behalf of Gideon, and, at the same time, were enemies to the true religion; no wonder, therefore, that Gideon replies to them with great severity, and afterwards inflicts upon them the punishment which they deserve. See note on ver. 16.

*Ver. 10. Children of the East]* Children of Kedem; i. e. Ishmaelites. Hiller. Onomastic. p. 534.

*Ver. 11. By the way of them that dwell in tents]* That is, by the country of the Arabians, called Scenitæ, from their dwelling in tents.

*Ver. 13. Before the sun was up]* Very different and contrary interpretations are given of this passage. Houbigant supposes, that החרם *becharas* does not signify *the sun* here, but is the proper name of a place; and accordingly he renders it *by that place which is above Hares*; and in this interpretation he is countenanced by the LXX, Syriac, and Arabic versions.

*Ver. 16. And with them he taught the men of Succoth]* He threatened in the 7th verse to *tear their flesh with the thorns*

17 And he beat down the tower of Penuel, and slew the men of the city.

18 ¶ Then said he unto Zebah and Zalmunna, What manner of men *were they* whom

ye slew at Tabor? And they answered, As thou art, so *were* they; each one resembled the children of a king.

19 And he said, They *were* my brethren,

*thorns of the wilderness, and with briars, which Le Clerc there renders, then will I thresh their flesh, &c.* and here for *and with them he taught, &c.* he reads, *and made an example of them to the men of Succoth.* But there is nobody, says Houbigant, conversant in the style of Scripture, who can doubt that דַשְׁתִּי *dashthi, I will tear*, being read in the 7th verse, the true reading here is, וַיִּדַשְׁ וַיִּדַשְׁ *vaidash, and he tore*, and not וַיִּדַע *vaidang, and he taught*, as we now read. What gives the greatest confirmation to this conjecture is, that the ancient versions, with one consent, agree in this reading. It is doubtful what kind of punishment it was that Gideon inflicted upon the *princes of Succoth*; but as their crime was the same as that of the men of Penuel, there seems to be no doubt that it was a punishment unto death. However severe, this chastisement was just. In refusing Gideon the succours which he demanded for the troops employed to save the state, they rendered themselves guilty of a species of rebellion; they sinned against the laws of humanity; they joined insult to their cruelty; and their refusal, unworthy of a people who had any respect for religion, and any love of their country, merited a more public chastisement; as otherwise their example might have proved contagious, and have defeated all the good effects of Gideon's government. See Scheuchzer on the place.

REFLECTIONS.—Though the battle is won, and a vast slaughter already made of one hundred and twenty thousand men of war, yet the sword of Gideon cannot rest whilst Zeba and Zalmunna, with fifteen thousand men, are still alive in Karkor. We have therefore,

1. His hot pursuit of them. With his three hundred men, not one of whom was missing, he passes Jordan; and, since God had so eminently supported him, seeks no other assistance: though faint with watching, want of food, and fatigue, he slackens not his pace, nor is discouraged with the refusal of refreshment that he met with at Succoth or Penuel, but continues his march; and, having taken a compass out of the strait road, he surprised the fugitive Midianites, who thought themselves secure, and beyond the possibility of being overtaken. As before, they seek their safety in flight; and when most of them are slain, their two kings remain prisoners with the conquerors. *Note;* (1.) Though in our spiritual warfare our flesh and heart often seem ready to fail, we must be still looking up for strength, and persevere. (2.) Those from whom we might expect the most cordial assistance, often, like the men of Succoth and Penuel, seek to weaken our hands and discourage our hearts. (3.) Patient perseverance will infallibly be crowned with success.

2. His heavy chastisement of his unnatural countrymen, according to his threatening when they refused to assist him with provisions in the pursuit; his request was small, he asked only a few loaves of bread; his necessities were urgent, and his deserts at the hand of every Israelite such

as entitled him to their best entertainment; but they, whether afraid of the resentment of the Midianites, or led, from the smallness of Gideon's forces, to treat his attempt as rash and desperate, not only shut up their bowels of compassion from him as a brother, but ridiculed his vain pursuit, as they conceived it, casting contempt on his faith in God. Justly incensed at such treatment, where not himself was more injured than God dishonoured, he had threatened to visit them; and, though he could not then interrupt his march to chastise their insolence, now that he is returned he will do it more deliberately and severely. Accordingly, having gained intelligence of the chief men at whose instigation he had been so used, he seizes their cities and persons: after upbraiding them with their baseness, and shewing them the captive kings in chains, as he had threatened, he scourged those of Succoth with thorns and briars, that, by this correction, they might know their folly and their sin, whilst the men of Penuel were put to the sword, and their fortrefs demolished. *Note;* (1.) They who sin will smart for it, either now under the rod of correction, or eternally under the wrath of God. (2.) It is no new thing to have the world ridicule the pursuits of God's people; but they who counted their lives madness, will shortly see that the folly was in themselves. (3.) In the severest chastisement, God means not our destruction, but correction: happy they who acknowledge God's hand, and correspond with the designs of his grace.

*Ver. 18. Then said he unto Zebah and Zalmunna]* The history is so extremely short in this place, that we can only form conjectures: it is plain, from the examination of these princes, that they had slain Gideon's brethren; but with what circumstances we know not. They tell Gideon, that they resembled him; *as thou art, so were they*; i. e. men in whose aspect greatness and majesty were conspicuous; *every one resembled the children of a king.* For this murder of his brethren, Gideon orders his eldest son Jether, ver. 20. to rise up and slay Zeba and Zalmunna; for it was not unusual in ancient times for great persons to execute those offenders upon whom they passed sentence. They had then no public executioners. Samuel himself hewed Agag to pieces in Gilgal; and Benaiah, the general of the army, fell upon Joab at the horns of the altar. Gideon, like another Asdrubal, would have animated his son by this execution to a zeal against the enemies of Israel; but the youth was afraid to obey his father's commands; terrified, possibly, by the fierce countenance of the Midianites, intrepid at the view of death, as their next words prove; in which they entreat Gideon, as a man of strength and dignity, to dispatch them, that they might not have the disgrace of their defeat augmented by an ignominious death from the hands of a stripling.

*Note;* The day is coming when every secret thing will be brought to light, and such conviction flash on the offenders, that they shall no longer be able to conceal their guilt.

*Ver.*



even the sons of my mother: as the LORD liveth, if ye had saved them alive, I would not slay you.

20 And he said unto Jether his first-born, Up, and slay them. But the youth drew not his sword: for he feared, because he *was* yet a youth.

21 Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, Rise thou, and fall upon us: for as the man *is*, *so is* his strength. And Gideon arose and slew Zebah and Zalmunna, and took away the ornaments that *were* on their camels' necks.

22 ¶ Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian.

23 And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the LORD shall rule over you.

24 And Gideon said unto them, I would

desire a request of you, that ye would give me every man the ear-rings of his prey. (For they had golden ear-rings, because they *were* Ishmaelites.)

25 And they answered, We will willingly give *them*. And they spread a garment, and did cast therein every man the ear-rings of his prey.

26 And the weight of the golden ear-rings that he requested was a thousand and seven hundred *shekels* of gold; beside ornaments, and collars, and purple raiment that *was* on the kings of Midian, and beside the chains that *were* about their camels' necks.

27 And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, *even* in Ophrah: and all Israel went thither a whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house.

28 ¶ Thus was Midian subdued before the

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*Ver. 22. Rule thou over us*] The Israelites, forgetful of the peculiar government under which they were, wished to be ruled, like their neighbour-nations, by a king, and therefore entreat Gideon to assume the sceptre; but he, more wise than they, absolutely refuses them; and at the same time, in the most noble manner, reminds them that God was their king: *The Lord will rule over you.*

*Ver. 27. Gideon made an ephod*] As the people in the height of their gratitude had offered Gideon the kingdom, he justly concluded that they could not refuse him an inferior petition; he asked therefore, and they readily gave him, such of their spoils as were necessary to the making of an ephod. By referring to Exod. xxviii. 6. we shall find an account of the ephod appropriated by God to the use of the high-priest. This of Gideon, most likely, was made according to the pattern of that in Shiloh; and as the presents here given are evidently too numerous for the construction of an ephod only, it may be thought that the word ephod is here used for all the appendages of the ephod, the whole sacerdotal dress and service, which Gideon improperly instituted at Ophrah, and which *drew all Israel a whoring thither after it*; i. e. abandoning the worship of God in Shiloh, and unfaithfully attending this false and unallowed service. Some, however, think, that this ephod was formed by Gideon with the best design, merely as a triumphant emblem of the victory granted to him by God. See Spencer de Leg. Heb. lib. iii. cap. 3. sect. 5.

REFLECTIONS.—Though Gideon met with so ill a reception from the men of Penuel and Succoth, he met with a more honourable one from the rest of Israel.

1. They offer him the government, and to make it hereditary in his family. So affected were they by the greatness of their deliverance, that they thought no returns

adequate to the deserts of their captain. *Note*; They, who have seen the Lord Jesus appearing for their salvation, cannot but with hearty choice say unto him, Come and reign over us.

2. Gideon modestly and piously declines the proposal; though he would serve them as a judge, he will not rule over them as a king: this would be to change the established government, which was a theocracy; and therefore neither his sons, any more than himself, may assume such authority. *Note*; The ambition of exalting a family is a great snare; but a true patriot, who means not himself but the public, will decline rather than seek honours, satisfied with the consciousness of his own integrity, and desiring not to rule, but to serve his country.

3. Though he declined their offer, he has a request to make to them. He asked the golden ear-rings of their spoil, to which he added what fell to his own share of jewels and fine garments; and with these he made an ephod, either designed for a memorial of his victory to be preserved in Ophrah, or conceiving that, as God had ordered him to build an altar, and had accepted his sacrifices, he might continue it to minister before him, and ask advice and direction from God, though not of the order of Aaron; and perhaps, as Shiloh lay in the tribe of Ephraim, who had disobliterated him, he the rather fell on this method to prevent his going up to the altar of the Lord there. But, however honestly it was meant, it proved a dangerous snare, leading Gideon, and his own house, into a breach of God's commands, and proving a temptation to Israel, always too prone to idolatry. *Note*; (1.) In God's worship we must carefully adhere to his word, avoiding all superstition. (2.) What may be indifferent or innocent to one man, may, to a weaker brother, be a dangerous snare. (3.) From small beginnings arose all the present horrid idolatry of the church of Rome.

children of Israel, so that they lifted up their heads no more. And the country was in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon.

29 ¶ And Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and dwelt in his own house.

30 And Gideon had threescore and ten sons of his body begotten: for he had many wives.

31 And his concubine that *was* in Shechem, she also bare him a son, whose name he called Abimelech.

32 ¶ And Gideon the son of Joash died in a good old age, and was buried in the sepulchre of Joash his father, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

33 And it came to pass, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel turned again, and went a whoring after Baalim, and made Baal-berith their god.

34 And the children of Israel remembered not the LORD their God, who had delivered them out of the hands of all their enemies on every side:

35 Neither shewed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, *namely* Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had shewed unto Israel.

### CHAP. IX.

*Abimelech is made king, and puts his brethren to death. Jotham, the only surviving one, rebuketh Abimelech and the men of Shechem by a parable, and foretels their ruin. At the siege of Thebez, Abimelech is killed by a piece of a mill-stone cast upon his head.*

[Before Christ 1231.]

**A**ND Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem unto his mother's

brethren, and communed with them, and with all the family of the house of his mother's father, saying,

2 Speak, I pray you, in the ears of all the men of Shechem, Whether *is* better for you, either that all the sons of Jerubbaal, *which are* threescore and ten persons, reign over you, or that one reign over you? remember also that *I am* your bone and your flesh.

3 And his mother's brethren spake of him in the ears of all the men of Shechem all these words: and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech; for they said, He *is* our brother.

4 And they gave him threescore and ten *pieces* of silver out of the house of Baal-berith, wherewith Abimelech hired vain and light persons, which followed him.

5 And he went unto his father's house at Ophrah, and slew his brethren the sons of Jerubbaal, *being* threescore and ten persons, upon one stone: notwithstanding yet Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left; for he hid himself.

6 And all the men of Shechem gathered together, and all the house of Millo, and went, and made Abimelech king, by the plain of the pillar that *was* in Shechem.

7 ¶ And when they told *it* to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried, and said unto them, Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you.

4. After Gideon's victory the land had again rest for forty years, during which time he judged them, and kept them, it is to be hoped, in the ways and service of God. *Note:* It is a great mercy to any people to have the lives of faithful ministers long spared among them.

*Ver. 33. Went a whoring after Baalim*] As the same expression is made use of in ver. 27. with regard to Gideon's *ephod*, we may reasonably conclude, that, in the former case, they were guilty of idolatry, by worshipping the true God in an improper manner, and contrary to his immediate commands; as, in the latter, they were guilty of idolatry by worshipping false gods: an observation which confirms the opinion that we have advanced in the note on the former part of the 27th verse, concerning the *ephod*.

### CHAP. IX.

*Ver. 2. In the ears of all the men of Shechem*] We are prepared for this exploit of Abimelech, by the mention of

him in the 31st verse of the foregoing chapter. His mother, it is conjectured by some, gave him the name of Abimelech, i. e. *my father a king*, out of pride and arrogance; and possibly the early impressions of this sort which he received were the foundation of that cruel ambition which occasioned his ruin. What we render *men of Shechem*, Houbigant renders *nobles or princes*; because, says he, the *citizens* are evidently distinguished in the 45th and 46th verses from the *nobles*: for the citizens in the 45th verse are called *העם haam*, the people, but in the 46th verse, *באלי baali*, nobles; who could not be the citizens of Shechem, as the house of their god Berith contained them all. The like distinction is made in the 51st verse: besides, the government of the tribes was aristocratical; and therefore the elders and chiefs, not the whole people, were to be consulted in the choice of a king. The same mode of expression is used in the foregoing chapter, ver. 8. compared with ver. 6. By the *pieces of silver* mentioned in ver. 4. it is generally thought that shekels are meant.

*Ver.*

8 The trees went forth *on a time* to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive-tree, Reign thou over us.

9 But the olive-tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?

10 And the trees said to the fig-tree, Come thou, *and* reign over us.

11 But the fig-tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees?

12 Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, *and* reign over us.

13 And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?

*Ver. 5. Upon one stone*] It has been conjectured from this by some, that Abimelech intended to make his brethren a great victim to Baal; for a stone was sometimes used for an altar, 1 Sam. vi. 14, 15.; and so they take this to be done in revenge of the sacrifice of the bullock prepared for Baal, chap. vi. 25, 26. Which crime of Gideon, as these idolaters account it, they designed to expiate by the sacrifice of all his sons.

*Ver. 6. And all the house of Millo*] Bertram, in his book *de Repub. Jud.* is of opinion, that *Millo* is not a proper name in this place; but that as by the first phrase, *all the men of Shechem*, are understood all the principal men or elders of the city, so the latter phrase denotes all the citizens, who, in a full assembly, agreed to make Abimelech king. *In the plain of the pillar*, is rendered by Houbigant and many others, *near the oak-grove*, &c. See Isai. xxix. 3.

REFLECTIONS.—Abimelech resolves, if possible, to secure that crown which Gideon had refused; and, though neither called of God, nor chosen of men, by art and insinuation he thrusts himself into the throne.

1. He makes application secretly to his mother's friends in Shechem, and they, at his instigation, engage in his interest the leading men of the city. The plea he used to support his solicitation was a lying insinuation of his brethren, as if they intended to lord it over the land, and their number would make the burden of such a government insupportable; though it never appears that they had the least intention of doing so, as it was expressly contrary to their father's solemn declarations. *Note*; (1.) They who have a wicked purpose to serve will lie to accomplish it. (2.) They who are conscious of their own bad designs are ready to suspect others of the same ill intentions.

2. His application was as successful as he could wish. The men of Shechem were very well pleased to have one of their brethren a king, and their city a metropolis, expecting, no doubt, their advantage therein; and therefore, to support him in his design, they supply him with money out of the common treasury, which was in the temple of their idol Baal-berith, or, it may be, from the hallowed things they had dedicated to him, imagining there must needs be success from such a support: with this, he raises a band of men, profligate as himself, to perpetrate the crimes that he meditated. *Note*; (1.) Self is at the bottom of every worldly man's policy. (2.) They who help the wicked often prepare a rod for themselves.

3. It is often the case, that, where there is a rage to reign, men must wade to a crown through blood. Presuming that his father's sons would justly object to his

advancement, he resolves first to dispatch them; and all but one are slain together on one stone, by himself and his wicked associates. *Note*; Ambition never hesitates; neither conscience nor natural affection, fear of God nor love of men, can bind those who are under its baleful influence.

*Ver. 8. The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king, &c.*] We have here the most ancient example of the use of parables and apologues, to set forth the most serious matters and the most interesting truths. The Greeks pretend to have been the inventors, but there is nothing more absurd than their vanity in this respect. A long time before AEsop, and every other author known to their nation, the Orientals, and particularly the Hebrews, made use of this ingenious manner, to instruct by amusing, without giving pain or offence. Bishop Warburton, in his *Div. Leg.* vol. iii. has some ingenious remarks upon this subject, to which we refer the reader; observing only from him, that, "As speech became more cultivated, the rude manner of speaking by action was smoothed and polished into an apologue or *fable*; where the speaker, to enforce his purpose by a suitable impression, told a familiar tale of his own invention, accompanied with such circumstances as made his design evident and persuasive; for language was yet too narrow, and the minds of men too undisciplined, to support only abstract reasoning and a direct address. We have a noble example of this form of instruction in a speech of Jotham to the men of Shechem, in which he upbraids their folly, and foretels their ruin, in choosing Abimelech for their king: and this is not only the oldest, but likewise the most beautiful apologue of antiquity. The general moral, which is of great importance, and is inculcated with all imaginable force, is, that weak and worthless men are ever most forward in thrusting themselves into power, while the wise and good decline rule, and prize their native ease and freedom. The vanity of base men in power is taught in the 15th verse; and the ridicule of that vanity is inimitably marked out in those circumstances where the *bramble* is made to bid his new subjects, who wanted no shadow, to come and put their trust in his; and that, in case of disobedience, he would send out from himself a fire, that should devour the cedars of Lebanon; whereas the fire of the *bramble* was short and momentary, even to a proverb among Easterns."

*Ver. 13. Wine, which cheereth God and man*] It has been objected, that Scripture here suggests false and unworthy notions of the Supreme Being; but we are to remember,

14 Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, *and* reign over us.

15 And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, *then* come *and* put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon.

16 Now therefore, if ye have done truly and sincerely, in that ye have made Abimelech king, and if ye have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done unto him according to the deservings of his hands;

17 (For my father fought for you, and adventured his life for you, and delivered you out of the hand of Midian:

18 And ye are risen up against my father's house this day, and have slain his sons, three-score and ten persons, upon one stone, and have made Abimelech, the son of his maid-servant, king over the men of Shechem, because he *is* your brother;)

19 If ye then have dealt truly and sincerely with Jerubbaal and with his house this day, *then* rejoice ye in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you:

20 But if not, let fire come out from Abimelech, and devour the men of Shechem, and the house of Millo; and let fire come out from the men of Shechem, and from the house of Millo, and devour Abimelech.

remember, that the words are part of a parable. In a parable, or fiction, every word or sentence is not to be interpreted with the utmost rigour, unless we are to take it to be Scripture doctrine that *trees* could talk. Jotham, to represent the forwardness and self-assurance of foolish persons in undertaking high things, which wiser and better men would decline, brings in a fable, setting forth how the *olive-tree*, the *fig-tree*, and the *vine*, and all the choice trees, had modestly refused a province not proper for them; but that the *bramble*, the unfittest of all, had accepted it notwithstanding, and was likely to perform accordingly. Now the words here cited are the words of the *vine*, and perhaps run upon a pagan hypothesis, allowable in a fable or apologue. So Castalio, Le Clerc, and others, interpret the place; and they render the words, not *God* and *man*, but *gods* and *men*, which is better. Perhaps, in such a kind of fiction, though it had a serious moral, it might be thought more *decent* to use the pagan style of *gods* and *men*, than to introduce the *true God*, either by name or implication: or Jotham, speaking to the idolatrous Shechemites, might adapt his speech to their notions, the better to be understood by them. There is another construction which some have recommended, namely, that "Wine cheereth both high and low, אֱלֹהִים *elohim* and אֲנָשִׁים *anashim*, "princes and peasants; or else, *princes and persons of quality.*" This last construction is maintained by Le Clerc, and his translator Rofs. But I prefer the interpretation of Le Clerc abovementioned, as being confirmed by the following ingenious remark of Bishop Warburton: "Jotham," says he, "did not mean God the governor of the universe; but all must see his meaning is, that wine *cheereth hero-gods, and common men*; for Jotham is here speaking to an idolatrous city, which *ran a whoring after Baalim, and made Baal-berith their god*: a god sprung from among men, as may partly be collected from his name, as well as from divers other circumstances of the story. This expression, which is very beautiful, contains one of the finest strokes of ridicule in the whole apologue, so much abounding with them; and insinuates to the Shechemites the vanity and pitiful original of their idolatrous gods, who were thought to be, or really

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"had been, *refreshed with wine.*" Div. Leg. vol. iii. p. 104.

*Ver. 20. Let fire come out]* This is not an execratory, but a prophetic expression, a prediction of what would follow from their cruel and injurious conduct. Mr. Maundrell gives an account of *Beer*, to which Jotham fled in his journey to Aleppo, p. 64. He says, that it enjoys a very pleasant situation on an easy declivity, fronting Southward. At the bottom of the hill it has a fountain of excellent water, from which it has its name. At the upper side are the remains of an old church built by the empress Helena.

REFLECTIONS.—Jotham alone, of all the sons of Gideon, escaped; and on a day when the men of Shechem were assembled, perhaps the very day that Abimelech is elected, in the plain, from the top of mount Gerizim, whence he could be heard, and yet escape if they attempted to seize him, he gives the Shechemites a reproof for their baseness, and a warning of the consequences of their folly; and this he couches under an elegant fable, the contrivance of which is as beautiful as the application was apposite.

1. The fable itself. The trees are represented as choosing a king; the olive, vine, and fig-tree, to whom the sovereignty is offered, decline the honour; while the wretched bramble grasps at the dominion, vaunts the protection he would give them, and threatens to fire the cedars which should dare refuse allegiance and submission. In the one, we see the modesty of Gideon's sons; in the other, the vanity of Abimelech, and the scourge they might expect from that fiery bramble. *Note;* (1.) The high office which the proud man covets the humble and wise decline, knowing its weight. (2.) They who are elected to public service must forego all private advantages, as the trees in this fable intimate. (3.) None so insolent and overbearing as a low person raised above his station.

2. He makes a pathetic application to the people; reminds them of the services of his father, upbraids them with their ingratitude to their benefactor's family, appeals to their consciences for the baseness of their proceedings, and to the issue of them for a proof of their wickedness; therein prophetically warning them of the mutual miseries

and

21 And Jotham ran away, and fled, and went to Beer, and dwelt there, for fear of Abimelech his brother.

22 ¶ When Abimelech had reigned three years over Israel,

23 Then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech:

24 That the cruelty *done* to the threescore and ten sons of Jerubbaal might come, and their blood be laid upon Abimelech their brother, which slew them; and upon the men of Shechem, which aided him in the killing of his brethren.

25 And the men of Shechem set liers in wait for him in the top of the mountains, and they robbed all that came along that way by them: and it was told Abimelech.

26 And Gaal the son of Ebed came with his brethren, and went over to Shechem: and the men of Shechem put their confidence in him.

27 And they went out into the fields, and gathered their vineyards, and trode *the grapes*, and made merry, and went into the house of

their god, and did eat and drink, and cursed Abimelech.

28 And Gaal the son of Ebed said, Who *is* Abimelech, and who *is* Shechem, that we should serve him? *Is not he* the son of Jerubbaal? and Zebul his officer? Serve the men of Hamor the father of Shechem: for why should we serve him?

29 And would to God this people were under my hand! then would I remove Abimelech. And he said to Abimelech, Increase thine army, and come out.

30 ¶ And when Zebul the ruler of the city heard the words of Gaal the son of Ebed, his anger was kindled.

31 And he sent messengers unto Abimelech privily, saying, Behold, Gaal the son of Ebed and his brethren be come to Shechem; and, behold, they fortify the city against thee.

32 Now therefore up by night, thou and the people that *is* with thee, and lie in wait in the field:

33 And it shall be, *that* in the morning, as soon as the sun is up, thou shalt rise early, and set upon the city: and, behold, *when* he and the people that *is* with him come out

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and contentions which would ensue from their present choice. *Note;* (1.) Ungrateful man is sadly apt to forget his generous benefactors. (2.) When we see men rejoice in prosperous wickedness, let us mark their end; and we shall usually be convinced, here below, that there is a God that judgeth the earth.

3. Jotham flies hereupon from the resentment of Abimelech, and finds a safe retreat to Beer; where, if he had not Abimelech's greatness, he hath better, a good conscience; and his low estate is his security.

*Ver. 26. And Gaal the son of Ebed]* It is very uncertain who this man was. It has been rationally conjectured by some, that he was a Gentile, and desirous to see the authority of the Canaanites restored. His whole speech and proceeding shew him to have been an insidious demagogue, desirous to obtain popularity, that by it he might climb up to dominion.

*Ver. 27. Did eat and drink]* They probably offered sacrifices, and afterwards feasted together upon those sacrifices.

**REFLECTIONS.**—For a time the wickedness of Abimelech seemed to prosper, and three years he enjoyed in peace his ill gotten dignity; but the triumphing of the wicked is short, like sunshine before the thunder-storm. For,

1. There was a spirit of dissention sworn between him and the Shechemites; God, in just judgment for the blood

which was shed, visiting their sins upon them by the hands of one another. They who set up Abimelech, now, tired of his government, conspire to slay him; so tottering is that throne which has been established by cruelty and bloodshed. *Note;* (1.) They, who have once acted a perfidious part are seldom or never again to be trusted. (2.) Blood will cry for vengeance. (3.) Conspiracies in iniquity have usually but feeble bands. (4.) They who promise themselves comfort in ill gotten rule will be deceived, and find that the crown they wear is lined with thorns.

2. Gaal the son of Ebed, hearing of the discontent of the men of Shechem, comes, in hopes to turn it to his own use, and fish for himself in these troubled waters; they entertain him gladly, and he seeks to foment the dissention, and to inflame the minds of the people more against their king. At their entertainments, inflamed with wine and feasting, he boldly broaches the treason, speaks contemptuously of Abimelech, his family, and his officers; vaunting his own courage, if they would make him their captain; and challenging Abimelech to assert his title; intimating, that it would be more eligible to serve a Canaanitish king than such a one. *Note;* (1.) An artful leader, with an inflamed populace, can do a world of mischief. (2.) When men are intoxicated with wine, then they are fit for murders, treason, and every evil work. (3.) To speak evil of dignities, is highly criminal. (4.) They

who

against thee, then mayest thou do to them as thou shalt find occasion.

34 ¶ And Abimelech rose up, and all the people that *were* with him, by night, and they laid wait against Shechem in four companies.

35 And Gaal the son of Ebed went out, and stood in the entering of the gate of the city: and Abimelech rose up, and the people that *were* with him, from lying in wait.

36 And when Gaal saw the people, he said to Zebul, Behold, there come people down from the top of the mountains. And Zebul said unto him, Thou seest the shadow of the mountains as *if they were* men.

37 And Gaal spake again and said, See, there come people down by the middle of the land, and another company come along by the plain of Meonenim.

38 Then said Zebul unto him, Where is now thy mouth, wherewith thou saidst, Who is Abimelech; that we should serve him? is not this the people that thou hast despised? go out, I pray now, and fight with them.

39 And Gaal went out before the men of

Shechem, and fought with Abimelech.

40 And Abimelech chased him, and he fled before him, and many were overthrown *and* wounded, *even* unto the entering of the gate.

41 And Abimelech dwelt at Arumah: and Zebul thrust out Gaal and his brethren, that they should not dwell in Shechem.

42 And it came to pass on the morrow, that the people went out into the field; and they told Abimelech.

43 And he took the people, and divided them into three companies, and laid wait in the field, and looked, and, behold, the people *were* come forth out of the city; and he rose up against them, and smote them.

44 And Abimelech, and the company that *was* with him, rushed forward, and stood in the entering of the gate of the city; and the two *other* companies ran upon all *the people* that *were* in the fields, and slew them.

45 And Abimelech fought against the city all that day; and he took the city, and slew the people that *was* therein, and beat down the city, and sowed it with salt.

who are most valiant over a bottle often prove cowards when the sword must decide.

*Ver. 45. And sowed it with salt*] Salt, in a certain quantity, makes land barren. Hence, in Scripture, a *land of salt* signifies a barren land; Deut. xxix. 23. Psa. cvii. 33, 34. Zeph. ii. 9. Profane authors use the same expression. See Plin. lib. xxxi. cap. 7. Virg. Georg. ii. ver. 238. and Bich. Hieroz. pars i. lib. 3. Abimelech intended by this ceremony to shew his hatred of the Shechemites, by wishing that their city might lie waste, and be a perpetual desolation. Calmet observes, that modern history affords many examples of a similar vengeance. See his Comment.

REFLECTIONS.—Such proceedings were too public to be concealed, and too dangerous to be neglected.

1. Zebul, Abimelech's governor of Shechem, having got intelligence of their meetings, and incensed at their contemptuous treatment of himself, informs his master, advising him to come thither without delay, and surpriseth the conspirators before they were ready to oppose him. *Note;* (1.) Much mischief is prevented by nipping evil designs in the bud. (2.) The imprudence and improvidence of rebellious spirits are often as great as their wickedness; these blast their designs, and sink the projects of them in ruin.

2. Zebul, pretending friendship to Gaal, betrays him. Abimelech having, according to Zebul's advice, marched all night, in the morning appears with his forces descending from the mountain; Gaal, from the gate, descending

the host, Zebul, either to lull him into security, or ridicule his fears, suggests, that what he saw was only the shadow of the mountains, till a nearer approach removed the possibility of deception; he then throws off the mask, and insults him for his former bravado.

*Note;* (1.) An insolent tongue is often put to flame by its own vaunting. (2.) Those who are themselves rebels must not expect fidelity from their associates.

3. Gaal could not now refuse to go out; but he is quickly routed in the field; and, Zebul having recovered the superiority in the city, he and his abettors are that night expelled. May every traitorous design be thus blasted!

4. Abimelech at that time pushed his victory no farther; and the men of Shechem, having expelled the traitor, promise themselves, now that his anger is appeased, that they may securely gather their harvest: but treason is not so lightly passed over; nor is the wrath of a king, and such a king, so ready to subside. Understanding their security, therefore, he marches from Arumah, dividing his forces into three companies; with two, he fell upon the people in the fields; with the other, he seized the city: after he had gotten possession, the havoc was indeed dreadful; for he utterly destroyed the city, and sowed it with salt, in vengeance for their rebellion. *Note;* The wiles of the wicked return upon their own head; and rebellion usually ends in the ruin of the traitors.

5. To complete the destruction of the remainder of the Shechemites, Abimelech besieges the men of the tower of Shechem, who had fortified themselves in the temple of

46 ¶ And when all the men of the tower of Shechem heard *that*, they entered into an hold of the house of the god Berith.

47 And it was told Abimelech, that all the men of the tower of Shechem were gathered together.

48 And Abimelech gat him up to mount Zalmon, he and all the people that *were* with him; and Abimelech took an axe in his hand, and cut down a bough from the trees, and took it, and laid *it* on his shoulder, and said unto the people that *were* with him, What ye have seen me do, make haste, *and do as I have done*.

49 And all the people likewise cut down every man his bough, and followed Abimelech, and put *them* to the hold, and set the hold on fire upon them; so that all the men of the tower of Shechem died also, about a thousand men and women.

50 ¶ Then went Abimelech to Thebez, and encamped against Thebez, and took it.

51 But there was a strong tower within the city, and thither fled all the men and women, and all they of the city, and shut *it* to them, and gat them up to the top of the tower.

52 And Abimelech came unto the tower, and fought against it, and went hard unto the door of the tower to burn it with fire.

53 And a certain woman cast a piece of a millstone upon Abimelech's head, and all to break his skull.

54 Then he called hastily unto the young man his armour-bearer, and said unto him, Draw thy sword, and slay me, that men say not of me, A woman slew him. And his young man thrust him through, and he died.

55 And when the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, they departed every man unto his place.

56 ¶ Thus God rendered the wickedness of Abimelech, which he did unto his father, in slaying his seventy brethren:

57 And all the evil of the men of Shechem did God render upon their heads: and upon them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal.

#### C H A P. X.

*Tola judgeth Israel, and after him Jair: the Israelites are oppressed by the Philistines and the Ammonites: they cry unto the Lord, and encamp in Mizpeh.*

[Before Christ 1208.]

**A**ND after Abimelech there arose to defend Israel Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar; and he dwelt in Shamir in mount Ephraim.

the god Baal-berith, either trusting to the strength of the situation, or to Abimelech's veneration for that place, whence he first rose to the kingdom; but their refuge, like that of other sinners, proves a refuge of lies. Though he could not carry the place by assault, policy prevails more than the sword; at his command his men follow his example, and, surrounding it with fuel, they set the place on fire, and men, women, and children, to the number of about a thousand, all perish in the flames. *Note;* (1.) Civil wars are most inhuman; the innocent and the guilty often fall together. (2.) Vain is every covering to hide men from the wrath of God; when his fire shall be stirred up round about the sinner, it will burn, and none can quench it.

*Ver. 50. Unto Thebez*] This was a city supposed to have revolted from Abimelech, in the neighbourhood of Shechem, in the tribe of Ephraim, situated, according to Eusebius and St. Jerome, at thirteen miles' distance from Shechem.

*Ver. 53. A certain woman cast a piece of a millstone, &c.*] A woman threw down from the top of a tower a large stone upon Abimelech's head, and all to break his skull;

which is an old Anglicism, and might be rendered much more eligibly, and *fractured his skull*. Thus Pyrrhus, at the siege of Thebes, was killed by a woman who threw a tile upon his head. See Plutarch's Life of Pyrrhus. But Abimelech's death by a *stone* is the more remarkable, as it carried some stamp of his sin upon it, who had slain all his brethren on a stone.

*Ver. 57. And all the evil of the men of Shechem, &c.*] Thus Providence punished him for his wicked cruelty, after chastising the Shechemites for having served as the instrument of his ambition. Let it not be imagined, that all this happened without a special direction of heaven. The sacred historian is express to that purpose. He is silent as to what became of Jotham, Gaal, and Zebul; and, indeed, it is of little importance to know: but it cannot too often be repeated to men, that in heaven there is a God, the avenger of wickedness; that though we may not always without rashness consider temporal afflictions as the punishment of their guilt on whom they fall, yet we should be well assured, that all second causes are in the hand of Providence, and that the exemplary punishment of Abimelech and the Shechemites should make those tremble who are like them.

2 And he judged Israel twenty and three years, and died, and was buried in Shamir.

3 ¶ And after him arose Jair, a Gileadite, and judged Israel twenty and two years.

4 And he had thirty sons that rode on thirty ass-colts, and they had thirty cities, which are called Havoth-jair unto this day, which are in the land of Gilead.

5 And Jair died, and was buried in Camon.

6 ¶ And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim, and Ashtaroth, and the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook the LORD, and served not him.

7 And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the children of Ammon.

8 And that year they vexed and oppressed the children of Israel eighteen years, all the children of Israel that were on the other side Jordan in the land of the Amorites, which is in Gilead.

9 Moreover the children of Ammon passed

over Jordan to fight also against Judah, and against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim; so that Israel was sore distressed.

10 ¶ And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, saying, We have sinned against thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim.

11 And the LORD said unto the children of Israel, *Did not I deliver you* from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites, from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines?

12 The Zidonians also, and the Amalekites, and the Maonites, did oppress you; and ye cried to me, and I delivered you out of their hand.

13 Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more.

14 Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation.

15 ¶ And the children of Israel said unto the LORD, We have sinned: do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee; deliver us only, we pray thee, this day.

16 And they put away the strange gods

## CHAP. X.

*Ver. 8. And that year they vexed, &c.* Houbigant renders this, therefore at that time the children of Ammon afflicted and oppressed the children of Israel eighteen years, namely, all those who dwelt on the other side.

**REFLECTIONS.**—One tumultuous reign we have had, which needed two peaceable ones to repair its desolations.

1. Tola, of the tribe of Issachar, succeeded Abimelech; not an usurping king, but raised up of God to be a righteous judge, to reform their abuses, decide their controversies, heal their intestine divisions, and protect them from foreign invasions. For the greater convenience of administering justice, he resided in mount Ephraim, and judged Israel twenty-three years. *Note;* Though a warlike king shines more splendidly in the annals of history, a peaceable and mild government is more for the prosperity and comfort of every nation.

2. Jair, of the half tribe of Manasseh, beyond Jordan, followed; for God now divided the honour, sometimes calling men of one tribe, sometimes of another, to the office of judge and captain. During his administration, the peace of Israel was maintained; his thirty sons, a numerous family, as his assistants, for the people's convenience, rode their circuits to administer justice, each of them possessed of a noble patrimony, having a lordship to themselves, which bore their

names in after-times. Twenty-two years this government lasted. *Note;* The impartial administration of justice, is, next to the Gospel, the greatest blessing of any land.

3. No sooner were these good men gone, than the people, as before, returned to their abominations. Their idolatry grew worse and worse; their idols were multiplied; God was forgotten, and his service neglected; and, as the consequence, when they leave him he leaves them. The Philistines on one side, and the Ammonites on the other, oppressed and crushed them, as the corn between the upper and nether mill-stone. Eighteen years this servitude continued extremely rigorous, and yet the people returned not to God. At last the Ammonites, having thoroughly plundered those on one side of Jordan, seek to increase their spoil, by attacking Ephraim, Judah, and Benjamin; while these disheartened tribes, having lost the presence of God, lose all courage, and are unable to make head against their invaders. *Note;* (1.) Reformation, without conversion of heart, will be of no long continuance. (2.) God never leaves us till we forsake him. (3.) They fall an easy prey to Satan who are left destitute of divine grace and protection.

*Ver. 12. And the Maonites]* It is very uncertain who these Maonites were. Houbigant, with the Vulgate, reads Canaanites. The LXX, according to the Alexandrian manuscript and Roman edition, read Midianites.

*Ver.*



from among them, and served the LORD : and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.

17 ¶ Then the children of Ammon were gathered together, and encamped in Gilead. And the children of Israel assembled themselves together, and encamped in Mizpeh.

18 And the people *and* princes of Gilead said one to another, What man *is he* that will begin to fight against the children of Ammon? he shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.

### CHAP. XI.

*Jephthah's covenant with the Gileadites: his vow; which he performeth on his daughter.*

[Before Christ 1186.]

**N**OW Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valour, and he *was* the son of an harlot : and Gilead begat Jephthah.

2 And Gilead's wife bare him sons; and his wife's sons grew up, and they thrust out Jephthah, and said unto him, Thou shalt not inherit in our father's house; for thou *art* the son of a strange woman.

3 Then Jephthah fled from his brethren, and dwelt in the land of Tob: and there were gathered vain men to Jephthah, and went out with him.

4 ¶ And it came to pass in process of time, that the children of Ammon made war against Israel.

5 And it was so, that when the children of Ammon made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah out of the land of Tob:

6 And they said unto Jephthah, Come, and be our captain, that we may fight with the children of Ammon.

7 And Jephthah said unto the elders of

*Ver. 16. His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel]* This is a figurative expression, setting forth, in a very emphatical manner, the effect of the divine compassion. If the Israelites, hardened by idolatry, had not repented, God resolved not to deliver them: but as soon as they repented and reformed, he changed his conduct towards them. His wisdom leaves free scope to his goodness. Though God is, of course, superior himself to the affections of grief and affliction, the sacred writer expresses it as if his soul was grieved for their misfortunes, as if compassion disarmed him in their favour. See Jeremiah, xv. 1.

REFLECTIONS.—It was long before they bowed the knee of penitence; but better late than never. We have,

1. Their humble confession. They had committed two great crimes: they had forsaken God, the fountain of living water, and had hewn themselves idols, broken cisterns which could hold no water; their sufferings were, therefore, just, and they acknowledged their deserts. *Note;* The first step of a sinner's return to God is a discovery of his own great guilt, and a sense of his deserved ruin.

2. God sends them a sharp and upbraiding answer to their cries. He turns not away his ear from their prayers, nor sinks them in utter despair; but speaks so as to awaken their consciences, and confound them under the sense of their baseness and ingratitude. Many a time had they been delivered, and those very oppressors subdued under them; yet they had vilely sinned against their own mercies: he, therefore, refers them for help to the gods whom they served, to upbraid their folly, and convince them of the weakness of these lying vanities. He refuses to deliver them any more, that is, conditionally, as long as their idols were kept among them. *Note;* (1.) If God frowns upon the returning sinner, let him not despair; it is only his desert, indeed, if he be utterly rejected: yet, with the

Lord there is mercy and forgiveness. (2.) When we are brought to a real sense of our sins, we shall see the vanity and insufficiency of those things to make us happy on which we formerly relied.

3. The people of Israel, solemnly assembled, it should seem, when this message by an angel, or prophet, was brought to them, own their just deserts, and surrender themselves up to God; yet humbly entreat, that once more he would spare them; and, convinced of their vanity, instantly put away their abominations. *Note;* (1.) When we come to God, we must pretend no excuse for our sin, but plead guilty, and throw ourselves on the mercy of our Judge. (2.) If we would prove our repentance real, we must instantly renounce the sins that we confess. (3.) When sin is our bitterness and burden, though we may stand trembling under the black review, there is yet hope.

4. God regards them with tender compassion, and, to speak as a man, beholds their misery with bowels which yearn over them. *Note;* No prodigals return to God, but his fatherly heart is touched with the feeling of their wretchedness, and he is ready to embrace the most miserable of sinners.

### CHAP. XI.

*Ver. 1. The son of an harlot]* See the note on Josh. ii. 1. Josephus understands it, that he was a stranger by the mother's side. The meaning of the original word, which we render *harlot*, is explained in the second verse;—a strange woman, or a woman of another country.

REFLECTIONS.—The people being reduced to straits, and a captain wanted, we have here an account of one whom, though under a brand of disgrace, God chooses to be their deliverer. A Gileadite, whose name was Jephthah, the son of

of

Gilead, Did not ye hate me, and expel me out of my father's house? and why are ye come unto me now when ye are in distress?

8 And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, Therefore we turn again to thee now, that thou mayest go with us, and fight against the children of Ammon, and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.

9 And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, If ye bring me home again to fight against the children of Ammon, and the LORD deliver them before me, shall I be your head?

10 And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, The LORD be witness between us, if we do not so according to thy words.

11 Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and captain over them: and Jephthah uttered all his words before the LORD in Mizpeh.

12 ¶ And Jephthah sent messengers unto the king of the children of Ammon, saying, What hast thou to do with me, that thou art come against me to fight in my land?

13 And the king of the children of Ammon answered unto the messengers of Jephthah, Because Israel took away my land, when they came up out of Egypt from Arnon even unto Jabbok, and unto Jordan: now therefore restore those lands again peaceably.

14 And Jephthah sent messengers again unto the king of the children of Ammon:

15 And said unto him, Thus saith Jephthah, Israel took not away the land of Moab, nor the land of the children of Ammon:

16 But when Israel came up from Egypt, and walked through the wilderness unto the Red Sea, and came to Kadesh;

17 Then Israel sent messengers unto the king of Edom, saying, Let me, I pray thee, pass through thy land: but the king of Edom would not hearken *thereto*. And in like manner they sent unto the king of Moab: but he would not *consent*: and Israel abode in Kadesh.

18 Then they went along through the wilderness, and compassed the land of Edom, and the land of Moab, and came by the east side

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of an harlot, or a Gentile; whose brethren, on their father's decease, counting him a scandal to the family, expelled him the house. Being brought hereby into great distress, and a man of valour, he resolves to live by the sword; collecting a band of men, therefore, he maintained them and himself, most probably, by incursions on Israel's enemies. *Note;* (1.) A man should not be reproached with the unhappiness of his birth, when his ways bespeak him deserving of a more honourable relation. (2.) They who know the difficulties of adversity are best prepared for the blessings of prosperity.

*Ver. 11. Jephthah uttered all his words before the Lord*] It is evident from these words, that Jephthah was a man of true religion, and had a serious regard for God; since, though the people had done all that was necessary on their part, he would undertake nothing without God's approbation; a remark which will be of use when we consider the performance of his vow. Indeed, the embassy which he sent to the king of Ammon, *ver. 12.* serves to prove that he was no less just than pious.

**REFLECTIONS.**—Many days had now passed during which Jephthah suffered an uncomfortable exile; but the fame of his courage being noised, in their distress from the children of Ammon, the men of Gilead bethought them of Jephthah. Hereupon,

1. They send him an honourable embassy to invite him to take the command of their armies. They were collected, but they wanted a head, and such a one as he had shewn himself, a man of conduct and courage; they therefore urge him to give them no denial. *Note;* The

providences which are, to appearance, our greatest misfortunes, are often necessary to fit us for the work for which God designs us.

2. Jephthah, at first, upbraids them with their ill usage of him. It should seem that his brethren were in the embassy, or that the elders of the city had connived at the violence shewn him. As it must appear, that it was not respect for him, but regard to themselves, that produced the invitation, he might justly refuse to go. *Note;* In distress of soul, men will have recourse to those ministers and people of God whom before they insulted.

3. They acknowledge their wrong dealing, and entreat him to forgive and forget it, and to come with them to lead their army; and, as the best recompence they can make, offer to elect him captain-general of their tribe. *Note;* (1.) The least we can do when we have injured any one is to beg his pardon. (2.) We should never despise or trample on any man; for we know not how much we may need him before we die.

4. Too generous to retain resentment, though just, he consents to assist them in their distress; but first solemnly questions them concerning their offer, Whether they would really make him their ruler if the Lord blessed them with success? They confirm what they had said with the most positive assurances, for the truth of which they appeal to God; on this, therefore, he accompanies them to Mizpeh. *Note;* (1.) In all that we take in hand, we must acknowledge God's blessing. (2.) Christ, who has fought for us, must rule in and over us. (3.) No injuries should make us implacable; we must forgive, as we hope to be forgiven.

5. The

of the land of Moab, and pitched on the other side of Arnon, but came not within the border of Moab: for Arnon *was* the border of Moab.

19 And Israel sent messengers unto Sihon king of the Amorites, the king of Heshbon; and Israel said unto him, Let us pass, we pray thee, through thy land unto my place.

20 But Sihon trusted not Israel to pass through his coast: but Sihon gathered all his people together, and pitched in Jahaz, and fought against Israel.

21 And the LORD God of Israel delivered Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel, and they smote them: so Israel possessed all the land of the Amorites, the inhabitants of that country.

22 And they possessed all the coasts of the Amorites, from Arnon even unto Jabbok, and from the wilderness even unto Jordan.

23 So now the LORD God of Israel hath dispossessed the Amorites from before his people Israel, and shouldest thou possess it?

24 Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh thy god giveth thee to possess? So whomsoever the LORD our God shall drive out from before us, them will we possess.

25 And now *art* thou any thing better than Balaak the son of Zippor, king of Moab? did he ever strive against Israel? or did he ever fight against them.

26 While Israel dwelt in Heshbon and her towns, and in Aroer and her towns, and in all the cities that *be* along by the coasts of Arnon,

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5. The whole is solemnly recognized in Mizpeh between Jephthah and the assembly. He then lays the matter before the Lord, praying for direction and success in the arduous enterprise. *Note;* (1.) That undertaking is likely to end well which is begun with fervent prayer. (2.) In our agreements, it is well to be explicit and solemn, that afterwards there may be no room to retract.

*Ver.* 24. *Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh thy god, &c.*] This is plainly an argument *ad hominem*, in which Jephthah does not by any means confess *Chemosh* to be a god; but only argues with the king of the Ammonites, from the opinion which he and his people had, that *Chemosh*, whom they worshipped, was a god; and that, according to the opinion which all nations held of their gods, they owed their conquests to him. He, therefore, appeals to the king, whether he would not keep what *his* god had given him, and look upon it as rightfully possessed by him; and if so, continues he, upon the very same foundation, we also will possess what Jehovah, our God, has given us. Wretched, indeed, must be the cause of infidelity, which finds it necessary to pervert so clear a passage as the present in order to serve and support it! Thus did Voltaire.

**REFLECTIONS.**—Jephthah now being constituted captain, before he draws the sword of war, seeks a peaceable accommodation.

1. He sends to enquire the reason of this invasion of the Ammonitish king; as they had given him no offence, he wishes him quietly to retire, and not oblige him to use force to repel force. *Note;* We must follow peace with all men, and never seek litigious redress till every fair proposal has been rejected.

2. The Ammonite, unwilling to plead the law of arms, trumps up a demand of a former title, that, at least, he might seem to cover his pretensions with a specious plea of justice. *Note;* (1.) They, who are destitute of conscience or honesty, are not willing to appear so. (2.) They who

seek a pretext for a quarrel will never be at a loss to find one.

3. Jephthah makes a most satisfactory reply to the unreasonable demand. The lands in question between Arnon and Jabbok were not in possession of the Ammonites, but of the Amorites, when Israel dispossessed them; and, though the land might originally belong to the Ammonites, they had suffered them peaceably to enjoy it, and quitted to them the title. So far were the people of Israel from offering the least violence to the children of Lot or Esau, that when refused a passage through their countries, though able, if they had chosen it, to have opened their way by force, they rather underwent the fatigue of a long march to compass their territories, than set a foot upon them, much less seize them for their own use; nor would they have touched the land of Sihon, if himself had not been the aggressor, and not only refused to let them go through, but also came out, unprovoked, to attack them, and thus brought his ruin on his own head. God having delivered Sihon into their hand, his land became theirs by the gift of God, nor was there the least reason why they should conquer it for the Ammonites. He appeals to him, what would be his own conduct in a like case? Would he quit what he thought he had conquered, under the influence of his idol god, or give up his own land to the original inhabitants whom he had dispossessed? No, surely. Why, then, should he expect it of the Israelites? He pleads farther their uninterrupted enjoyment of this country for near three hundred years; during which time neither Balaak nor his successors ever pretended to claim it; and the Moabites had an equal, if not a better right to it, than the Ammonites; so that, on all these accounts, the war must appear most unjust and unprovoked; and therefore Jephthah appeals to God for a decision of the controversy, if he should persevere in his demands. *Note;* (1.) When we have justice and truth on our side, we may confidently appeal to the God of truth for a decision in our favour. (2.) When our own harmless and inoffensive conduct speaks our peaceableness, it is at their peril who then make themselves ready for battle.

*Ver.*

three hundred years? why therefore did ye not recover *them* within that time?

27 Wherefore I have not sinned against thee, but thou doest me wrong to war against me: the LORD the Judge be judge this day between the children of Israel and the children of Ammon.

28 Howbeit the king of the children of Ammon hearkened not unto the words of Jephthah which he sent him.

29 ¶ Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, and he passed over Gilead, and Manasseh, and passed over Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed over unto the children of Ammon.

30 And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands,

31 Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD's, and I will offer it up for a burnt-offering.

32 ¶ So Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon to fight against them; and the LORD delivered them into his hands.

33 And he smote them from Aroer, even till thou come to Minnith, *even* twenty cities, and unto the plain of the vineyards, with a very great slaughter. Thus the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel.

34 ¶ And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto

his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she *was his* only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter.

35 And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back.

36 And she said unto him, My father, *if* thou hast opened thy mouth unto the LORD, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the LORD hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, *even* of the children of Ammon.

37 And she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: Let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows.

38 And he said, Go. And he sent her away for two months: and she went with her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains.

39 And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her *according* to his vow which he had vowed: and she knew no man. And it was a custom in Israel,

40 *That* the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year.

*Ver. 31. Shall surely be the Lord's; and I will offer it up for a burnt-offering.] Shall be consecrated to the Lord, or I will offer it, &c. Waterland.*

It is very evident, that this translation by Dr. Waterland must be right; because it was impossible that Jephthah should mean to offer for a burnt-offering whatever came forth of the doors of his house to meet him, since it was possible for him to have been met by several things which it would be sacrilegious for him to have offered to the Lord; and, indeed, the event sufficiently proves the propriety of this interpretation, since he was met by that which no vow, however solemn, could justify him in offering up.

*Ver. 39, 40. It came to pass at the end of two months.]* When Jephthah returned victorious, he was met by his daughter, who accordingly became the object of his vow, and therefore, as we understand it, being in every respect improper for a burnt-offering, she was to be devoted to a

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single state in the service of the Lord: the greater calamity to Jephthah, as she was his only child, ver. 34.; a circumstance which the sacred historian dwells upon, *besides her he had neither son nor daughter.* Immediately upon her father's signifying his vow to her she seems to have understood him, and, with pious alacrity, submits to the decree; though celibacy, and the want of offspring, were esteemed by the women of Israel as one of the severest punishments, ver. 36. She requests to be allowed two months to bewail this calamity; to bewail her being cut off, as it were, from Israel, and deprived of all hope to become a mother among those from whom the Messiah was to spring. Jephthah complies with her request; and at the end of two months she returned to her father, who did with her, says the sacred writer, *according to his vow;—and she knew no man.* In which words, it is as clear as the light, that the vow of Jephthah was fulfilled; for, if she had been slain as a burnt-offering, it would

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## C H A P. XII.

*The Ephraimites expostulate with Jephthah, and threaten to burn his house. Jephthah discerns them: he dies, and is succeeded by other judges.*

[Before Christ 1180.]

**A**ND the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and went northward, and said unto Jephthah, Wherefore passedst thou over to fight against the children of Ammon, and didst not call us to go with thee? we will burn thine house upon thee with fire.

2 And Jephthah said unto them, I and my people were at great strife with the children of Ammon; and when I called you, ye delivered me not out of their hands.

3 And when I saw that ye delivered me not, I put my life in my hands, and passed over against the children of Ammon, and the LORD delivered them into my hand: wherefore then are ye come up unto me this day, to fight against me?

4 Then Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead, and fought with Ephraim:

and the men of Gilead smote Ephraim, because they said, Ye Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim among the Ephraimites, and among the Manassites.

5 And the Gileadites took the passages of Jordan before the Ephraimites: and it was so, that when those Ephraimites which were escaped said, Let me go over; that the men of Gilead said unto him, Art thou an Ephraimite? If he said, Nay;

6 Then said they unto him, Say now Shibboleth: and he said Sibboleth: for he could not frame to pronounce it right. Then they took him, and slew him at the passages of Jordan: and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand.

7 ¶ And Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then died Jephthah the Gileadite, and was buried in one of the cities of Gilead.

8 ¶ And after him Ibzan of Beth-lehem judged Israel.

9 And he had thirty sons, and thirty daughters, whom he sent abroad, and took in thirty

would have been absurd to have told us, that she afterwards knew no man. And, indeed, the passage is so plain, that one would wonder that it could ever have come into the heads of writers to conceive, that her father, who was a truly pious man, (see on ver. 11.) could have thought of offering up his daughter as a sacrifice to that God, who never allowed or admitted such horrid sacrifices, and whose great quarrel against the baneful idols of the heathens was, that they called for and accepted the sacrifices of sons and daughters. See Lev. xviii. 21. xx. 2. Deut. xii. 31. xviii. 10. Jephthah vowed, that whatever met him upon his return from a victorious war, if a human creature, and proper for that service, should certainly be consecrated to the service of the LORD; or, if an animal fit for a sacrifice, should immediately be offered up for a burnt-offering. His daughter met him; she willingly confirms her father's vow; and wishes to bewail herself for that state of virginity to which she was devoted; which completed, her father did with her according to his vow, and, therefore, she knew no man; but was devoted to the Lord a virgin to the end of her life: and it continued a custom in Israel, we are further informed, for the virgins of Israel to go to the daughter of Jephthah, the Gileadite, to console her four days in the year: so Houbigant translates the verse, observing, that there is nothing in history to lead us to believe that this custom was kept up after the death of Jephthah's daughter; nay, the virgins of Israel are said expressly to have gone to the daughter of Jephthah herself, for no other place is specified whither they could go. This appears to us the genuine sense of a passage upon which volumes have been written. Those who choose to enter more deeply into the

subject may consult Pfeifferi, *Dub. Vex.* Dodwell, Schudt, Smallridge, or Sykes.

## C H A P. XII.

*Ver. 3. I put my life in my hands]* A strong phrase; which signifies, *I exposed myself to the utmost hazard*: the expression seems peculiar to the eastern writers; for Casaubon remarks, that among all the Greek and Roman writers he never met with it, except once in Zenarchus. See Bishop Patrick.

*Ver. 6. Say, now, Shibboleth]* The word has two senses in the Hebrew; namely, *an ear of corn*, and *floods of water*, Pl. lxix. 2. It is used in the latter sense here; and the text which the Gileadites put the Ephraimites to was to bid them say, "Let me pass over the water." The pronunciation of words of the same language varies greatly in different parts. An Athenian spoke Greek as differently from a Dorian as a northern man speaks English from an inhabitant of the south: it is no wonder, therefore, that the Ephraimites could not pronounce the word in the same manner as those did who inhabited the countries on the other side of Jordan. St. Peter was known for a Galilean by his accent in the court of Pilate's palace. See Matt. xxvi. 73.

*Ver. 7. In one of the cities of Gilead]* In the Hebrew it is, *in the cities of Gilead*, which has given rise to a thousand ridiculous rabbinical fables. Houbigant well remarks, that all the ancient versions read, *In the city of Gilead*. It is the Chaldee alone that reads, *In the cities*. He observes, that the phrase, *whom he sent abroad*, ver. 9. expresses the giving these daughters in matrimony. We are to remember, that

daughters from abroad for his sons. And he judged Israel seven years.

10 Then died Ibzan, and was buried at Beth-lehem.

11 ¶ And after him Elon, a Zebulonite, judged Israel; and he judged Israel ten years.

12 And Elon the Zebulonite died, and was buried in Aijalon in the country of Zebulun.

13 ¶ And after him Abdon the son of Hillel, a Pirathonite, judged Israel.

14 And he had forty sons and thirty nephews, that rode on threescore and ten ascolts: and he judged Israel eight years.

15 And Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite died, and was buried in Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the mount of the Amalekites.

## C H A P. XIII.

*The Israelites are oppressed forty years by the Philistines: an angel appears to the wife of Manoah, and promises her a son: he appears again to the husband and wife, and ascends, in the midst of the flame of the burnt offering, towards heaven: Samson is born.*

[Before Christ 1175.]

**A**ND the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD; and the

LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years.

2 ¶ And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren, and bare not.

3 And the angel of the LORD appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son.

4 Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing.

5 For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.

6 ¶ Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible: but I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name:

7 But he said unto me, Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and now drink no

a numerous issue was considered as a peculiar blessing of Providence; and where many wives were permitted, such a number of children will not appear improbable.

REFLECTIONS.—No sooner is Jephthah delivered from foreign enemies than he is disturbed by domestic feuds.

1. The men of Ephraim, jealous of the honour that Manasseh had got, seek occasion to quarrel with him, as they had before done with Gideon, under pretence of being slighted, because not called to the war against Ammon; and threaten, with outrageous violence, to fire Jephthah's house over his head. *Note;* (1.) Quarrels between brethren are usually most bitter and violent. (2.) They who have done the greatest services to the cause of God are not secure from the greatest insults, even sometimes from the pretended friends of the cause. (3.) The most spotless characters are the fairest mark for the foul fangs of envy to fasten upon.

2. Jephthah remonstrates against their violence and accusation. Their charge was as false as malicious: he had called them, and they had refused to come. When, therefore, the danger was so imminent, at the risk of his life, he went out to battle, and, through the strength of God, prevailed. Was this a cause for their anger? Ought it not rather to have been cause of thankfulness? *Note;* (1.) The greatest boasters are usually the greatest cowards. (2.) They, who are themselves most in fault, would often

save themselves by clamouring against the innocent. (3.) They well deserve the honour who purchase it at the peril of their lives.

3. The ill temper of the Ephraimites will not be pacified, and their ill tongue provokes the Gileadites, who came to interpose with them in behalf of the captain. They call them fugitives, a vagabond race, pretending as if they were expelled Canaan from the Ephraimites and Manassites, as unworthy of their relation. Such insult is too much for men of war usually to bear: swords are instantly drawn, and the Ephraimites justly punished for their insolence. They are routed in the field, and the passes of Jordan being secured by the men of Gilead, by the pronunciation of the word *Shibboleth*, they are all detected and slain, to the number of forty-two thousand. *Note;* (1.) A hasty and lying tongue usually occasions much mischief to its owner. (2.) They who insolently upbraid others quickly bring themselves into a worse condition.

4. Six years ended Jephthah's government. *Note;* Great and good men must die, as well as others; but there is one liveth, who will never leave his people to want a friend and protector in time of need.

## C H A P. XIII.

*Ver. 3. The angel of the Lord appeared unto the woman* The same angel as appeared to Gideon, Joshua, Moses, &c. See the observations on those appearances, *ver. 22 of this*

wine nor strong drink, neither eat any unclean thing: for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death.

8 ¶ Then Manoah intreated the LORD, and said, O my LORD, let the man of God which thou didst send come again unto us, and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born.

9 And God hearkened to the voice of Manoah; and the angel of God came again unto the woman as she sat in the field: but Manoah her husband was not with her.

10 And the woman made haste, and ran, and shewed her husband, and said unto him, Behold, the man hath appeared unto me, that came unto me the *other* day.

11 And Manoah arose, and went after his wife, and came to the man, and said unto him, *Art* thou the man that spakest unto the woman? And he said, I *am*.

12 And Manoah said, Now let thy words come to pass. How shall we order the child, and *how* shall we do unto him?

13 And the angel of the LORD said unto

chapter: See also Vitringæ Observat. Sacræ, tom. 1. It is observable, that some of the greatest men of the Jewish nation were born of women who had been barren; as Isaac, Samuel, and John the Baptist.

Ver. 4. Now, therefore, beware, &c.] As Samson was to be a perfect Nazarite unto God, from the womb to the day of his death, ver. 7. his mother is commanded to live as the Nazarites did, (Numb. vi.) while she carried him in her womb, and, most likely, while she nursed him; because a child in the womb, and its mother, live by the same nourishment.

Ver. 6. His countenance—very terrible] The French version has it very well, *fort vénérable*, a countenance full of majesty; such as was that of St. Stephen, when he appeared before the Sanhedrim at Jerusalem, Acts vi. 15. His Judges saw his face, as it had been the face of an angel. It does not appear, that either Manoah, or his wife, at first conceived this sacred messenger to be any other than some prophet commissioned by God to them.

REFLECTIONS.—There is no end of Israel's evil, or of God's mercy. Once more the heavy hand of the Philistines is upon them; and during forty years, more or less, they bear the punishment of their sins under these oppressors, till God, in the person of Samson, raises up a deliverer for them.

1. His tribe and parentage: of Dan, which bordered nearest on the Philistines, and of parents who had long been childless. Note; (1.) Where is the greatest danger, and the least prospect of relief, there God often chooses to display his power and glory. (2.) The fruit of the womb is a heritage and gift which cometh of the Lord.

2. An angel appears to Manoah's wife, even the glorious angel of the everlasting covenant, who now comes in the fashion of a man, as afterwards really partaking of the same nature.

3. The message that he brings her is most welcome and unexpected, and the charge that he delivers strict and solemn. He compassionately mentions her misfortune of barrenness; this shall be her grief no longer; she shall conceive and bear a son, who, being appointed for singular service, must be a Nazarite, not only from his birth, but also from his conception; for which, and during her pregnancy, she must not touch any thing that comes of the vine, nor eat any unclean thing; nor is a razor ever to come on

his head, God intending by him to begin his people's deliverance. Note; (1.) God sees and compassionates our secret griefs. (2.) They who would preserve themselves in holiness for God, must deny themselves the indulgence of their appetites. (3.) The offspring usually partakes of the parents' bodily habit. Temperate parents have healthy children, while the curse of lewdness and luxury descends often on the fruit of the womb. (4.) The beginnings of salvation are glorious; how much more the completion of it. (5.) Samson is the type of him who foretold his birth; he was thus holy, undefiled, and separate from sinners, conceived of the Holy Ghost, a Nazarite purer than snow, raised up not only to begin, but to perfect the salvation of his people.

4. With a transport of joy, she flies to carry her husband an account of what had passed. Struck at the majestic and venerable appearance of the messenger, she describes his countenance as luminous, like Moses's face, or bright with divine irradiation as an angel. His words she repeats, but neither dared ask his name nor whence he came. Note; (1.) We should call those who are near and dear to us to partake in our joys. (2.) True yoke-fellows should communicate their experiences for their mutual comfort and edification.

Ver. 10. The other day] There is nothing for other in the Hebrew. Houbigant renders it, *on that day*, following the Chaldee, Syriac, and Arabic.

Ver. 12. And Manoah said, Now let thy words come to pass, &c.] Houbigant renders this, *And Manoah said, when that shall come to pass which thou hast spoken, what shall be the method of educating the child?* words plainly alluding to those in the 8th verse.

REFLECTIONS.—1. Manoah rejoices at the news, and staggers not at the promise; but, confidently depending on its fulfilment, prays for direction how to manage this child, when he should be born, agreeably to God's will; and for this purpose begs that God would send the same messenger, to give them farther information. Note; (1.) To improve God's blessings to his glory, is the prayer and labour of every gracious soul. (2.) When we have met with a refreshing visit from God, we cannot but cry, Return, O God of hosts, return. (3.) They who with a messenger from God, a preacher of his word, to be sent among them, would do well to make it the matter of their fervent prayer.

2. God

Manoah, Of all that I said unto the woman let her beware.

14 She may not eat of any *thing* that cometh of the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean *thing*: all that I commanded her let her observe.

15 ¶ And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, I pray thee, let us detain thee, until we shall have made ready a kid for thee.

16 And the angel of the LORD said unto Manoah, Though thou detain me, I will not eat of thy bread: and if thou wilt offer a burnt-offering, thou must offer it unto the LORD. For Manoah knew not that he *was* an angel of the LORD.

17 And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, What *is* thy name, that when thy sayings come to pass we may do thee honour?

18 And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it *is* secret?

19 So Manoah took a kid with a meat-offering, and offered *it* upon a rock unto the LORD: and *the angel* did wonderfully; and Manoah and his wife looked on.

20 For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar. And Manoah and his wife looked on *it*, and fell on their faces to the ground.

21 But the angel of the LORD did no more appear to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he *was* an angel of the LORD.

22 And Manoah said unto his wife, We

2. God refused not his request. The same day probably, not another day, as our translation seems to make it; the angel of the covenant returns a second time to Manoah's wife, when alone, either in her business, or retired for converse with God. She entreats permission to call her husband: this granted, she runs to inform him; he gladly attends her, to wait on their celestial visitant, and there solicitously inquires about the management of the child, which, in faith, he believed should be given them. *Note*, (1.) They who seek God will find him to their comfort. (2.) When we are alone with God, he will manifest himself to us as he does not unto the world. (3.) They who have experienced the blessing of God's presence and love, would fain call those who are near and dear to them, to taste and see with them how good the Lord is. (4.) When we are called to approach God, our hearts should never be backward to the gracious invitation. (5.) The care of children is a great concern, and parents had need beg often of God, to direct them how to manage them so, as to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

3. The angel repeats the same instructions. *Note*; (1.) It is good to have line upon line, and precept on precept. (2.) When our treacherous memories would forget, or treacherous hearts neglect God's commands, it is good to have near us a loving and careful remembrancer. (3.) They who would be holy to the Lord, must watch with jealousy against the defilement of sin.

*Ver. 16. And if thou wilt offer a burnt-offering, thou must offer it unto the Lord*] Manoah, as we observed, supposing this divine personage to be a prophet, was desirous to entertain him in a hospitable manner, and agreeably to his extraordinary commission; See Gen. xviii. 3, 4. and ch. vi. 18. but the angel told him, that though he should comply with his request, and stay, yet he would not eat of his food; insinuating thereby who he was "*But*, continues he, (not "*and*, as we render it,) *if thou wilt offer a burnt-offering, if*

"thou hast a mind to express thy thankfulness, *thou mayest offer a burnt-offering unto the Lord.*" A prophet, as Manoah took this to be, might authorize men to sacrifice, though they were not priests, or at the tabernacle; as Elijah did at Mount Carmel. The next words of this verse might be more properly connected with the 17th, thus: *Now Manoah knew not that he was an angel of the Lord, therefore he said unto him, &c.*

*Ver. 18. Seeing it is secret*] More properly rendered in the margin, *wonderful*; compare Isai. ix. 6. where this same name of wonderful is applied to Christ, the wonderful Word incarnate for the redemption of mankind.

*Ver. 19. And the angel did wonderfully*] There is nothing for *angel* in the original, which might easily be construed thus: "So Manoah took a kid, with a meat-offering, and offered upon a rock unto the Lord; and he did wonderfully, Manoah and his wife looking on: for it came to pass," &c. ver. 20. in which verse we have an account of what this divine messenger did; most probably, bringing fire from the altar, as in the case of Gideon, chap. vi. 21. out of the rock, to consume the burnt-offering, and then ascending in the midst of the flame to heaven. The celebrated Vitringa supposes, that it was the angel, who, upon this occasion, performed the principal functions of the priest; the most essential of which was to put the fire to the burnt-offering. Manoah, according to him, dared not to perform the offices of the priesthood in the presence of a personage whom he took for an extraordinary prophet commissioned from God. All that he did was done by the order of the angel, or as his minister; just as the Israelites obeyed Elijah afterwards, 1 Kings xviii. 34. See Vitringa, as quoted above.

*Ver. 22. Manoah said—we shall surely die*] See ch. vi. 22. and the places there referred to.

REFLECTIONS.—We have here a continuation of what passed at this interview.

f. Manoah



shall surely die, because we have seen God.

23 But his wife said unto him, If the LORD were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering and a meat-offering

at our hands, neither would he have shewed us all these *things*, nor would as at this time have told us *such things* as these.

24 ¶ And the woman bare a son, and

1. Manoah entreats him to prolong his stay, and take some refreshment with him before he departs. *Note*; When God sends his messengers with glad tidings to us, the least we can do is, to afford them kind entertainment.

2. The angel declines accepting his offer, though he does not forbid him to prepare the kid for sacrifice, which he might offer to the Lord, the only true object of worship. *Note*; The services that we do or offer to God's ministers, are acceptable sacrifices to God.

3. He refuses to gratify Manoah's curiosity when the latter inquired who he was, and where he lived, that he might, after the event, do him honour, spread his fame, or send him a present on the birth of his son. His name is secret, not to be known; for who, by searching, can find out God? or *wonderful*, as Christ is called, whose person, incarnation, and office, deserve this title. *Note*; (1.) It is highly desirable to cultivate acquaintance with a good man. (2.) If we ask in prayer what is not good for us to receive, the best answer is a denial. (3.) In our inquiries in religion, vain curiosity is dangerous. There are secret things which belong only to God, where it is our highest wisdom to be contentedly ignorant.

4. Manoah having prepared the offering and sacrifice, and laid it on the rock, the angel did wonderfully: either, as in Gideon's sacrifice, he brought forth fire from the rock to consume it; or, if Manoah kindled the flame, to his astonishment he sees him ascend in the midst of the fire, and disappear; hereby evidently intimating his acceptance of the oblation, and discovering himself to them, who now were convinced that he was more than man who talked with them. *Note*; (1.) When we bring our hearts to God in prayer, Jesus will kindle the holy fire, and lift up our souls to heaven as the flame ascends. (2.) The ascent of the angel betokened the acceptableness of the offering. Jesus, our ascended Lord, is thus gone up to heaven, to present our sacrifices to God, as, for his sake, a sweet smelling favour.

5. For a time in silent wonder and dread, Manoah and his wife, after this strange sight, remained on their faces: when, rising to reflect on this transaction, Manoah expresses his fearful apprehensions, lest (as was then the general opinion) this divine appearance portended his death certain and near. *Note*; (1.) So weak are we, that we are afraid sometimes of our very mercies. (2.) A good man may at particular seasons be afraid to die.

6. His wife appears not only the strongest believer, but the wisest reasoner. She suggests the groundlessness of his fears from two arguments, strongly evidencing the favor of God towards them; 1. The acceptance of their sacrifice; and, 2. the promise that he had made them; for the accomplishment of which, they must needs live. *Note*; (1.) It is a singular mercy to have such a help-mate as Manoah's. (2.) When the sinner is cast down, he should remember what Christ has done for him by his bloody sacrifice, a sure proof that he designs not his death. (3.) The faithful,

in times of discouraging providences or sore temptations, should remember the past experience of God's goodness, as a ground of present support. He that has helped us hitherto will not our destruction at the last.

*Ver. 23.* If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering and a meat-offering at our hands, &c.] Such was the argumentation of Manoah's wife against the fear and diffidence of her husband; and it might very well have become the most masculine understanding. God Almighty will be very well pleased, if we have so much confidence and faith in him, as in all our perplexities when our understandings are puzzled, and in all our distresses when our spirits are fainting, to use that kind of logick to support us. If he has at any time redeemed us from pressing or languishing wants and necessities, and supplied us beyond our hope, or at least beyond our expectation, by the charity of friends, compassion of strangers, or some such other seeming casualties as he usually transmits his favors by, in such a manner, as that we have found ourselves for a time at ease, and in a degree of plenty (and perhaps there are few men so miserable as not to have enjoyed such intervals); if he has at any time rescued us from a devouring danger, when our enemies were so near taking our lives from us, that we had death in our prospect, and by our sensible fear had even undergone some impressions of it (and God knows how many there are who have been instances of those articulate deliverances);—we may very well argue, that if he were resolved to destroy us, he could not have conferred those graces, and favours, and deliverances upon us. Nay, if he has given us grace to rely upon and put our trust in him, to pray heartily to him, and to preserve ourselves from the infection and contagion of prevailing and prosperous wickedness; if, in a time of powerful rebellion, we have, from a due sense of our duty to him, kept our allegiance to our king; if, when the sacrilegious and prophane have broken in upon the religion and worship of the most High, we have, for piety's sake, to our utmost power, and with our utmost hazards, opposed their desperate fury, and never consented to their wickedness, when we were no longer able to stop the progress of it; if, in a time of persecution, when men's lives and fortunes were with all imaginable rigour and severity taken from them, for not consenting to perjury and other violations of their consciences, and both lives and fortunes might be preserved by submitting to those impositions, we have passed through the fire of that persecution, and chosen imprisonment or banishment, or death, rather than comply with that power to the breach of our duty; we may very well expect some signal-deliverance; upon this conclusion, that if God had meant we should be destroyed, he would not have received those burnt-offerings nor those meat-offerings at our hands; he would not have given us the grace and courage to have sacrificed our conveniences, and property, and lives to his service.

*Ver.*

called his name Samson: and the child grew, and the LORD blessed him.

25 And the Spirit of the LORD began to move him at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.

## C H A P. XIV.

*Samson marries a wife of the Philistines: he rends a lion in pieces, in whose carcase he afterwards finds a swarm of bees and honey: he puts forth a riddle to his companions, the interpretation of which his wife enticeth from him: he slays thirty Philistines.*

[Before Christ 1155.]

**A**ND Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines.

2 And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife.

3 Then his father and his mother said unto him, *Is there* never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people,

that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well.

4 But his father and his mother knew not that it *was* of the LORD, that he fought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.

5 ¶ Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath: and, behold, a young lion roared against him.

6 And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and *he had* nothing in his hand: but he told not his father or his mother what he had done.

7 And he went down and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well.

8 ¶ And after a time he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcase of the lion: and, behold, *there was* a swarm of bees and honey in the carcase of the lion.

*Ver. 24. Called his name Samson*] It is not easy to determine the derivation of this word. That of those who derive it from שמש *Sbemesb*, the Sun, seems the most probable; Samson's birth being, as some say, the elevation of the Hebrews; so David is called a *light of Israel*. It cannot escape the notice of any reader, how remarkable a type Samson was of the Messiah; some particulars of which we shall mention at the close of his history.

*Ver. 25. The spirit of the Lord began to move him*] The Chaldee renders it, *the spirit of fortitude, or courage*. Very early the Spirit of God gave marks of his presence with him, by some extraordinary things superior to human power, which it enabled him to do, as a kind of prelude to that heroic courage with which he was to be endowed. As there was no army of Danites encamped where Samson displayed his power, many follow the version of our Margins, and read this as the proper name of a place; *Mabaneh Dan*.

## C H A P. XIV.

*Ver. 1. Timnath*] See on Josh. xix. 43.

*Ver. 4. His father and mother knew not that it was of the Lord, &c.*] According to Archbishop Uther's computation, Samson was now twenty-two years old. Every thing was extraordinary, and ought not to be judged of by common rules. The marriage which he solicited, was contrary to the law of Moses; (See Exod. xxxiv. 16. Deut. vii. 3.) but he was infligated to it by an impulse from God, and consequently dispensed from an observation of the law. See Bp. Hall's contemplations on the subject.

*Ver. 5. Behold, a young lion roared against him*] It appears from this and many other passages, that there were lions in Judæa; whence several places had their names. See Josh. xv. 32. xix. 6. Every one knows, that a young lion, just come to its full strength, is the fiercest of all the species. Josephus tells us, that Samson throttled this lion with his hand: if this was the case, he must first have strangled him, and then have torn him in pieces. For some curious remarks upon this subject, we refer to Scheuchzer on the place.

*Ver. 8. And after a time*] In the Hebrew, *after days*; i. e. (as this phrase frequently signifies, and as the circumstances seem to render probable,) after a year; See Exod. xiii. 10. For it was not usual to celebrate the nuptials between a man and an espoused virgin till twelve months after the espousals. See Selden Uxor. Heb. lib. ii. cap. 8. and so long time seems necessary for the reducing the carcase of the lion, to a state proper for the reception of bees; which, as Aristotle and other naturalists observe, being remarkably abhorrent of all foetid smells, would scarcely settle in the carcase of a lion till the flesh was wholly consumed by the birds and beasts and time; but that being done, there is nothing more probable, than that a swarm of bees should settle in such a skeleton. See Boch. Hieroz. pars ii. lib. 4. and Vossius de Orig. et Prog. Idol. lib. iv. cap. 72. We have here a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. The devil is the roaring lion, whom our divine Samson has destroyed; and from his victory consolations are brought to the believer's soul, sweeter than honey and the honey-comb.

*Ver.*

9 And he took thereof in his hands, and went on eating, and came to his father and mother, and he gave them, and they did eat: but he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcase of the lion.

10 ¶ So his father went down unto the woman: and Samson made there a feast; for so used the young men to do.

11 And it came to pass, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him.

12 ¶ And Samson said unto them, I will now put forth a riddle unto you: if ye can certainly declare it me within the seven days of the feast, and find *it* out, then I will give you thirty sheets and thirty change of garments:

13 But if ye cannot declare *it* me, then shall ye give me thirty sheets and thirty change of garments. And they said unto him,

Put forth thy riddle, that we may hear it.

14 And he said unto them, Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. And they could not in three days expound the riddle.

15 And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they said unto Samson's wife, Entice thy husband, that he may declare unto us the riddle, lest we burn thee and thy father's house with fire: have ye called us to take that we have? *is it not so?*

16 And Samson's wife wept before him, and said, Thou dost but hate me, and lovest me not: thou hast put forth a riddle unto the children of my people, and hast not told *it* me. And he said unto her, Behold, I have not told *it* my father nor my mother, and shall I tell *it* thee?

17 And she wept before him the seven days, while their feast lasted: and it came to

*Ver. 10. And Samson made there a feast*] Nuptial feasts of this kind were usual in all countries. And, no doubt, Samson's riddle was proposed by him in accommodation to the customs of these feasts, as the thirty companions were brought by his wife's friends, as a kind of bridemen to honour his nuptials. See Lowth. Prælect. Poet. p. 392. 8vo.

*Ver. 12. Samson said,—I will now put forth a riddle unto you*] It was a very ancient custom, as we learn from this, to propose at feasts, enigmas to their guests, in order to exercise their wit, and enliven conversation, instead of passing the whole time in downright eating and drinking. The Greeks derived this custom from the Orientals, and they generally proposed a reward to those who solved the riddle.

Bp. Warburton observes, that as symbolick writing, the more it receded from the proper hieroglyphick, became the more obscure; so it was with the *parable*, which grew the more mysterious, till it became a *riddle*, which exactly corresponded with the enigmatical hieroglyphick. This in sacred scripture is called a *dark saying*, by way of eminence. In the interpretation of these *riddles* consisted much of the old eastern wisdom, according to the observation of the wise man, Prov. i. 5, 6. It was the custom too, as we learn from this passage, and it lasted long, as we are informed by Josephus, for the sages of those times to send or offer *riddles* to each other, as a trial of sagacity, to the exposition of which rewards and penalties were annexed; so that the present of a riddle was only the stratagem for a booty. Hence the understanding of *dark sentences* became proverbial among the Hebrews, to signify the arts of fraud and deceit, as may be collected from the character frequently given by Daniel of Antiochus Epiphanes; Dan. viii. 23. The mysterious cover to this kind of wisdom made it, as such a cover always will, the most high prized

accomplishment: So when the psalmist would raise and enlarge the attention of his audience, he begins his song in this manner: *I will incline mine ear to a parable; I will open my dark saying upon the harp.* Psal. xlix. 4. For, a great critic in sacred and prophane learning rightly observes upon the place, "The Psalmist, in order to engage the attention of his auditors, promises to treat of such things as were esteemed the highest reach of wisdom; and in composing this Psalm, he made use of all the art that he was master of, to render it worthy of his subject." Div. Leg. vol. iii. p. 155. See Boch. Hieroz. pars ii. lib. 4. cap. 12. & Egid. Strauchii Dissert. de Enigm. Samf.

*Ver. 13. Thirty sheets*] These were vestments of linen, which were worn next the flesh. See Matt. xxvii. 59. Mark. xiv. 51. & Braunius de Vestit. Sacerd. Heb. lib. cap. 7.

*Ver. 14. Out of the eater, &c.*] We do not perceive in this version, the opposition which there ought to be between the two latter terms, as there is between the two first; for what opposition is there between *strength* and *sweetness*? But, as Bochart has judiciously observed, there is this opposition in the original; for, in the Arabic language the word *mirra*, which implies *strength*, comes from *marra*, which signifies to be *bitter*; and therefore, the antithesis of the words is this, "Food came from the *devourer*, and sweetness from that which is *cager* or *sharp*, i. e. violent or fierce." And Bp. Patrick well observes, that the word *acer*, which signifies as well *sharp*, as a *valiant man*, is usually applied to lions.

GENUS ACER LEONUM.

Ovid.

*Ver. 15. That he may declare unto us*] The LXX. Syriac, and Arabic, instead of *unto us*, render the passage, *that he may declare unto thee.*

pafs on the feventh day, that he told her, becaufe ſhe lay fore upon him; and ſhe told the riddle to the children of her people.

18 And the men of the city ſaid unto him on the feventh day before the ſun went down, What is ſweeter than honey? and what is ſtronger than a lion? And he ſaid unto them, If ye had not plowed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle.

19 ¶ And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he went down to Aſhkelon, and ſlew thirty men of them, and took their ſpoil, and gave change of garments unto them which expounded the riddle. And his anger was kindled, and he went up to his father's houſe.

20 But Samſon's wife was given to his companion, whom he had uſed as his friend.

*Ver. 18. If ye had not plowed with my heifer*] A proverbial expreſſion; which ſignifies no more, than that without the aſſiſtance of his wife the Philiftines could not have found out his riddle.

*Ver. 19. And ſlew thirty men of them*] This action is prefaced by a declaration, that the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, moving him to ſo extraordinary a deed, which no one has a right to imitate; for, 1ſt. The Philiftines were conſidered as in a ſtate of war with the Iſraelites; they were their tyrants and oppreſſors. 2dly. Samſon was actually general of the Iſraelites, appointed by heaven to puniſh the Philiftines. 3dly. He was in this caſe no other than an inſtrument in the hand of God to puniſh offenders.

*Ver. 20. Samſon's wife was given to his companion*] Enraged at his wife for betraying, and at his companions for their mean proceedings; Samſon returned to his father's houſe, and left his wife with her own relations. She, looking upon herſelf as wholly forſaken, and willing perhaps to unite with her relations to ſhow their reſentment at Samſon, was readily perſuaded to marry one of his bride-men; one with whom he had been moſt familiar, who was peculiarly his friend, honoured poſſibly with the name of the friend of the bridegroom; and whoſe office it was to conduct the bride to her houſe. See St. John. iii. 29. and Selden de Uxor. Heb. as before.

REFLECTIONS.—We have here,

1. Samſon keeping his bridal feaſt. He did not reſuſe to comply with an innocent cuſtom, nor would, on ſuch an occaſion, appear moroſe or ſingular. *Note;* Unneceſſary ſingularity proceeds more from pride than piety.

2. Thirty young men are brought to do him honour on the occaſion, and to be his companions during theſe feſtal days. Civility and reſpect are amiable, even in Philiftines.

3. To exerciſe their ingenuity, Samſon propoſes a riddle to them. *Note;* (1.) Many diſpenſations of God ſeem, for a time, like this riddle, dark and inexplicable. (2.) The ſweeteſt mercies of God to our ſouls come from the ſevereſt trials, as meat from the eater, and honey from the lion.

4. Three days do they in vain puzzle themſelves to diſcover the ſecret; the fourth, which was the ſabbath, or ſeventh day, they come to Samſon's wife, and threaten to burn her and her father's houſe with fire, unleſs ſhe would extort it from him, and ſave them the loſs of their wager, though to her own husband's great diſadvantage: a requeſt unreaſonable, and a threatening moſt barbarous

and inhuman. *Note;* (1.) Unreaſonable and wicked men ſtop at nothing when their worldly intereſts are at ſtake. (2.) Wagers are always better avoided, as contrary to the ſpirit of the Goſpel; but they are ſure to be highly ſinful, when their loſs is ſuch as may injure our circumſtances or occaſion the ruffling of our tempers.

5. This falſe and faithleſs woman immediately began to importune him for a diſcovery, upbraiding him with want of love, and plying him with tears, which he beheld with the tendereſt emotions. In vain he expoſtulates on the unreaſonableneſs of the demand, when he had not told even his parents; ſhe wearies him with ceafeleſs importunity, till he can no longer reſiſt her crocodile tears and unkind accuſations; and on the ſeventh day he intruſts her with the important ſecret. *Note;* (1.) An inordinate love of women makes wiſe men fools. (2.) A woman's tears are often her ſtrongeſt argument: he muſt be more than Samſon, who can ſteel his heart againſt them.

6. No ſooner is the ſecret known, than ſhe communicates it; perhaps the pride of her power operated as ſtrongly as her fears or perfidy to make her eager to know, and haſty to reveal it. With this explication, they come to Samſon before the ſeven days are expired, and claim the wager. He acknowledges it to be theirs; but hints their unfair dealing, in making uſe of his own wife to betray him. *Note;* (1.) When we truſt a ſecret out of our own breaſt, we muſt not expect it will long continue ſuch. (2.) Our corrupt affections are the heifer that Satan plows with, and by theſe he prevails.

7. Though the wager is loſt, it ſhall not be at Samſon's coſt; the Philiftines ſhall rue it. The ſpirit of the Lord coming upon him to authoriſe and enable him for the work, he deſcends to Aſhkelon, ſeizes thirty Philiftines; ſlays and ſtrips them, and with theſe garments pays his companions. And now, from experience of their perfidy, heartily ſick of his wife and them, he leaves the country, and retires to his father's houſe. *Note;* (1.) Ill-judged and raſh marriages frequently end in unhappy ſeparation. (2.) It were well if the ill uſage of the world drove us out of it in affection, to ſeek our true reſt at home with our God and Father.

8. No ſooner has he turned his back, than his wife is given to his companion: perhaps, for his ſake ſhe had betrayed her husband's ſecret, and now heſitates not to deſile his bed. *Note;* (1.) A forſaken wife is in a dangerous ſtate. (2.) The friendships of the world are often faithleſs. (3.) If a woman's affections ſtray from her husband, it is to be feared that her perſon will ſoon follow them.

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## C H A P. XV.

*Samson is denied his wife: he burneth the Philistines' corn; he is bound by the men of Judah, and delivered to the Philistines: he breaketh his bands, and killeth one thousand of the Philistines with the jaw-bone of an ass; the Lord giveth water to quench his thirst.*

[Before Christ 1155.]

**B**UT it came to pass within a while after, in the time of wheat-harvest, that Samson visited his wife with a kid; and he said, I will go in to my wife into the chamber. But her father would not suffer him to go in.

2 And her father said, I verily thought that thou hadst utterly hated her; therefore I gave her to thy companion: *is* not her younger sister fairer than she? take her, I pray thee, instead of her.

3 ¶ And Samson said concerning them, Now shall I be more blameless than the Philistines, though I do them a displeasure.

4 And Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took firebrands, and turned

tail to tail, and put a firebrand in the midst between two tails.

5 And when he had set the brands on fire, he let *them* go into the standing corn of the Philistines, and burnt up both the shocks and also the standing corn, with the vineyards *and* olives.

6 Then the Philistines said, Who hath done this? And they answered, Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he had taken his wife, and given her to his companion. And the Philistines came up and burnt her and her father with fire.

7 ¶ And Samson said unto them, Though ye have done this, yet will I be avenged of you, and after that I will cease.

8 And he smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter: and he went down and dwelt in the top of the rock Etam.

9 ¶ Then the Philistines went up, and pitched in Judah, and spread themselves in Lehi.

## C H A P. XV.

*Ver. 4. And Samson went and caught three hundred foxes]* Samson was moved to take a wife from the Philistines, in order to find occasion against them: such occasions are seldom long wanting where marriages of this kind are contracted between persons of different countries, different religions, or different interests. Samson had sufficient cause for that resentment which he executed, as we read in this and the following verses. 1. Some have thought it difficult to believe, that Samson could get together so great a number of *foxes*; but it should be remembered, *First*, That these creatures were, and at this time are extremely numerous in Judea; inasmuch that several places had their names from them; see *Jos. xv. 28. xix. 42. 1 Sam. xiii. 17.* and they are spoken of very commonly in Scripture as thus numerous. See *Cantic. ii. 15. Psalm lxxiii. 10, &c.* *Secondly*, Under the name of *foxes* may be comprehended creatures nearly resembling that animal, called *hubs*, which go together in herds, so that two hundred have been seen in company together. *Thirdly*, It will not appear so incredible, that Samson should collect so many *foxes*, when we recollect from the Roman history, that *Sylla* produced at the shews which he gave the Roman people, *one hundred lions*, *Cæsar four hundred*, *Pompey near six hundred*; and others innumerable different animals. *Fourthly*, If the sacred historian had said that Samson caught these *three hundred foxes* in one day, or one night, the difficulty might be greater; but, possibly, he might employ a month or more in the accomplishment of this design, and have been assisted in it by his servants, neighbours, and friends. These animals were caught in nets,

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and on account of their length of tail were most proper for his purpose. 2. These observations seem sufficiently to justify the present version; we must not, however, omit to mention, that another has been offered, though we apprehend it will not stand the test of critical inquiry. It is proposed to render the words, now translated *three hundred foxes*, by *three hundred sheaves of corn*; to support which, it is to be observed, that instead of *shualim* in the Hebrew, we should read *schealim*, which properly signifies *sheaves*: and that *זנב zanab*, which we translate *tail*, signifying the *end*, or *utmost part of any thing*, we may, according to this version, suppose that Samson set fire to *three hundred standing shocks of corn*, by laying two sheaves between each shock to make a communication, and by putting fire to those intermediate sheaves. See Mr. Chais on the passage, where the reader will find a refutation of this criticism.

*Ver. 6. And the Philistines came up and burnt her and her father with fire].* Thus they fulfilled their menace uttered in the former chapter, and the faithless wife gained no advantage by her treachery. But who can help remarking, on a circumstance like this, the savage barbarity of those times?

*Ver. 8. And he smote them hip and thigh]* Houbigant renders this, *and he contended with them, and slew them with a great slaughter*; observing, that the idea is taken from the action of wrestlers. It seems to be a merely proverbial expression, signifying a total overthrow. The French render it, *il les battit entièrement*, he beat them entirely; *Isai. ix. 14. Etam* was a strong place in the tribe of Judah, to the top of which there was a passage only capable of admitting a single man at a time. Instead of *went down, and dwelt*, it may be read, *went, and dwelt*.

*Ver.*

10 And the men of Judah said, Why are ye come up against us? And they answered, To bind Samson are we come up, to do to him as he hath done to us.

11 Then three thousand men of Judah went to the top of the rock Etam, and said to Samson, Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us? what is this that thou hast done unto us? And he said unto them, As they did unto me, so have I done unto them.

12 And they said unto him, We are come down to bind thee, that we may deliver thee into the hand of the Philistines. And Samson said unto them, Swear unto me, that ye will not fall upon me yourselves.

13 And they spake unto him, saying, No; but we will bind thee fast, and deliver thee into their hand: but surely we will not kill thee. And they bound him with two new cords, and brought him up from the rock.

14 ¶ And when he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him: and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands.

15 And he found a new jaw-bone of an ass, and put forth his hand, and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith.

16 And Samson said, With the jaw-bone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men.

17 And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking, that he cast away the jaw-bone out of his hand, and called that place Ramath-lehi.

18 ¶ And he was sore athirst, and called on the LORD, and said, Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant: and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?

*Ver. 15. A new jaw-bone of an ass.]* Of an ass that had not been long dead, properly rendered moist in the margin of our Bibles; not so brittle as one that was dry, and had long lain in the air and the sun. No doubt, this event must be ascribed to the providence of God, who thus fulfilled the promise he had made to the Israelites, that no one should be able to stand before them, and that one man of them should chase a thousand; Lev. xxvi. 8. Bochart: Hieroz. pars i. lib. ii. cap. 15. and a dissertation upon the jaw-bone of the ass, by J. Jac. Seiferheld, in the Nov. Thesaur. Philolog. tom. i.

*Ver. 16. Samson said, with the jaw-bone of an ass, &c.]* Samson, upon this victory, composed a triumphant song, or ode, of which this verse appears to have been the chorus or burden. Houbigant renders it,

With the jaw-bone of an ass have I dispersed them;  
With the jaw-bone of an ass have I slain a thousand men.

REFLECTIONS.—Unable any longer to bear such treatment, the Philistines gathered their armies, not to fight with Israel, but to oblige them to give up their enemy Samson. Hereupon,

1. The men of Judah, understanding the reason of their invasion, instead of setting Samson at their head to fight for their liberty, basely resolve to make a sacrifice of him to his enemies, preferring ignominious servitude before a generous struggle for their country. Instead of honouring him for his courage, they blame him for his rashness, and desire him peaceably to submit to their bonds. Samson might well expostulate with them, that what he had done was for their good, and a just correction for the wrongs he had received; but knowing that this was from God, that he might have a new occasion to destroy them, he

peaceably submits to be bound; and, having first engaged his brethren to do him no harm, consents to be delivered into the hands of the Philistines. *Note;* We have here, in Samson, a lively figure of the Lord Jesus. A band of armed men surround him in the garden; he is betrayed, and forsaken by his own disciples; though able to destroy at a stroke those who came to bind him, yet, quietly submissive, he is led as a lamb to the slaughter.

2. With joy the Philistines behold their captive approaching, and shout aloud, as now triumphant over their destroyer: but how momentary is the triumph of the wicked! Instantly a sudden impulse of Divine power comes upon him; like flax his captive bands are burst asunder: no better weapon is at hand than the jaw-bone of an ass's carcase: this he seizes, flies on his amazed foes, and turns the shouts of joy into shrieks of horror: for soon, with resistless fury, he mows down their ranks, and heaps the slain on the slain. A thousand fell on the spot. *Note;* (1.) When God will work, the most despicable instruments in his hand shall be effectual. (2.) Though tied and bound with the chains of our sins, the spirit of the Lord can loose these captive bonds, and set us free. (3.) Unequal as the contest is, between one poor believer and all the hosts of hell and earth without, and corruption within, yet Divine Grace can make him more than conqueror. (4.) When his rejoicing enemies were most secure, and under the seal and stone had thus bound up the dead body of our crucified Lord, then, like Samson, he broke the bands of death, awaked as a giant refreshed with wine, confounded his foes, and led captivity captive.

3. Samson celebrates his victory, not out of vanity, but to the glory of God, who, with so unfit a weapon, had enabled him to make so great a slaughter. The same He-

19 But God clave an hollow place that *was* in the jaw, and there came water thereout; and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived: wherefore he called the name thereof En-hakkore, which *is* in Lehi unto this day.

20 And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years.

### CHAP. XVI.

*Samson carries away the gates of Gaza: falls in love with Delilah, to whom he confesses that his strength would leave him if his head should be shaven. His hair being shaven off while he is asleep, he is taken by the Philistines; his eyes are put out, and he grinds in the prison-house. The manner of his death.*

[Before Christ 1135.]

**T**HEN went Samson to Gaza, and saw there an harlot, and went in unto her.

2 And it was told the Gazites, saying, Samson is come hither. And they compassed him in, and laid wait for him all night in the gate of the city, and were quiet all the night, saying, In the morning, when it is day, we shall kill him.

3 And Samson lay till midnight, and arose at midnight, and took the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and went away with them, bar and all, and put *them* upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of an hill that *is* before Hebron.

4 ¶ And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.

5 And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, Entice him, and see wherein his great strength *lieth*, and by what *means* we may prevail against him, that

brew word *חמור* *chamor*, signifying an *ass* and a *heap*, in the original, affords an elegant paronomasia, not to be accurately expressed in a translation. Then, having finished his song of praises, he casts away the useless jaw, and, in memory of this single event, calls the place Ramoth-Lehi, *The lifting up of the jaw-bone*. Note; (1.) God must have the glory of his own work. (2.) Songs of praise are as honourable to him, as reviving to our own souls.

Ver. 19. But God clave an hollow place that was in the jaw] It is very evident, from what follows in this verse, that our translation is erroneous; since, if God had caused water to come from the jaw only for the present satisfying of Samson's necessities, it is reasonable to suppose, that Samson would have given it the name of a *well* or *fountain*, or that the sacred historian would have told us, that it remained in Lehi unto this day. The rendering in the margins of our Bibles, therefore, is by far the best. Houbigant observes, very properly, that the word rendered *hollow place*, *מכתש* *maktesh*, signifies a *rock*; and he renders the verse thus: *Then God clave the rock which was in Lehi, and there came water from thence; which when he had drank, his spirit came again, and he revived; wherefore Samson called that fountain, the fountain of the implorer; which fountain is in Lehi unto this day.* Modern travellers inform us, that in the suburbs of Eleutheropolis, (in all probability the ancient Lehi,) the fountain which flowed upon this occasion is still remaining, and is called to this day *the fountain of the jaw*; an observation which abundantly confirms the interpretation that we have given. See Scheuchzer on the place.

REFLECTIONS.—The withholding of the most common necessaries of life, little as we are apt to value them, would be more fatal than the sword. The want of a draught of water brought Samson nearer to the grave than all the host of the Philistines.

1. We see him here ready to die with thirst; no water is nigh; and he is so parched and weak, as to be unable

to seek farther. In this distress he calls upon God, who alone could relieve him. In his prayer he pleads God's past mercies as an argument for present help, and urges the dishonour which would be cast on God, if now he should be given into the hands of the uncircumcised, after such an instance of divine interposition. Note; (1.) Jesus on the cross cried thus, I thirst. (2.) In time of distress, prayer is our best resource. (3.) Past mercies should encourage us to wait upon God, and no plea so prevalent as his own glory.

2. God heard and answered him, permitting the distress only to exercise his faith, keep his spirit humble, and magnify his own power and grace. God clave the rock, and a stream of fresh water sprang up; whereupon his fainting spirit revived, and his departing life returned. Note; (1.) Every day we have to praise God for a new life given us. (2.) Without the constant supply of living streams from the fountain of grace, our souls must quickly faint and die.

3. Twenty years he judged Israel, during which the Philistines, though not utterly subdued, seem not to have oppressed them as before, checked by the terror of his arm; so that they had respite from the yoke, if not perfect freedom. Note; (1.) It is a mercy to have our afflictions alleviated. (2.) If we improve the beginning of our mercies, we may expect that they will be continued and perfected.

### CHAP. XVI.

Ver. 3. An hill that is before Hebron] Or, a mountainous place, that is, &c. Hebron was twenty miles from Gaza, which was situated near the extremity of the promised land. It is probable, therefore, that this hill, or mountainous place, lay between Gaza and Hebron. It might be rendered, *which looketh towards Hebron*.

Ver. 4. In the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah] The valley of Sorek, through which passed the river of the same

we may bind him to afflict him: and we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred pieces of silver.

6 And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee.

7 And Samson said unto her, If they bind me with seven green withs that were never dried, then shall I be weak, and be as another man.

8 Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven green withs which had not been dried, and she bound him with them.

9 (Now *there were* men lying in wait, abiding with her in the chamber.) And she said unto him, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And he brake the withs, as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire. So his strength was not known.

10 And Delilah said unto Samson, Behold, thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: now tell me, I pray thee, wherewith thou mightest be bound.

11 And he said unto her, If they bind me fast with new ropes that never were occupied, then shall I be weak, and be as another man.

12 Delilah therefore took new ropes, and bound him therewith, and said unto him, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. (And *there were* liers in wait abiding in the chamber.) And he brake them from off his arms like a thread.

13 And Delilah said unto Samson, Hitherto thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: tell me wherewith thou mightest be bound. And he said unto her, If thou weavest the seven locks of my head with the web.

14 And she fastened *it* with the pin, and said unto him, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And he awaked out of his sleep, and went away with the pin of the beam, and with the web.

15 ¶ And she said unto him, How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart *is* not with me? thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength lieth.

16 And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death;

17 That he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I *have been* a Nazarite unto

same name, and where, in the times of Eusebius and St. Jerome, stood the village of *Cephar-sorek*, was situated to the north of Eleutheropolis, near Zorah, the place of Samson's birth. This place, famous for its *vines*, was about a mile and a half from Eshcol, whence the spies brought their bunch of grapes. Here it was that Samson had the misfortune to become acquainted with Delilah. St. Chrysostom and some others assert, that Samson married her; but it seems much more probable, that she was only his concubine: and so Josephus understands it. Samson, unhappily, abandoned himself entirely to her; and her method of proceeding proves, that she was not only a Philistine, but a woman of very despicable character.

*Ver. 5. We will give—eleven hundred pieces of silver]* By which, says Bishop Patrick, is commonly understood so many shekels; for the Jews make it a rule, that where pieces of silver are mentioned, shekels are meant; the whole sum amounted to about 344 l.

*Ver. 7. Weak]* Worn away. Schult. p. 268.

*Ver. 13, 14. If thou weavest the seven locks of my head with the web]* The LXX render the passage thus: If thou shalt weave the locks of my head, and shalt fasten them with a pin in the wall, I shall be deprived of my strength, and become like other men, ver. 14. When he slept, Delilah took the seven locks of his head which she wove

into a web, and fastened it with a pin to the wall. Then she cried, &c. See Spencer de Leg. Heb. lib. iii. cap. 6. Dissert. I.

*Ver. 17. He told her all his heart]* It was natural to suppose, that God would forsake a man who had forsaken Him, to plunge into the excess of a criminal passion. Samson, softened by the caresses of Delilah, chagrined by her reproaches, overcome by her tears, could no longer resist her pressing solicitations. He forgot every thing to please her. He discovered his secret to her. There have been many men of wonderful strength, whose memory is preserved in history, and an account of whom may be found in Scheuchzer on the place; but it should be observed here, that Samson's extraordinary strength was not inherent in himself, but depended entirely on the divine power coming upon him when there was need of it, so long as he preserved himself consecrated to God, and strictly observed all those things which belonged to the vow of a Nazarite. Josephus paraphrases these words of Samson to Delilah thus: "I am under the care of God: born by his immediate providence, I nourish my hair; for he forbid that I should ever have it cut off, and it is herein that all my strength consists." See Hist. of the Jewish War, book v. chap. 10.

REFLECTIONS.—As woman first was man's ruin; how often since has she been his snare! Other passions have slain.



God from my mother's womb: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any *other* man.

18 And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for he hath shewed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand.

19 And she made him sleep upon her

knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him.

20 And she said, The Philistines be upon thee Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him.

21 ¶ But the Philistines took him, and put

slain their thousands, the love of women has slain its ten thousands.

I. Samson, who could not be taken in the toils of the Philistines, is ensnared by the attire of a harlot: to his shame, the history is recorded.

1. He went down to Gaza, on what occasion is not mentioned; but the bad tendency of familiarity with Philistines is left for our admonition. He saw a woman who pleased his eye, and, passion overcoming conscience, he connected himself with her. *Note;* (1.) The strongest in grace had need deeply to cry, Lead us not into temptation! (2.) They who ramble into places of vain company, must not wonder if they suffer for it.

2. Though perhaps he came in disguise, he was not long concealed; and while he is lying in the arms of a harlot, danger and death await him at the gate. *Note;* (1.) In our most secret sins God will find us out. (2.) Men would not sleep in quiet on the bed of lewdness, could they see the wrath of God which is hanging over them. (3.) The more securely the sinner sleeps, the more dangerous is his state.

3. Whether the conviction of his conscience terrified him, or a dream monitory of his danger awakened him, or some intelligence was brought him of the Philistines' designs, we do not learn; but at midnight he arose, and, finding the gates of the city barred, and the guards probably asleep, little expecting such a visitant, he took up posts, gates, and bars together on his shoulders, and carried them to a distant hill, to let his enemies see how vain were their attempts against him. Thus Christ, on his resurrection-day, carried off the gates of death, mocking at the impotent designs of his enemies, and opening a passage for all his people to follow him to the hill of God.

II. Again and again we find this mighty man sinking under the power of his besetting sin. More than once he had been brought by it into the most imminent danger; yet still he relapses, and, the third time, severely suffers. What a warning to every man of God to make a covenant with his eyes, and watch against and deny the sinful lusts of the flesh, which are as easily besetting, as difficult to be resisted.

1. A harlot caught his eye, and ensnared his heart. In criminal conversation with her he passed the day; and him whom armies could not move, a woman enslaved.

2. The Philistines seize the opportunity, and hope at last to prevail against him. Persuaded that there was some charm or spell which gave him such matchless strength,

they offer Delilah a large bribe to get the secret out of him. *Note;* (1.) Where the love of money is rooted in the heart, bribe high enough, and you may buy body, soul, and all. (2.) By this was the Son of God betrayed; the love of thirty pieces of silver prevailed on the traitor Judas.

3. On the first opportunity, when caresses had paved the way for an easier entrance into his heart, she earnestly desires that he would gratify her curiosity, by informing her where his strength lay, and how he might be so bound as to be unable to help himself. Reluctant to declare the real secret, and hoping to put her off, he hesitates not at a lie; but when, to make the experiment, the officers bound him, and an alarm of danger was given, the deceit appeared. Again she tries, again he misinforms her: the new ropes were as flax on his hands. The third time, upbraiding him with his deceit, she wearies him to tell the truth; but, still reluctant, he gives her a false information; and when she had wove his locks with her web, and fastened them to the beam, no sooner was the cry heard, "The Philistines be upon thee," than pin, beam, and all were carried away. *Note;* (1.) We must never expect fidelity from those who shew their utter unthankfulness to God. (2.) When the heart is infatuated with lust, repeated warnings of danger will be disregarded. (3.) They who feel themselves unable to resist the importunity of their passions should instantly fly.

4. At last, wearied out with her ceaseless upbraidings, and enslaved by his violent passion for her, the fatal secret is extorted. He could not bear to be suspected as wanting in affection to her, and, rather than not convince her of it by gratifying her most unreasonable requests, his own reputation, life, yea worse, the honour of God and the people's safety, are basely betrayed into the power of a faithless woman. *Note;* They who are slaves to their lusts are the worst of slaves, and stop at nothing to gratify them.

*Ver. 19. She began to afflict him]* i. e. (in the sense wherein this word is frequently used,) to humble and bring him low; for as soon as the razor touched his head, his strength began to be diminished.

*Ver. 21. The Philistines took him, &c.]* The design of the Philistines in putting out Samson's eyes, was to prevent him from undertaking any future enterprise against them; thus, by the just judgment of God, the *concupiscence of the eyes* was punished very remarkably in him. But a further punishment was prepared for him; loaden with chains,

out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison-house.

22 Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven.

23 ¶ Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoice: for they said, Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand.

24 And when the people saw him, they praised their god: for they said, Our god hath delivered into our hands our enemy, and the

destroyer of our country, which slew many of us.

25 And it came to pass, when their hearts were merry, that they said, Call for Samson, that he may make us sport. And they called for Samson out of the prison-house; and he made them sport: and they set him between the pillars.

26 ¶ And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them.

27 Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines.

chains, he was condemned to *grind in the prison-house*. Before the invention of wind and water-mills, they generally made use of hand-mills; and they condemned to this fordid employment malefactors and slaves, especially such as were disobedient and rebellious. See Exod. xi. 5. Grotius on the place, and Herodotus, lib. iv. ch. 2.

REFLECTIONS.—Fully convinced now, from the seriousness of his manner, or the name of God which he had used, that he had discovered to her his whole heart, the summons the lords of the Philistines once more to attend her, who, having been so often disappointed, had returned home in despair; and they, ready to embrace the opportunity, take the money in their hands, and haste away. Behold and pity this unhappy victim, destined now as a sheep to the slaughter. *Note*: It is just in God to give up those to suffer who give themselves up to sin.

1. When her assistants are ready, this treacherous wretch spreads the soft lap of love; and after "dalliance sweet," the mighty Samson sinks down to rest, and closes those eyes, which, fascinated with beauty's charm, can see no danger in that pleasing pillow. But now the fatal razor approaches: his seven locks fall off; his strength departs; and now the Philistines, at her cry, rush in, and, to his utter confusion, he discovers his irreparable ruin. At first, when he awoke, he thought that he might shake himself as before, and knew not his dire mishap; but God was departed, and therefore resistance was vain. *Note*: (1.) Indulgence of sensual appetite stupifies the conscience, and rocks the soul asleep in security; but Satan is awake, and insensibly leads us into the pit of ruin. (2.) Many a sinner closes his eyes in peace, which the alarm of death or judgment will open, only to discover his state of everlasting despair. (3.) When God is provoked to depart, though we may think that we can do as at other times, our weakness will appear to our confusion, and we shall sink under our wickedness. (4.) Let every one who reads beware of Samson's sin, lest they bring themselves, like him, into the depths of misery.

2. The Philistines secure him fast. No longer now the terror of the mighty, they drag him down to Gaza in triumph, and, to disable him for ever, put out his eyes, and with fetters of brass chain him to the mill; at once to suffer,

to serve them, and stand the derision of every beholder. How art thou fallen, son of the morning! how is the glory departed from Israel! *Note*: (1.) His punishment corresponds with his sins; those eyes which ensnared his heart are now for ever closed in darkness. The sinner's portion will be the outer darkness, where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth. (2.) They, who yield their members instruments of iniquity, will find Satan's service base and bitter, when in chains of sin they groan, being burdened. (3.) Former manifestations of God's mercy to sinners, will but aggravate their torment in hell; as the remembrance of the gates of Gaza made the doors of the prison more ignominious and afflictive.

*Ver. 22. Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again*. We are to understand by this, not merely that, Samson's hair growing again, he thereby recovered his strength; but that, sensible, no doubt, of his folly and imprudence, he renewed his vow of Nazariteship, and in a state of penitence implored the pardon of that God whom he had so grievously offended.

*Ver. 23. Then the Lords of the Philistines, &c.* Then, that is, some time after Samson had been in prison, his hair having grown again to a considerable length, the Philistines prepared to celebrate their annual festival in honour of Dagon, to whom they conceived themselves indebted for this triumph over their great enemy. *Dagon*, which comes from *dag*, a fish, was the tutelary deity of the Philistines; and the lower part of this idol, it is most probable, was in the form of a fish. See Deut. iv. 18. and 1 Sam. v. 4. As fishes are remarkably fruitful, it seems most probable that *Dagon* was designed as an emblem of the fertility of nature. *Δαγών* ος εστι Σίτων; *Dagon*, that is, the corn-giver, says Sanchoniathon in Philobibulus. Those who are inclined to know more of Dagon may consult Selden de Diis Syriis, Calmet's Dissertations, Cumberland in Sanchoniath. and the Pisga Sight of Fuller; who is of opinion, that Dagon, coming from a word signifying bread, was worshipped as the inventor of bread-corn, and was represented in a form entirely human: but the former is the more general opinion.

*Ver. 27. Now the house was full, &c.* It is not certain, whether this was the temple of Dagon, or a kind of theatre built

were there; and *there were* upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport.

28 And Samson called unto the LORD, and said, O LORD GOD, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O GOD, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.

29 And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left.

30 And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with *all his* might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that *were* therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than *they* which he slew in his life.

31 Then his brethren and all the house of his father came down, and took him, and brought *him* up, and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the burying-place of Manoah his father. And he judged Israel twenty years.

built for public sports. Dr. Shaw gives us the best commentary on this passage. "This method of building," says he, whereof he had just spoken, "may further assist us in accounting for the particular structure of the temple or house of Dagon, (Judg. xvi.) and the great number of people who were buried in the ruins of it, by the pulling down of the two principal pillars which supported it. We read, ver. 27. that about three thousand persons were upon the roof to behold while Samson made sport, viz. to the scoffing and deriding Philistines. Samson, therefore, must have been in a court or area below; and consequently the temple will be of the same kind with the ancient *τεμενν*, or sacred inclosures, which were only surrounded either in part or on all sides with some plain or cloistered buildings. Several palaces and *douwanas*, as the courts of justice are called in these countries, are built in this fashion; where, upon their public festivals and rejoicings, a great quantity of sand is strewed upon the area for the *pellouans* or *wrestlers* to fall upon; whilst the roofs of these cloisters are crowded with spectators to admire their strength and activity. I have often seen numbers of people diverted in this manner upon the roof of the *Dey's* palace at Algiers, which, like many more of the same quality and denomination, has an advanced cloister *over against the gate of the palace*, (Esth. v. 1.) made in the fashion of a large pent-house, supported only by one or two contiguous pillars in the front, or else in the centre. In such open structures as these, the *basbarus*, *kadees*, and other great officers, distribute justice, and transact the public affairs of their provinces. Here likewise they have their public entertainments, as the lords and others of the Philistines had in the house of Dagon. Upon a supposition, therefore, that in the house of Dagon there was a cloistered building of that kind, the pulling down the front or centre pillars, which supported it, would alone be attended with the like catastrophe that happened to the Philistines." See Travels, p. 216. Our great English architect, Sir Christopher Wren, is of opinion, that this building was an oval amphitheatre, the scene in the middle; where a vast roof of cedar beams resting round upon the walls, centered all upon one short architrave, which united two cedar-pillars in the middle. One pillar would not be sufficient to unite the ends of at least one hundred beams which tended to the centre; therefore

there must be a short architrave, or concentric circle resting upon two pillars, upon which all the beams tending to the centre of the amphitheatre might be supported. Now, if Samson, by his miraculous strength, moved one of those pillars from the basis, the whole roof must necessarily fall. The supposing that the ends of the beams were united in a circle in the middle, will remove the difficulty which may arise from considering that no less than three thousand persons were spectators of Samson's ill treatment from the roof; for this manner of construction would have afforded them conveniency enough for this purpose. See Wren's Parentalia, p. 359. Pliny mentions two theatres built at Rome by Caius Curio, which were large enough to contain the whole Roman people, and yet of so singular a structure as to depend each upon one hinge or pivot. See Nat. Hist. lib. xxxvi. cap. 15. And in Tacitus, we read of a destruction by the fall of an amphitheatre similar to this occasioned by Samson. Annals, lib. vi. cap. 62.

Ver. 28. And Samson called unto the Lord, &c.] We must always consider Samson in the light of an extraordinary person, immediately raised up by God for the chastisement of the Philistines. In this view his death was heroic, as he voluntarily sacrificed himself, by the only means in his power, to the service of his country, by the destruction of those who had in a base manner insulted him and his God, and who, holding Israel in bondage, vainly imagined their Dagon superior to the eternal JEHOVAH. As we have before remarked, Samson was unquestionably a very singular type of the Messiah: called and sanctified in and from the womb; set apart to deliver his people out of the hands of all their enemies; performing all by his own personal strength alone, without assistant, and almost without weapons (Isai. lxiii. 1. 3. Hof. i. 7.); and in his death eminently doing more than in his life, thereby destroying the power of the devil, and triumphing over all his enemies. Heb. ii. 14.

Ver. 30. So the dead which he slew at his death, &c.] And those whom he slew at his death were more than those whom he had slain in his life. Houb. It is plain, that this event must have greatly reduced the Philistines, as they made no sort of opposition to the burying of Samson who had wrought such destruction among them.

REFLECTIONS.—In this ignominious employment, unhappy Samson had time and opportunity given him for reflection;

C H A P. XVII.

*Micah, an Ephraimite, restores the money which he had taken from his mother; from which she commands a graven image to be made; Micah hires a Levite to be his priest.*

[Before Christ 1426.]

**A**ND there was a man of mount Ephraim, whose name was Micah.

2 And he said unto his mother, The eleven hundred *shekels* of silver that were taken from thee, about which thou cursedst, and spakest of also in mine ears, behold, the silver is with me; I took it. And his mother said, Blessed

*be thou of the LORD, my son.*

3 And when he had restored the eleven hundred *shekels* of silver to his mother, his mother said, I had wholly dedicated the silver unto the LORD from my hand for my son, to make a graven image and a molten image: now therefore I will restore it unto thee.

4 Yet he restored the money unto his mother; and his mother took two hundred *shekels* of silver, and gave them to the founder, who made thereof a graven image and a molten image: and they were in the house of Micah.

reflection; bitter reflection [where all was dark without, and all as dark within. Yet how preferable his present situation! Far better grind in Gaza, than sleep in the bosom of Delilah. Repentance seems now to have been vouchsafed to him; his hair began to grow, and, as a token that God had not utterly left him, his strength returned with it, God still designing him for great exploits, and in his death to wipe away the foul stains of his past ungracious conduct.

1. The Philistines assemble to celebrate the praises of their god Dagon, half man half fish, to whose favour they ascribe their victory over the mighty Samson. With songs of praise the lofty roofs resound, and echo back their idol's victory. To make their joy complete, Samson is led forth; insult is added to his sufferings, and he degraded to be the sport of fools. *Note;* (1.) If even a Philistine could ascribe his victories only to his dunghill god, how much more are we bound to give our God the glory due to his name, for all he does to us, in us, and for us! (2.) They, who by their ill conduct have brought dishonour upon God, justly deserve to bring contempt upon themselves. (3.) They, who have sported in sin to their own deceiving, will find themselves in the end exposed to everlasting shame.

2. Little thought the lords of the Philistines what ruin hung over their heads. In mirth and wine the joyful day was spent; and besides the chief nobility, a vast concourse of men and women crowded the temple within and without, no less than three thousand being on the roof. Unhappy Samson stood the spectacle of their delight, fallen from his high estate, trampled upon by every foot, and led along blind by a little lad, the guide and guard of this once renowned hero. Meditating the fatal blow, and having informed himself of the supporters of the roof, he desires the lad to lead him, that he may lean against them; there pausing for a while on this great deed, he lifts his heart to God in prayer for power to avenge, as a public person, his own and Israel's wrongs; and for his people's sake cheerfully devotes himself to death. With arms extended then he grasps the massy pillars, and, feeling an answer to his prayer, in the renewed strength bestowed on him, he bows himself forward; the pillars rock, the building totters, the roof, encumbered with the weight of the

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spectators, rushes down, and death in every tremendous shape appears. Crushed under the load, or dashed to pieces in the fall, thousands expire; their music now is changed to dying groans; and shrieks of agonizing pain, instead of songs of triumph, fill the air. Thus dies the mighty Samson, glorious in his fall, and more terrible to the Philistines in his death than even during his life. *Note;* (1.) They who sport and mock at God's servants, fill fast the measure of their iniquities. (2.) When we return to God in penitent prayer, God will return to us in mercy, and renew our strength. (3.) To die for our country is great, but to die for God is far greater. (4.) Samson's death is a type of Christ's; his arms were thus extended on the cross; laying down a life which none could else take from him; saving his people by shedding his own blood, and casting down thereby the throne of Satan, ruining his temple in the hearts of men, and destroying the power of sin, death, and hell, their mortal enemies.

3. His father and friends, during their consternation, went up and took his dead body from the ruins, (the Philistines not daring to oppose them,) and buried it in his father's sepulchre. Twenty years his government lasted; and had the people but followed his example, they had no more felt the yoke of Philistia. *Note;* It is our own fault if we live and die the servants of sin, because we neglect to use the means of grace that God vouchsafes us.

C H A P. XVII.

*Ver. 1. And there was a man of mount Ephraim]* The second part of the book of Judges begins here; containing an account of several transactions in and about the time of the judges, which the sacred historian omitted in their proper order, that he might not interrupt the thread of a narrative relating to the transactions of the whole nation.

*Ver. 2. About which thou cursedst]* Houbigant renders this, and for which you put me to my oath; connecting the whole sentence thus: *the eleven hundred shekels of silver which thou saidst in my hearing were taken from thee, and for which thou didst put me to my oath, behold, are with me, &c.* In which he nearly follows the Arabick. See Dr. Hammond on St. Matt. xxvi. annot. 1.

*Ver.*

X

5 ¶ And the man Micah had an house of gods, and made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest.

6 In those days *there was* no king in Israel, but every man did *that which was* right in his own eyes.

7 ¶ And there was a young man out of Beth-lehem-judah of the family of Judah, who *was* a Levite, and he sojourned there.

8 And the man departed out of the city from Beth-lehem-judah to sojourn where he could find *a place*: and he came to mount Ephraim to the house of Micah, as he journeyed.

9 And Micah said unto him, Whence comest thou? And he said unto him, I *am* a

Levite of Beth-lehem-judah, and I go to sojourn where I may find *a place*.

10 And Micah said unto him, Dwell with me, and be unto me a father and a priest, and I will give thee ten *shekels* of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, and thy victuals. So the Levite went in.

11 And the Levite was content to dwell with the man; and the young man was unto him as one of his sons.

12 And Micah consecrated the Levite; and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah.

13 Then said Micah, Now know I that the LORD will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest.

*Ver. 3. For my son, to make a graven image, and a molten image*] It is very plain, from the sequel, that the intention of this woman was, not to form any images of false gods to herself, but to make a representation of the tabernacle in Shiloh. She says, *I had wholly dedicated the silver unto Jehovah*; and therefore it has been reasonably conjectured by some, that these *images*, as well as the *teraphim* mentioned in the 5th verse, were made in imitation of the cherubim; the *ephod* being formed like that which God appointed for the priests, and the rest of this idolatrous preparation being designed to imitate the ark, with all its sacred furniture. See Spencer de Leg. Heb. lib. iii. c. 3. dissert. 7.

*Ver. 5. An house of gods*] This might be rendered more properly, a temple or house of God; בית אלהים *beith elohim*: so the LXX and the Vulgate render it, as well as *Houbigant, ades deo sacra*. Micah and his family were desirous to have a little tabernacle, a place consecrated to the *elohim*, at their own house, without the trouble of going up to Shiloh. Respecting the *teraphim*, see Gen. xxxi. 17.

*Ver. 6. In those days there was no king in Israel*] That is to say, no supreme governor; and, consequently, a total anarchy prevailed, (see 2 Chron. xv. 3.) which words are inserted, not only as a reason why Micah set up this sanctuary at home, being afraid, through the deficiency of government, and the danger of the times, to go up to Shiloh; but also as a reason why he did it with impunity.

*Note*: 1. Corruptions in the church arise from small beginnings; to avoid idolatry, we must keep from superstition. (2.) It matters little whether the idol be set up in the heart or the house; whatever alienates the affections from God leads us into idolatry. (3.) The reason is given why this conduct of Micah met with no reproof; there was no judge in Israel; and they must be bad days indeed when no magistrates restrain sin, and ministers are negligent to reprove it.

*Ver. 13. Then said Micah, now know I, &c.*] What a strange infatuation! Micah is at the summit of his wishes because the Levite has accepted his offers, and because he

sees his chapel consecrated, and a priest of the sacerdotal line minister of the new religion planned out by his mother. Micah had rendered himself capitally guilty in making a common Levite a priest. See Numb. iii. 10. and Witsii Egypt. pa. 133.—Idols, teraphim, a prophane altar, an intruded minister,—what noble grounds for self-approbation! The crime of Micah is strongly set forth by Calmet. “He persuades himself,” says he, “that the people, seeing his chapel served by a man of the family of Levi, will come thither with greater confidence, and that this concourse, together with the offerings to be brought, will procure him considerable gain. It is evidently this gain, that he here calls the blessings of God. How just a representation is this of those superstitiously covetous persons who would connect religion with the love of riches, and who, as St. Paul expresses it, fancy that piety should serve as a means of enriching themselves!”

REFLECTIONS.—Micah had probably been content with his son's service, if an accident had not brought him a more acceptable chaplain in a Levite of Beth-lehem-judah, who was by his mother's side of the tribe of Judah, and had resided at Beth-lehem; either, through the neglect of God's worship which now began to take place, he could no longer gain a maintenance from the ministry, and was forced to seek a livelihood; or, perhaps, being of a rambling disposition, unsettled, and uneasy at being confined at home: it may be also, hearing of Micah's house of gods, and hoping for better preferment in his service, abominable as it was, than at the altar of God. *Note*: (1.) They must be bad times indeed when God's ministers want a maintenance. (2.) The priest who sets out with an eye to preferment is certainly in the high road to perdition. (3.) The ministry is the best calling, but the worst trade in the world.

Micah having inquired whence he came, and learning his profession, invites him in; offers, if he will officiate for him, to treat him with respect as a father, and to provide

for

## C H A P. XVIII.

*The Danites seek an inheritance, and in the journey enter into the house of Micah, and carry off his image and his priest: they take the city Laish, which they burn, build another in its place, and set up there Micah's graven image.*

[Before Christ 1426.]

**I**N those days *there was* no king in Israel: and in those days the tribe of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell in; for unto that day *all their* inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel.

2 And the children of Dan sent of their family five men from their coasts, men of valour, from Zorah, and from Eshtaol, to spy out the land, and to search it; and they said unto them, Go, search the land: who when they came to mount Ephraim, to the house of Micah, they lodged there.

3 When they *were* by the house of Micah, they knew the voice of the young man the Levite: and they turned in thither, and said unto him, Who brought thee hither? and what makest thou in this *place*? and what hast thou here?

4 And he said unto them, Thus and thus

dealeth Micah with me, and hath hired me, and I am his priest.

5 And they said unto him, Ask counsel, we pray thee, of God, that we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous.

6 And the priest said unto them, Go in peace: before the LORD *is* your way wherein ye go.

7 ¶ Then the five men departed, and came to Laish, and saw the people that *were* therein, how they dwelt careless, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure; and *there was* no magistrate in the land, that might put *them* to shame in *any* thing; and they *were* far from the Zidonians, and had no business with *any* man.

8 And they came unto their brethren to Zorah and Eshtaol: and their brethren said unto them, What *say* ye?

9 And they said, Arise, that we may go up against them: for we have seen the land, and, behold, it *is* very good; and *are* ye still? be not slothful to go, *and* to enter to possess the land.

for him. The Levite consents, the bargain is concluded; and as he found it a good house, though the work was scandalous and the wages mean, he thought himself well settled. *Note:* (1.) They, whose office and duty it is to rebuke sin, are often, for the sake of their belly and a good table, wicked and mean enough to sit by and countenance it. (2.) They, who choose their own delusions, would fain flatter themselves that God approves of them. (3.) More, like Micah, derive their hopes from the priest and the altar, their worship, and external devotions, than from spirituality of temper and real purity of heart. (4.) The deeds that the self-righteous boast of, as commending them to God's favour, are those which God most abhors, and which most effectually seal them up under wrath.

## C H A P. XVIII.

*Ver. 1. In those days there was no king in Israel*] The exact period here referred to is uncertain; but it is generally supposed to have been before there was a judge in Israel, between the death of Joshua and the elders who survived him, and the time of Othniel, who was the first judge raised up for them by God. See Josephus, Antiquities, lib. v. cap. 2. and the note on the first verse of the former chapter. Houbigant renders the latter part of this verse, *for not yet, even to this time, they had sufficient inheritance among the tribes of Israel.* Instead of *the tribe of the Danites*, some would read *a tribe*, or *family*, &c.

*Ver. 5. They said unto him, ask counsel, we pray thee, of*

*God*] These two verses prove, what we have before observed on the 5th verse of the foregoing chapter, that this sanctuary of Micah was dedicated to the true God, and not to idols. *Before the Lord is your way* signifies you are under the immediate *guidance* and *protection* of the Lord; under his eye: an answer framed, no doubt, by the Levite, as we cannot conceive that he could, in such a case, have any answer from God. Strange folly! to ask direction of idols, when Shiloh was so nigh; and prefer an intruding self-made priest to the anointed of the Lord. Thus still the blind lead the blind, and the people love to have it so.

*Ver. 7. Came to Laish*] See on Josh. xix. 47. where this history is briefly told by way of anticipation. The Zidonians were a powerful people in a strong city; and therefore they indulged securely in peace and luxury, and in these particulars were imitated by the men of Laish, who had not the same reasons for their security. The people of Laish were probably a colony of the Zidonians.

*Ver. 9, 10. And they said, Arise, &c.*] There cannot be a more infallible presage of the ruin of any people or nation, of the immediate destruction of a city or a kingdom, than when *they dwell quiet and secure*, when they are *careless*, as if nothing could befall them; when the *magistrates* are *as careless as the people*, or care not to put the *people to shame for any thing*. As good to be without any magistrates, as to have such as will neither instruct nor punish those who do amiss. They who were sent from the

10 When ye go, ye shall come unto a people secure, and to a large land: for God hath given it into your hands; a place where *there is no want of any thing that is in the earth.*

11 ¶ And there went from thence of the family of the Danites, out of Zorah and out of Ekhtaol, six hundred men appointed with weapons of war.

12 And they went up, and pitched in Kirjath-jearim, in Judah: wherefore they called that place Mahaneh-dan unto this day: behold, *it is behind Kirjath-jearim.*

13 And they passed thence unto mount Ephraim, and came unto the house of Micah.

14 ¶ Then answered the five men that went to spy out the country of Laish, and said unto their brethren, Do ye know that there is in these houses an ephod, and teraphim, and a graven image, and a molten image? now therefore consider what ye have to do.

15 And they turned thitherward, and came to the house of the young man the Levite, *even* unto the house of Micah, and saluted him.

16 And the six hundred men appointed with their weapons of war, which *were* of the children of Dan, stood by the entering of the gate.

17 And the five men that went to spy out the land went up, *and* came in thither, *and* took the graven image, and the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image: and the

priest stood in the entering of the gate with the six hundred men *that were* appointed with weapons of war.

18 And these went into Micah's house, and fetched the carved image, the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image. Then said the priest unto them, What do ye?

19 And they said unto him, Hold thy peace, lay thine hand upon thy mouth, and go with us, and be to us a father and a priest: *is it* better for thee to be a priest unto the house of one man, or that thou be a priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel?

20 And the priest's heart was glad, and he took the ephod, and the teraphim, and the graven image, and went in the midst of the people.

21 So they turned and departed, and put the little ones and the cattle and the carriage before them.

22 ¶ *And* when they were a good way from the house of Micah, the men that *were* in the houses near to Micah's house were gathered together, and overtook the children of Dan.

23 And they cried unto the children of Dan. And they turned their faces, and said unto Micah, What aileth thee, that thou comest with such a company?

24 And he said, Ye have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and ye are gone away: and what have I more? and what *is* this *that* ye say unto me, What aileth thee?

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children of Dan to *spy out the land*, and to *search out an inheritance to dwell in*, (ver. 1, 2.) thought that they need go no farther, when they had found in what condition and manner the people of Laish lived; that they *dwelt carelessly, quiet, and secure*, and that there was *no magistrate in the land that might put them to shame in anything*: there was no more to be done, than to return to those who sent them, with the advertisement, *Arise, &c.*

*Note*, (1.) If there be no magistrate to bear the sword, or negligence let it sleep in the scabbard, barefaced iniquity will quickly walk in triumph. (2.) Shame is a great restraint on sin; when that is lost, men grow utterly abandoned. (3.) The security of sinners is their ruin.

*Ver. 19. And they said unto him*] *They*, that is, the five men who had entered the house.

*Ver. 24. Ye have taken away my gods, &c.*] The word rendered *gods* is *elohim*, which, as in other places, would be more properly rendered, my god; and must, undoubtedly,

mean the symbol of the Divine presence; as we cannot conceive that Micah, who was a worshipper of Jehovah, could have been so absurd as to think that he could make *his god*.

REFLECTIONS.—The priest, surprised to see the men return with his treasure, expostulates with them against the theft; but his complaints are easily silenced: no sooner do they propose to him to go along with them, and set in his view better wages and greater preferment, than he very readily consents to follow, and leave a private cure for a fee, little concerning himself about the charge, or the infamous means of his advancement. *Note*, (1.) When a priest's heart is more anxious after his preferment, than concerned about the weight of his office, it is a sure sign that he serves an idol god. (2.) When a man chooses to minister for the salary, not the souls, he must scandalize his profession.

*Ver.*

25 And the children of Dan said unto him, Let not thy voice be heard among us, lest angry fellows run upon thee, and thou lose thy life, with the lives of thy household.

26 And the children of Dan went their way: and when Micah saw that they *were* too strong for him, he turned and went back unto his house.

27 ¶ And they took *the things* which Micah had made, and the priest which he had, and came unto Laish, unto a people *that were* at quiet and secure: and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and burnt the city with fire.

28 And *there was* no deliverer, because it was far from Zidon, and they had no business

with *any* man; and it was in the valley that *lieth* by Beth-rehob. And they built a city, and dwelt therein.

29 And they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father, who was born unto Israel: howbeit the name of the city *was* Laish at the first.

30 ¶ And the children of Dan set up the graven image: and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land.

31 And they set them up Micah's graven image, which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh.

*Ver. 29. They called the name of the city Dan*] It was situated at the extremity of the north of Judea, though the tribe of Dan had their lot in the south-west: Hence came the common saying afterwards, (when they would express the whole length of their country,) from Dan to Beer-sheba.

*Ver. 30. The son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh*] As this Manasseh certainly cannot mean him who was the head of the tribe so called; it is generally thought, that some other Manasseh of the tribe of Levi is understood. Dr. Kennicott, however, strongly contends for the reading of the Vulgate, *the son of Moses*. "We know," says he, "that Gershom was the son of Moses; and there are strong reasons for believing that the word here was *Moses*, and not Manasseh. For, *first*, Saint Jerome has expressed it *Moses*, and so has the Vulgate likewise; and farther, that the Septuagint, as well as the Vulgate, formerly read *Moses*, we may infer from Theodoret, who reads the verse thus: 'Jonathan, the son of *Manasseh*, the son of Gershom;' and from the existence of both these words we may infer, that some copies read the latter, and some the former; while others, that they might be sure of the right word, inserted both. The Jews, as Kimchi and Aben-dana confess, struck with deep concern for the honour of their law-giver, and distressed to think that a grandson of Moses should be the first priest of idolatry, have ventured upon a pious fraud; placing over the word משה *Moseh*, Moses, the letter נ *nun*, which might intimate it to be מנשה *Manasseh*. This additional letter, being variously placed over the word, has at length slipped down into the same rank with the original letters; and the word *Manasseh*, which was designed to be read, has now supplanted *Moses*. We are told, indeed, that this relation is figurative, meant of a similitude in idolatry, and not of natural consanguinity: but that any man who lived eight hundred years before Manasseh should be called a descendant of Manasseh, because Manasseh acted *like him* eight hundred years afterwards, is absurd. That this word should mean Manasseh the son of Joseph, is impossible, because that Manasseh had no son called Gershom; but that Gershom was the son of Manasseh

"is certain from many texts of Scripture. And lastly, the *time* of this first apostacy to idolatry farther confirms the present argument. It is allowed, that the events recorded in the five last chapters of Judges happened soon after the death of Joshua, and are prior to those recorded in the former chapter; and as this idolatrous establishment in Dan was soon after Joshua's death, that will be perfectly coincident with the life of Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Moses; for Joshua, being in the vigour of life at the death of Moses, must be *contemporary* with Gershom, the son of Moses; and would at his death leave Jonathan the son of Gershom in the vigour of life, or at least capable, in point of age, of being an idolatrous priest, at such a time as the sacred history here most impartially represents him." See his *Diss.* p. 51—55, and p. 559.

*Until the day of the captivity of the land*] All the later Jews agree, that this passage refers to the captivity of the ark of the covenant, which happened after the Philistines had subdued the Israelites.

REFLECTIONS.—Proceeding on their expedition, the Danites arrive at Laish, where, according to the report of the spies, the people were in perfect security; but when sinners cry, Peace, peace, then cometh the sword.

1. They smote them without any resistance, put the people to the sword, and burnt the city, which they afterwards rebuilt, and called it Dan, to preserve their connection with their brethren, lest, by their distance from them, they might afterwards be disowned.

2. They set up Micah's images there, probably imputing their success to their presence; and the Levite and his sons were priests there till the ark was taken by the Philistines in the time of Eli. And though this worship seems to have been suppressed during the days of Samuel, David, and Solomon, yet enough of the old leaven remained to make Jeroboam's calves welcome. *Note*: (1.) Prosperity in an evil way encourages the heart to persevere in it. (2.) If pious parents could look out of their graves upon their degenerate children, it would shock and grieve them



## C H A P. XIX.

*A Levite passes the night in Gibeah of Benjamin: the men of Gibeah abuse his concubine to death: the Levite divides her body into twelve parts, which he sends to the twelve tribes.*

[Before Christ 1426.]

**A**ND it came to pass in those days, when *there was* no king in Israel, that there was a certain Levite sojourning on the side of mount Ephraim, who took to him a concubine out of Beth-lehem-judah.

2 And his concubine played the whore against him, and went away from him unto her father's house to Beth-lehem-judah, and was there four whole months.

3 And her husband arose, and went after her, to speak friendly unto her, *and* to bring her again, having his servant with him, and a couple of asses: and she brought him into her father's house: and when the father of the damsel saw him, he rejoiced to meet him.

4 And his father-in-law, the damsel's father, retained him; and he abode with him three days: so they did eat and drink, and lodged there.

5 And it came to pass on the fourth day, when they arose early in the morning, that he rose up to depart: and the damsel's father said unto his son-in-law, Comfort thine heart with

a morsel of bread, and afterward go your way.

6 And they sat down, and did eat and drink both of them together: for the damsel's father had said unto the man, Be content, I pray thee, and tarry all night; and let thine heart be merry.

7 And when the man rose up to depart, his father-in-law urged him: therefore he lodged there again.

8 And he arose early in the morning on the fifth day to depart: and the damsel's father said, Comfort thine heart, I pray thee. And they tarried until afternoon, and they did eat both of them.

9 And when the man rose up to depart, he and his concubine, and his servant, his father-in-law, the damsel's father, said unto him, Behold, now the day draweth towards evening, I pray you tarry all night: behold, the day groweth to an end, lodge here, that thine heart may be merry; and to-morrow get you early on your way, that thou mayest go home.

10 But the man would not tarry that night, but he rose up and departed, and came over against Jebus (which is Jerusalem); and *there were* with him two asses saddled, his concubine also *was* with him.

to see their ways. (3.) When bad habits are long indulged, it is very hard to eradicate them; and if, for a season, they are restrained, yet relapses are greatly to be feared.

## C H A P. XIX.

*Ver. 1. Took to him a concubine*] Women of this sort differed little from the wife; except in some outward ceremonies and stipulations, but agreed with her in all the true essences of marriage, and gave themselves up to the husband, (for so he is called in the next chapter, ver. 4.) with faith plighted, with sentiment, and with affection. See Selden de Jur. Nat. et Gent. l. v. c. 7.

*Ver. 2. And his concubine played the whore against him*] The Chaldee renders this, *she despised him*, &c. the LXX, *she separated herself from him*, with which Josephus agrees. It is probable, that this is the true reading; for one can hardly imagine, that otherwise her husband would have made such haste to follow, and obtain a reconciliation with her.

*Ver. 3. And her husband arose, and went after her, to speak friendly unto her*] In the original, *to speak to her heart*, to refer to their former endearments, and to ask how she could be so unkind to him, and so very unkind to herself. Even the upbraidings of the quiet and relenting are sweet:

not like the strivings of the fierce and inexorable, who bite and devour all that have thwarted them in their way; but they are calm, and courteous, like the spirit which watches over their character. How could such a temper woo the damsel, and not bring her back? Or how could the father of the damsel, beholding such a scene, have a heart open to any impressions but those mentioned in the latter clause; that *when he saw him, he rejoiced to meet him*; urged his stay, from day to day, with that soft invitation, *comfort thine heart,—and tarry all night, and let thine heart be merry*. If *mercy and truth* thus meet together in settling this account, *love* would surely be of the party: great, great is its power in cementing what has been broken, and wiping out wrongs even from the memory itself: and so it was; for *the Levite arose up*, and with him his concubine, and his servant, and they departed.

REFLECTIONS.—The events of the following chapters are proofs how great a misery it is to any people to be without good government. We may observe here, (1.) That where there is real remorse in the offender, the injured should not be implacable. (2.) Though parents should be very jealous how they receive those into their houses who have deserted their husbands, yet it is highly dangerous, by severity, to render those desperate, who, by milder.

11 *And when they were by Jebus, the day was far spent; and the servant said unto his master, Come, I pray thee, and let us turn in unto this city of the Jebusites, and lodge in it.*

12 *And his master said unto him, We will not turn aside hither into the city of a stranger, that is not of the children of Israel; we will pass over to Gibeah.*

13 *And he said unto his servant, Come, and let us draw near to one of these places to lodge all night, in Gibeah, or in Ramah.*

14 *And they passed on and went their way; and the sun went down upon them when they were by Gibeah, which belongeth to Benjamin.*

15 *And they turned aside thither, to go in and to lodge in Gibeah: and when he went in, he sat him down in a street of the city: for there was no man that took them into his house to lodging.*

16 ¶ *And, behold, there came an old man from his work out of the field at even, which was also of mount Ephraim; and he sojourned in Gibeah: but the men of the place were Benjamites.*

17 *And when he had lifted up his eyes, he saw a wayfaring man in the street of the city: and the old man said, Whither goest thou? and whence comest thou?*

18 *And he said unto him, We are passing from Beth-lehem-judah toward the side of mount Ephraim; from thence am I: and I went to Beth-lehem-judah, but I am now going to the house of the LORD; and there is no man that receiveth me to house.*

19 *Yet there is both straw and provender for our asses; and there is bread and wine also for me and for thy handmaid, and for the young man which is with thy servants: there is no want of any thing.*

20 *And the old man said, Peace be with thee; however let all thy wants lie upon me; only lodge not in the street.*

21 *So he brought him into his house, and gave provender unto the asses: and they washed their feet, and did eat and drink.*

22 ¶ *Now as they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, certain sons of Belial, beset the house round about, and beat at the door, and spake to the master of the*

milder methods, may be reclaimed. (3.) Generous hospitality to our friends and relations is very becoming, and a proof of our regard to them. (4.) Though we may yield somewhat to the importunity of friends, yet every man has calls at home, and Levites especially, which will not admit of long absence. (5.) Let kind friends beware of selfishness in their solicitations, lest their intended kindness do us real injury.

*Ver. 19. Yet there is both straw and provender for our asses]* The laws of hospitality were extremely sacred in ancient times; but the men of Gibeah, as they were grossly abandoned in vice, so were they wholly defective in this virtue, suffering this stranger, and traveller, to remain in the streets, without any invitation; which, at length, he received from a poor man who was himself only a sojourner among them. It should be remembered, that then, as now, there were no such things as inns in these countries; travellers usually carried with them not only provision for themselves, but for their beasts. Thus the Levite tells the old man, that he hath both *straw and provender for his asses*. The author of the *Observations* informs us, (p. 209.) that, as they have little or no hay in those countries, they are therefore very careful of their *straw*, which they cut into small pieces with an instrument, which, at the same time, thrashes out the corn. This *chopped straw*, with barley, beans, and balls made of bean and barley meal, or of the pounded kernels of dates, are what they are wont to feed them with. See 1 Kings, iv. 28. *Isai. xxx. 24.*

REFLECTIONS.—Though the men of the city were so unkind or uncivil, there was one, though only a sojourner, who was of another spirit. He was an Ephraimite himself, but seems to have had some possessions near Gibeah; an old man, who had lived in better days, and consented not to the wickedness of the rising generation. Having spent the day industriously in the field, returning at night he fees and inquires into this stranger's business, and, ready to open his hospitable doors, receives him, doubly welcome as a Levite, and his countryman also. The Levite wanted nothing but a lodging, having sufficient provision and provender with him; but the good old man, too generous to permit this, entertains him at his table, and takes care of his cattle: this done, they, without doubt, began to look upon themselves as happy in the opportunity of spending a comfortable evening together. *Note:* (1.) A truly charitable heart looks out for, and is happy in an opportunity of doing good. (2.) The company of a minister of God is good payment for a hearty welcome. (3.) A good man will not wish to be troublesome to others when he has a provision of his own. (4.) We are sometimes rejoicing that our troubles are at an end, when we foresee not the darker cloud which is gathering.

*- Ver. 22. Behold, the men of the city, &c.]* As many circumstances of this horrid affair are very similar to those in *Gen. xix.*, we refer to the comment on that place.

house, the old man, saying, Bring forth the man that came into thine house, that we may know him.

23 And the man, the master of the house, went out unto them, and said unto them, Nay, my brethren, nay, I pray you, do not so wickedly; seeing that this man is come into mine house, do not this folly.

24 Behold, *here is* my daughter a maiden, and his concubine; them I will bring out now, and humble ye them, and do with them what seemeth good unto you: but unto this man do not so vile a thing.

25 But the men would not hearken to him: so the man took his concubine, and brought her forth unto them; and they knew her, and abused her all the night until the morning: and when the day began to spring, they let her go.

26 Then came the woman in the dawning of the day, and fell down at the door of the man's house where her lord *was*, till it was light.

27 And her lord rose up in the morning, and opened the doors of the house, and went out to go his way: and, behold, the woman his concubine was fallen down at the door of the house, and her hands *were* upon the threshold.

28 And he said unto her, Up, and let us be going. But none answered. Then the man took her *up* upon an ass, and the man rose up, and gat him unto his place.

29 ¶ And when he was come into his house, he took a knife, and laid hold on his concubine, and divided her, *together* with her bones, into twelve pieces, and sent her into all the coasts of Israel.

*Ver. 25. But the men would not hearken to him]* It is plain, from ver. 5. of the next chapter, that all the particulars of this matter are not related. The Levite, resolutely bent to defend his own chastity, probably found no other way to save that and his life, than by giving up his concubine, and therefore of two evils chose the least.

*Ver. 26. The woman—fell down at the door of the man's house]* She fell down dead through shame, grief, and the scandalous abuse which she had received from these monsters. For the emphasis of the word *Lord*, see 1 Pet. iii. 6.

*Ver. 29. And sent her into all the coasts of Israel]* No doubt, he enjoined the bearers of this sacrifice to relate all the circumstances of it; upon which a general indignation animated the tribes. They agreed that *no such deed* had been done or seen among them since they were a people; for it was a mixture of adultery and murder, with a vile attempt at sodomy upon a stranger, upon a Levite, a person consecrated to the divine service. Determined properly to avenge it, they said, as if with one consent, *consider of it, take advice, and speak your minds*; which words are a prelude to what we find in the next chapter. A modern critic supposes, that the Levite's division of the body of his concubine was an anathema or devotion to the Lord, and that sending of the parts to each tribe clearly signified, that he invited them to revenge him, and to punish the guilty, on pain of being subjected to the curse. This writer compares the action of the Levite with that of Saul in after time, as mentioned 1 Sam. xi.; and, indeed, there is some conformity between them. The question then is, whether the Levite's proceeding laid the tribes under an indispensable necessity to espouse his cause and repentment on pain of the divine malediction? See *Martin's Explication des Textes Difficiles*, p. 118—130.

REFLECTIONS.—Behold another Lot in another Sodom! we have here,

1. The tumultuous assembly of the men of Gibeah. This should have been a city of the Levites; but, perhaps not being sufficiently numerous, the Benjamites, in whose tribe it lay, yet inhabited it; and a vile set of wretches they were, sons of Belial, who neither feared God nor regarded man, intent only upon the indulgence of their brutal lusts, and stopping at nothing to gratify them. In defiance of all laws, human and divine, they beset the house, demand the stranger, and dare avow their infamous designs upon him. *Note*; (1.) Continuance in lewdness breeds barefaced impudence. (2.) When a sinner is given up to his own heart's lust, he easily sinks into the most unnatural crimes which are shocking but to mention.

2. The good man of the house goes out to expostulate with them, pleads the rights of hospitality and the wickedness of their demands, nay proffers to bring them (a very sinful proposal, indeed, which never can be vindicated) his own daughter, and the Levite's concubine, that he might, by a lesser evil, divert them from a greater; but they are deaf to remonstrance, and their heart is fully set in them to do evil. *Note*; (1.) Sinners often grow desperate in wickedness, and, like the raging sea, neither will bear restraint nor hear admonition. (2.) We must never commit one evil to avoid a greater, but choose the greatest suffering preferably to the least sin.

3. The Levite's concubine, probably more handsome than the old man's daughter, being thrust out to them, they seize her; and, perhaps, seeing the old man resolute to gratify them no farther, they make her the object of their brutal lust. All night they abused her, till the dawning day casting unwelcome light on such deeds of darkness, they left her, and retired. Her strength exhausted, her spirit sunk with grief and shame, her body covered with mortal bruises, and murdered with this inhuman treatment, she just crawls to the door, falls down, and dies. *Note*; (1.) Perhaps the lust which had been

30 And it was so, that all that saw it said, There was no such deed done nor seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt unto this day: consider of it, take advice, and speak *your minds*.

C H A P. XX.

*The eleven tribes demand from the Benjamites, that the authors of the cruelty against the Levite's concubine be delivered up: they are conquered in two battles, but in a third overcome the Benjamites, of whom five and twenty thousand fall that day: six hundred of them fly to the rock Rimmon, and abide there four months.*

[Before Christ 1426.]

**T**HEN all the children of Israel went out, and the congregation was gathered together as one man, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, with the land of Gilead, unto the LORD in Mizpeh.

2 And the chief of all the people, *even* of all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God, four hundred thousand footmen that drew sword.

3 (Now the children of Benjamin heard

that the children of Israel were gone up to Mizpeh.) Then said the children of Israel, Tell *us*, how was this wickedness?

4 And the Levite, the husband of the woman that was slain, answered and said, I came into Gibeah that *belongeth* to Benjamin, I and my concubine, to lodge.

5 And the men of Gibeah rose against me, and beset the house round about upon me by night, and thought to have slain me: and my concubine have they forced, that she is dead.

6 And I took my concubine, and cut her in pieces, and sent her throughout all the country of the inheritance of Israel: for they have committed lewdness and folly in Israel.

7 Behold, ye *are* all children of Israel; give here your advice and counsel.

8 ¶ And all the people arose as one man, saying, We will not any *of us* go to his tent, neither will we any *of us* turn into his house.

9 But now this *shall be* the thing which we will do to Gibeah; *we will go up* by lot against it;

been her sin is now, in just judgment, made her punishment. (2.) They who have ruined the objects of their guilty pleasure may think lightly of their crimes, but will surely meet an avenging God.

4. In the morning the Levite arises to go; and, seeing his wife in this posture, thinks her ashamed of what had passed, or asleep on the ground, and therefore bids her arise: but he soon finds his mistake; she is dead. Hereupon he quietly takes her on his beast, glad to escape with his own life from such a scene of abominations; home he hastens, instead of going to Shiloh, as he proposed: and as there was no kind of general council, from whom he could seek redress, he takes a method which could not but tend to make every Israelite shudder with horror; he divided the dead body into twelve parts, and sent one to each tribe, with an account of what had passed, referring it to them to consider what punishment such atrocious wickedness deserved: one part was probably sent to Benjamin, as well as the other tribes, in case some might be found different from their brethren; or else two parts were for Manassah, whose lot was divided.

5. Struck with indignation and horror at the deed, the whole body of the people, as one man, declare their sense of such an unparalleled crime. A solemn assembly is resolved upon, where they might meet to determine the punishment of the offenders; and in the mean time the matter is recommended to the serious consideration of each man, that, when they met in council, they might be ready to resolve upon a proper method of proceeding. *Note*; (1.) Even where the provocation is great, we do well to proceed with deliberation, lest our anger bias our resolu-

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tions. (2.) They, who would obtain God's blessing on the land, must seek to purge iniquity from it by executing justice on the criminals.

C. H A P. XX.

*Ver. 1. In Mizpeh*] Mizpeh was very conveniently situated for a meeting of all the people, as it stood on the confines of Judah and Benjamin, and was very near to Shiloh; so that they could easily consult the Divine Oracle on any occasion. Hence Josephus tells us, that this congregation met at Shiloh. The phrase, *unto the Lord*, does not imply that the ark was there, God being present in an especial manner where all his people assembled. See 2 Sam. v. 3. The word rendered *chief* in the next verse, signifies *corners*, alluding to the *corner-stone*, which is the strength and support of a building. Hence Christ is called in Scripture the *chief corner-stone*. See Lowman on Civ. Gov. of the Hebrews, chap. ix. x. xiv.

*Ver. 9. To Gibeah; we will go up by lot against it*] Houbigant renders this more properly, *we will draw lots against Gibeah*.

REFLECTIONS.—Fired with holy zeal against such a crying enormity, the whole congregation assembles in Mizpeh, near Shiloh; that they may not only deliberate, but consult God's mind and will in the matter. Four hundred thousand men, under their captains of hundreds and thousands, furnished with weapons of war, are ready to put in force the sentence which shall be resolved upon. The children of Benjamin alone, though acquainted with the assembling of Israel, and the cause of it, refuse to come up, and

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10 And we will take ten men of an hundred throughout all the tribes of Israel, and an hundred of a thousand, and a thousand out of ten thousand, to fetch victual for the people, that they may do, when they come to Gibeah of Benjamin, according to all the folly that they have wrought in Israel.

11 So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, knit together as one man.

12 ¶ And the tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribe of Benjamin, saying, What wickedness *is* this that is done among you?

13 Now therefore deliver *us* the men, the children of Belial, which *are* in Gibeah, that we may put them to death, and put away evil from Israel. But the children of Benjamin would not hearken to the voice of their brethren the children of Israel:

14 But the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together out of the cities unto Gibeah, to go out to battle against the children of Israel.

15 And the children of Benjamin were numbered at that time out of the cities twenty and six thousand men that drew sword, beside the inhabitants of Gibeah, which were numbered seven hundred chosen men.

16 Among all this people *there were* seven hundred chosen men left-handed; every one could sling stones at an hair-breadth, and not miss.

17 And the men of Israel, beside Benjamin, were numbered four hundred thousand men that drew sword; all these *were* men of war.

18 ¶ And the children of Israel arose, and went up to the house of God, and asked counsel of God, and said, Which of us shall go up first

and determine to protect the delinquents, becoming thereby parties in the crime, *ex post facto*, by their vindication of it.

1. A solemn examination and deposition is taken from the Levite, and probably the old man and his servant, who were present, ver. 3. The circumstances of the story are related and confirmed. Such lewdness and cruelty, especially in Israel, deserved, no doubt, a most severe scourge: he refers himself for this to their wife and vigorous resolutions; as children of Israel, who would wipe off such a defiling stain from among them. *Note;* (1.) Lewdness in Israel is doubly criminal. (2.) Before we proceed to judgment, the evidence should be clear and distinct. (3.) They who are God's people will at least, by their conduct, testify their abhorrence of the iniquity which may be found among them, and cut off from their communion the wicked person.

2. The fact being indubitable, their resolution is unanimous. They swear never to separate till they have obtained satisfaction; and in order that the army may be supplied in their encampment before Gibeah, forty thousand men are deputed to provide forage and provisions. *Note;* It is good to be zealously affected in the cause of God, and without delay carry our purposes into action.

*Ver. 15.* Which were numbered seven hundred chosen men.] It is said in the 46th verse, that there fell of the Benjamites on the third day twenty-five thousand. In the 47th verse, that there remained from the slaughter six hundred, which number makes twenty-five thousand six hundred men; there remained therefore four hundred to make up the twenty-six thousand, besides the Gibeathites: we may suppose these men to have perished in the two battles of the first and second day; for the sacred history does not relate how many fell in the victorious army. For the phrase, *left-handed*, see the note on chap. iii. 15. The excellence of the Benjamites, noted in the next clause, has

been remarkable in men of other countries, particularly in the men of the islands anciently called *Baleares*, where they were bred from children to hit a mark with a stone slung out of a sling, or else to lose their breakfast. See Strabo in Boch. Hieroz. pars i. lib. 3. cap. 10. and Calmet on the place. This warlike disposition of the Benjamites was foretold, Gen. xlix. 27. We should just observe, that the men of Israel, in the embassy they sent, and the whole method of their proceedings, acted agreeably to the law of nature and nations, while the Benjamites shewed themselves extremely depraved, and most deficient in justice. But for more on this subject, we refer to Grotius de Bell. et Pace, lib. ii. cap. 21. sect. 4.

REFLECTIONS.—As wise men, who, not for revenge, but for the glory of God, desired the execution of the criminals; 1. They sent to their brethren of the tribe of Benjamin, to admonish them of the great wickedness that had been perpetrated among them, and to demand the delivery of the offenders, to put them to death. *Note;* (1.) We are bound to follow peace with all men, and must with reluctance have recourse to severer methods. (2.) If our traitor-sins are withheld, there can be no hopes of peace with God. (3.) It is cruelty to the community to spare those who, for atrocious crimes, are deserving of death.

2. The men of Benjamin reject their reasonable demand, thinking it beneath them to submit. They are, indeed, unequal in numbers, and more unequal in the badness of their cause; yet such confidence have they in the courage and dexterity of their slingers, that they dare meet their brethren in the field. *Note;* (1.) They who countenance others in their sins are justly reckoned alike criminal with them. (2.) Proud self-dependence is the ruin of the sinner's soul. (3.) They who draw the sword in a bad cause, may expect to see it bathed in their own blood.

*Ver.*

to the battle against the children of Benjamin? And the LORD said, Judah shall go up first.

19 And the children of Israel rose up in the morning, and encamped against Gibeah.

20 And the men of Israel went out to battle against Benjamin; and the men of Israel put themselves in array to fight against them at Gibeah.

21 And the children of Benjamin came forth out of Gibeah, and destroyed down to the ground of the Israelites that day twenty and two thousand men.

22 ¶ And the people the men of Israel encouraged themselves, and set their battle again in array in the place where they put themselves in array the first day.

23 (And the children of Israel went up and wept before the LORD until even, and asked counsel of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up again to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother? And the LORD said, Go up against him.)

24 And the children of Israel came near against the children of Benjamin the second day.

25 And Benjamin went forth against them out of Gibeah the second day, and destroyed down to the ground of the children of Israel again eighteen thousand men; all these drew the sword.

26 ¶ Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up, and came unto the

house of God, and wept, and sat there before the LORD, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings before the LORD.

27 And the children of Israel enquired of the LORD, (for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days,

28 And Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, stood before it in those days,) saying, Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother, or shall I cease? And the LORD said, Go up; for to-morrow I will deliver them into thine hand.

29 ¶ And Israel set liers in wait round about Gibeah.

30 And the children of Israel went up against the children of Benjamin on the third day, and put themselves in array against Gibeah, as at other times.

31 And the children of Benjamin went out against the people, and were drawn away from the city; and they began to smite of the people, and kill, as at other times, in the highways, of which one goeth up to the house of God, and the other to Gibeah in the field, about thirty men of Israel.

32 And the children of Benjamin said, They are smitten down before us, as at the first. But the children of Israel said, Let us flee, and draw them from the city unto the highways.

33 And all the men of Israel rose up out of

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*Ver. 28. And Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, &c.]* This was that Phinehas who had signalized his zeal for the glory of God on a former occasion. See Numb. xxv. Had this war been posterior to the death of Samson, Phinehas must have been above three hundred years old; but, as we have before remarked, its epocha was between the death of Joshua and the appointment of the first judge. The Alexandrian Chronicle assigns only twenty-five years to the priesthood of Phinehas, and mentions three other priests between him and Eli. See Selden de Success. in Pontif. lib. i. cap. 2. It has appeared surprising to many, that the Israelites should have been defeated in this manner by the Benjamites, when they seem not only to have had justice, but the approbation of God on their side. Now, besides the general answer given from the secret purposes and wisdom of God, who might intend to humble them, and shew them their absolute dependence upon him, it has been observed, that they took this warlike step, not by his appointment, but wholly of themselves, without consult-

ing the Divine oracle; which, as God was the king of their nation, was a kind of high treason against him: nor does it by any means appear, whether they were actuated by a zeal for his glory, or by private pique and prejudice only; since the rest of their conduct implies no such zeal, as the state of things among them, particularly their allowance of Micah and his idols, shews. In the 18th verse, it is true, they ask counsel of God; but not whether they should go to war with Benjamin or not; they only ask, who of them shall go up first against Benjamin; a proper answer to which question is given, but no success promised. Convinced, no doubt, of the impropriety of their conduct by their ill success, and having duly humbled themselves before the Lord, they now, by Phinehas, applying properly, are answered, and succeed accordingly. They who would see this matter more fully defended may consult Leland on the Div. Auth. of the Old and New Testament, vol. i. cap. 8. and Palsmanazar's 4th Essay.

their place, and put themselves in array at Baal-tamar: and the liers in wait of Israel came forth out of their places, *even* out of the meadows of Gibeah.

34 And there came against Gibeah ten thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and the battle was fore: but they knew not that evil *was* near them.

35 And the LORD smote Benjamin before Israel: and the children of Israel destroyed of the Benjamites that day twenty and five thousand and an hundred men: all these drew the sword.

36 So the children of Benjamin saw that they were smitten: for the men of Israel gave place to the Benjamites, because they trusted unto the liers in wait which they had set beside Gibeah.

37 And the liers in wait hasted, and rushed upon Gibeah; and the liers in wait drew *themselves* along, and smote all the city with the edge of the sword.

38 Now there was an appointed sign between the men of Israel and the liers in wait, that they should make a great flame with smoke to rise up out of the city.

39 And when the men of Israel retired in

the battle, Benjamin began to smite *and* kill of the men of Israel about thirty persons: for they said, Surely they are smitten down before us, as *in* the first battle.

40 But when the flame began to arise up out of the city with a pillar of smoke, the Benjamites looked behind them, and, behold, the flame of the city ascended up to heaven.

41 And when the men of Israel turned again, the men of Benjamin were amazed: for they saw that evil was come upon them.

42 Therefore they turned *their backs* before the men of Israel unto the way of the wilderness; but the battle overtook them; and them which *came* out of the cities they destroyed in the midst of them.

43 *Thus* they inclosed the Benjamites round about, *and* chased them, *and* trode them down with ease over-against Gibeah toward the sun-rising.

44 And there fell of Benjamin eighteen thousand men; all these *were* men of valour.

45 And they turned and fled toward the wilderness unto the rock of Rimmon: and they gleaned of them in the highways five thousand men; and pursued hard after them

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*Ver. 42, 43. But the battle overtook them, &c.]* Houbigant renders this, but the battle overtook them, from the liers in wait, who came, surrounded them, and destroyed them on every side; moreover they pursued them, and trod them under foot, from Noah, even to the east side of Gibeah. See his note.

**REFLECTIONS.**—Confounded at their repeated losses, the whole congregation assemble before the Lord at Shiloh.

1. In deep affliction they compass God's altar, humbling their souls under a sense of conscious guilt, and crying for pardon and help from him who alone can save either body or soul from ruin. They offer sacrifices of atonement, and peace-offerings; and having now rejected every vain confidence, and inquired of God, not only whether they should go up, but whether they should succeed, God gives them assurance of victory, and bids them draw near to the battle. *Note;* (1.) When in true humiliation the soul is brought low before God, the end of its suffering is near. (2.) It is by the one great sacrifice alone, that the sinner can hope for the favour and presence of God.

2. On the divine warrant, they now draw near to the battle, and with a success equal to their most sanguine wishes. Having contrived an ambush near Gibeah, as at Ai, the army advances; but when the Benjamites come

forth they retire precipitately. The Benjamites, concluding that they were smitten as before, eagerly pursue, and about thirty men are slain in the retreat. But now the men of Gibeah and Benjamin being at a distance, the ambush arises, and the defenceless city is seized and burnt. At the sight of the ascending smoke, the signal given, the men of Israel face about at Baal-tamar: the battle is renewed; the Benjamites look back, and too late discover the evil which had overtaken them. They are attacked in front and rear at once, routed with ease, and, hemmed in as they are, flight is vain. Eighteen thousand are slain on the spot; five thousand in the pursuit, and two thousand at Gidom, a place to which they had fled, or where they made a stand. Thus the very name of Benjamin had been blotted out, if six hundred men had not escaped to the rock Rimmon; for, in their heat, or for their oath's sake in Mizpeh, they fell upon the cities, burnt them, slew men, women, and children, and every living creature, as they had done by the devoted Canaanites, and left the land swept as with the besom of destruction. *Note;* (1.) What desolation does sin make on the earth! (2.) It is in vain to fight where God is our foe, or to fly when he pursues. (3.) When God awakes to judgment in the last day, not a sinner shall escape; no rock can then hide, no mountain cover him.

unto Gidom, and slew two thousand men of them.

46 So that all which fell that day of Benjamin were twenty and five thousand men that drew the sword; all these *were* men of valour.

47 But six hundred men turned and fled to the wilderness unto the rock Rimmon, and abode in the rock Rimmon four months.

48 And the men of Israel turned again upon the children of Benjamin, and smote them with the edge of the sword, as well the men of every city, as the beast, and all that came to hand: also they set on fire all the cities that they came to.

### CH A P. XXI.

*The people bewail the desolation of Benjamin: they send to Jabesh-gilead, and destroy the inhabitants, except four hundred virgins, who are married to so many of the remaining Benjamites; the rest of whom afterwards carry off two hundred virgins from Shiloh, and marry them.*

[Before Christ 1426.]

**N**OW the men of Israel had sworn in Mizpeh, saying, There shall not any of us give his daughter unto Benjamin to wife.

2 And the people came to the house of God, and abode there till even before God, and lifted up their voices, and wept fore;

3 And said, O LORD God of Israel, why is this come to pass in Israel, that there should be to-day one tribe lacking in Israel?

### CH A P. XXI.

*Ver. 5. For they had made a great oath*] See what has been said of this oath or anathema in the last note on the 19th chapter.

*Ver. 11. Every woman that hath lien by man*] This exception for the preservation of virgins was received in all nations, and was in time the source of the many prerogatives wherewith virgins were honoured; those which they received among the Romans were extraordinary. See Martin's Explication des Textes, p. 130.

REFLECTIONS.—Their zeal for the destruction of Benjamin was scarcely so great as is their anguish now that their warmth has subsided. What increases their grief is, that, at Mizpeh, they bound themselves by a solemn oath, not only to destroy every city that should neglect their summons, but also never to give their daughters in marriage to a Benjamite; so that, having slain all the women, and being by their oath disabled from giving them others, while it was forbidden them to marry with the nations around them, though the six hundred men have escaped,

4 And it came to pass on the morrow, that the people rose early, and built there *an* altar, and offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings.

5 And the children of Israel said, Who *is there* among all the tribes of Israel that came not up with the congregation unto the LORD? For they had made a great oath concerning him that came not up to the LORD to Mizpeh, saying, He shall surely be put to death.

6 And the children of Israel repented them for Benjamin their brother, and said, There is one tribe cut off from Israel this day.

7 How shall we do for wives for them that remain, seeing we have sworn by the LORD that we will not give them of our daughters to wives?

8 ¶ And they said, What one *is there* of the tribes of Israel that came not up to Mizpeh to the LORD? And, behold, there came none to the camp from Jabesh-gilead to the assembly.

9 For the people were numbered, and, behold, *there were* none of the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead there.

10 And the congregation sent thither twelve thousand men of the valiantest, and commanded them, saying, Go and smite the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead with the edge of the sword, with the women and the children.

11 And this *is* the thing that ye shall do, Ye shall utterly destroy every male, and every woman that hath lien by man.

the tribe is in danger of being extinct. *Note;* (1.) Even true zeal may be carried too far. (2.) When our spirits are exasperated, we too often speak and do what, in cooler moments, we wish unaid and undone. On this mournful occasion,

1. They wept before God in bitterness of soul. More affected with Benjamin's destruction, than pleased with their own victory, they spread their complaints before the sanctuary, and offer up their sacrifices in such abundance, that they built a temporary altar for that service. *Note;* (1.) Our distresses should drive us to God. (2.) Under all our griefs, the blood of atonement will afford us relief. (3.) They, who pour out their complaints to the God of all grace, will usually find a way to extricate themselves from their difficulties.

2. The method which they took to prevent the ruin of the tribe. On reviewing the troops, the men of Jabesh-gilead were found absent. As bound by their oath, they immediately detach twelve thousand of their most valiant troops to smite men, women, and children, except such as had not known man; these are to be reserved for their distressed brethren.



12 And they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead four hundred young virgins, that had known no man by lying with any male: and they brought them unto the camp to Shiloh, which *is* in the land of Canaan.

13 And the whole congregation sent *some* to speak to the children of Benjamin that *were* in the rock Rimmon, and to call peaceably unto them.

14 And Benjamin came again at that time; and they gave them wives which they had saved alive of the women of Jabesh-gilead: and yet so they sufficed them not.

15 And the people repented them for Benjamin, because that the LORD had made a breach in the tribes of Israel.

16 ¶ Then the elders of the congregation said, How shall we do for wives for them that remain, seeing the women are destroyed out of Benjamin?

17 And they said, *There must be* an inheritance for them that be escaped of Benjamin, that a tribe be not destroyed out of Israel.

18 Howbeit we may not give them wives of our daughters: for the children of Israel have sworn, saying, Cursed *be* he that giveth a wife to Benjamin.

19 Then they said, Behold, *there is* a feast of the LORD in Shiloh yearly *in a place* which *is* on the north side of Beth-el, on the east side

of the highway that goeth up from Beth-el to Shechem, and on the south of Lebonah.

20 Therefore they commanded the children of Benjamin, saying, Go and lie in wait in the vineyards;

21 And see, and, behold, if the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in dances, then come ye out of the vineyards, and catch you every man his wife of the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin.

22 And it shall be, when their fathers or their brethren come unto us to complain, that we will say unto them, Be favourable unto them for our sakes: because we reserved not to each man his wife in the war: for ye did not give unto them at this time, *that ye should be guilty.*

23 And the children of Benjamin did so, and took *them* wives, according to their number, of them that danced, whom they caught: and they went and returned unto their inheritance, and repaired the cities, and dwelt in them.

24 And the children of Israel departed thence at that time, every man to his tribe and to his family, and they went out from thence every man to his inheritance.

25 In those days *there was* no king in Israel: every man did *that which was* right in his own eyes.

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brethren. Having performed this service in the utter ruin of Jabesh-gilead, they returned with four hundred young virgins to the camp in Shiloh. Messengers are now dispatched to the men who remained in the rock Rimmon; they, glad to embrace the offer of peace, come down to their brethren, and thankfully receive the wives provided for them, though there yet remained a great deficiency. *Note:* (1.) The quarrels of brethren are usually bitter, and seldom end thus in bands of firmer friendship. (2.) They who make rash vows have only themselves to blame for the difficulties in which they may afterwards be involved.

*Ver. 19. Behold, there is a feast of the Lord in Shiloh yearly]* The three great festivals were always to be held in the place where God fixed his habitation, which was now at Shiloh. Some have supposed, that this festival was that of the *passover*; but, from the festivity attending it, it is much more reasonable to suppose, that it was that of *tabernacles*. "Kane-laban," says Mr. Maundrell, "stands on the east side of a delicious vale, having a village of the same name standing opposite to it on the other side of the vale. One of these places, either the *Kane* or the village,

" is supposed to have been the *Lebonah* here mentioned; " to which both the name and situation seem to agree." Voyage to Aleppo, p. 63. Concerning the solemn oath of the Israelites, and their manner of dispensing with it, related at the close of this chapter, see Grotius de Bell. et Pace, lib. ii. cap. 13. sect. 5.

*Ver. 25. In those days there was no king in Israel, &c.]* The sacred writer, no doubt, repeats this observation to account for the disorders and enormities mentioned in the four preceding chapters, which, as they exhibit a most depraved state of things, so are they, we apprehend, by no means to be justified. It is a natural inference, that men ought to be extremely thankful for lawful authority: and, if they would preserve their happiness, ought to be zealous to support that authority, as well as to discourage all licentious approaches toward its dissolution. The Persians have a custom which justifies this reflection. When any of their kings die, they suffer the people to do as they please for five days; that, by the disorders then committed, they may see the necessity of legal government, and learn submission to it. In general, the four chapters which conclude this book shew us to what a degree the Israelites

were degenerated, in the short space from the death of Caleb to the election of his younger brother to be their judge: we discover the true cause of the chastisements wherewith God punished them from time to time, though he delivered them from their enemies, under whose yoke they must infallibly have fallen, if God had not beheld them with compassion, and raised them up judges to save them from ruin. We just remark, in conclusion, that it would be unreasonable to draw any inference from the tumultuous and irregular actions of a tribe or people to the lessening of the authority of the writer of any history. The writer of the present book ought rather to be admired for the impartiality with which he relates facts so little to the credit of his nation.

REFLECTIONS.—We have here the expedient used to provide wives for the remaining two hundred men of Benjamin without violation of their oaths. A bad expedient, it is true; but better than none.

1. At one of the annual feasts, probably the feast of tabernacles, the daughters of Shiloh used to meet, in a place at some distance from the city, to rejoice before the Lord, as David afterwards did, with sacred music and dancing. It was not a mixed company or lewd assembly; all men were excluded, which made the following scheme more easily put in execution. *Note;* They who plead Scripture to countenance the modern mixed assemblies, neither con-

sider the manner nor the end of the precedents they quote.

2. The elders advise the two hundred men to lie in wait near the place where this solemnity was kept, and, when the virgins came thither, to rush in, take each a wife, and retire; promising to be their advocates with the enraged fathers of the damsels, whose oath was not broken, because they were forcibly taken; and who need not think their daughters ill disposed of, when among these few survivors the whole inheritance of Benjamin must now be divided. *Note;* (1.) One rash step draws on a train of bad consequences. Had they been more considerate in their vow, they had not been reduced to so disagreeable an expedient. (2.) Though a stolen match is both sinful before God, and unjust towards man, parents must not be implacable in their resentments, but, on proper submission, receive their children into favour again.

3. The men of Benjamin followed the advice, and succeeded; and thus the survivors of the tribe are again settled, and in a way to repair its desolations. The children of Israel disband; every man returns to his inheritance; and it is again repeated, that there was no king in Israel, as the cause of all the evil and confusions related in the foregoing chapters. *Note;* Next to a good ministry, we have reason to esteem magistracy among the chief of earthly blessings; and if we know our own mercies, we have much reason to be thankful to God, that there is not only a king in England, but such a King!

THE  
B O O K of R U T H.

*THIS Book was most probably written by Samuel, and in favour of the family of David, as appears from the genealogy at the close of it. It is a kind of supplement to the Book of Judges; properly filling up the void between that and the Book of Samuel. Respecting the principal design of it, see the note on chap. iv. 17.*

C H A P. I.

*Elimelech, being driven by famine into Moab, dies there; Naomi, his wife, returning to her own country, is accompanied by Ruth, her daughter-in-law.*

[Before Christ 1376.]

**N**OW it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Beth-lehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons.

2 And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephraimites of Beth-lehem-judah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there.

3 And Elimelech Naomi's husband died, and she was left, and her two sons.

4 And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah,

and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years.

5 And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.

6 ¶ Then she arose with her daughters-in-law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread.

7 Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah.

8 And Naomi said unto her two daughters-in-law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me.

9 The LORD grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband.

C H A P. I.

*Ver. 1. It came to pass—when the judges ruled]* Though these words point out the general epocha of this event, yet they leave us at a loss to determine under what particular judge it happened. Bishop Usher places it in the 2686th year of the world, one hundred and thirty-three years after the conquest of Canaan. See his Chronolog. Sac. p. i. ch. 12. and Judg. vi. 3, 4.

*Ver. 2. The name of the man was Elimelech]* That is, God is my king. According to the Jews, he was a man of great wealth and dignity: his wife's name was Naomi; i. e. amiable, agreeable; see ver. 20. If we are to believe the Jews, she was the daughter of Salmon, and niece of Nahshon prince of the tribe of Judah.

*Ver. 4. They took them wives of the women of Moab]* We must necessarily conclude from this, that these women had become profelytes to the Jewish religion; for otherwise it was not lawful for Jews to have married them. The case is plain with respect to Ruth (see ver. 16.); and it appears to me, that Orpah not only left her mother and returned to her own country, but also apostatized from the religion that she had embraced to the idol worship of Moab. See ver. 15. and also Prideaux's Connection, vol. ii.

*Note;* Worldly comforts and crosses are nearer than we suspect; while we are rejoicing in the settlement of our children, the pleasing prospect vanishes in an instant, and death lays all our hopes in the grave.

*Ver.*

Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept.

10 And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people.

11 And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? *are* there yet *any more* sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?

12 Turn again, my daughters, go *your way*; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, *if* I should have an husband also to-night, and should also bear sons;

13 Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD is gone out against me.

14 And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law; but Ruth clave unto her.

15 And she said, Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister-in-law.

16 And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, *or* to return from following after thee:

*Ver. 11. Are there yet any more sons in my womb, &c.]* Naomi refers in these words to that very ancient custom, which seems to have existed from the beginning of the world, of the brother marrying the widow of his brother when the latter has died without children. See Gen. xxxviii. and Deut. xxv. 5. There is great beauty and pathos in this natural and unadorned relation of the parting of Naomi and her daughters.

*Ver. 14. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law]* Houbigant reads here after the LXX, *and returned to her people.*

*Ver. 15. Thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods.]* It is not by any means a just consequence from hence, that Orpah had never been profelyted to the Jewish religion. The contrary is a much more natural deduction; for if she had not once left them, she could not have returned to them. Ruth continued steadfast to the faith that she had embraced; Orpah returned back to Moab and to Chemosh. They who consider the friendless and forlorn state of Naomi, will not wonder much at her solicitude that her daughters should remain in their own country, and amidst their friends; where, doubtless, they might have continued to profess the true religion had they been inclined to do so. That state of Naomi, however, adds great lustre to the piety and filial affection of Ruth.

REFLECTIONS.—Naomi, having heard that plenty was again restored to Israel,

1. Resolves to return to her own country. Moab was now a land of sorrow to her; every object around her renewed the bitter remembrance of her losses, and no comforter was near, who, with discourse of holy resignation to Israel's God, could alleviate her griefs. *Note;* (1.) They, who are compelled for a time to dwell among those who are strangers to God, ought to embrace the first moment of liberty to return to God's people and ordinances. (2.) Change of place is often a useful assistant in calming the griefs which are exasperated by the sight of objects that remind us of those who are taken from us. (3.) When God afflicts, it is good to examine whether something in us has not brought his rod upon us. (4.) It is even a mercy to have this land of our sojourning embittered to us, that we may be more weaned from earth, and have our conversation in heaven.

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2. Her daughters accompany her to the borders of Moab; and there Naomi with tender affection intends to dismiss them, praying God to give them a comfortable settlement, each in the house of her husband; and acknowledging, to their great commendation, the affection that they had shewn to the living and the dead, as good wives and dutiful daughters. They kiss, embrace, then burst into a flood of tears, the involuntary effusion of tenderness, which cannot bear the heart-breaking separation from those we love. *Note;* (1.) When friends part in prayer, they may comfortably hope, either in time or eternity, to meet in praise. (2.) They, who conscientiously fulfil their relative duties in life, will have the comfort of it in a parting hour. (3.) Though the parting of tender and affectionate friends is painful, it is a kind of pleasing pain, of which we wish not to be insensible.

3. Unable to support the thought of parting, they both resolve to accompany her; but Naomi, fearful lest they should afterwards repent the hasty resolution, and perhaps to try whether they had any desire after the worship of the God of Israel as their motive, seeks to dissuade, and advises them to weigh the matter well before they determined. They could hope for nothing with her. God's afflicting hand was upon her, her circumstances distressed, and no provision for them in Beth-lehem, which grieved her more for their sakes than her own. Such a remonstrance produced a fresh torrent of tears. Orpah, though affectionately attached to Naomi, discouraged now by the difficulties, kisses her, and returns. Ruth, more determined, refuses to go back, and resolves to cleave to her. *Note;* (1.) Hasty resolutions are easily broken. (2.) Tender hearts can better bear want themselves, than see those whom they love exposed to it. (3.) They who would follow Christ ought first to count the cost. (4.) Many say, I will go with thee, who, on the first difficulties, turn back, and walk no more with Jesus. (5.) The difficulties of the way will bind the faithful soul closer to the Saviour.

4. To make the last essay of Ruth's determined purpose, Naomi again urges her to return, and pleads her sister's example, who was returned to her people and her gods. But Ruth was fixed, and her choice unalterable. She begs her mother to desist from dissuading her. "Though the place be distant, and the country unknown, I will go  
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for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people *shall be* my people, and thy God my God.

17 Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, *if ought* but death part thee and me.

18 When she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.

19 ¶ So they two went until they came to Beth-lehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Beth-lehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, *Is this Naomi?*

20 And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.

21 I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why *then* call

ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?

22 So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab: and they came to Beth-lehem in the beginning of barley harvest.

## CHAP. II.

*Ruth goes to glean in the fields of Boaz: Boaz takes notice of her, and shews kindness towards her: Naomi rejoices in the event.*

[Before Christ 1376.]

**A**ND Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name *was* Boaz.

2 And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of

“with thee; if thy lodging be a cottage, I seek no better covering; thy people shall be my people, in their manners, customs, and religion; and thy God, my God; renouncing every abomination of Moab, and owning Israel's God alone: Never will I quit thee; on the same spot our dying eyes shall close, and in the same grave our kindred dust shall mingle, and make the clods of the valley sweeter by the union.” Such is her purpose; and, to prevent farther entreaty, she binds her soul by a solemn vow, never but by death to part from her. *Note;* (1.) Nothing will be able to separate the faithful heart from Jesus; no, not death itself. (2.) They are truly our enemies who seek to turn us back from God and godliness. (3.) When we give up our hearts to God, and choose our portion among God's poor people, then in life or death we shall surrender ourselves up to be disposed of by him as shall please him, content in every station, and welcoming every cross.

5. Naomi, satisfied now, attempts no more to dissuade her: happy, no doubt, to hear her daughter's pious choice; and glad, amidst every distress, to bring her to the worship of Israel's God, and to the communion of his people.

*Ver. 21. The Lord hath testified against me*] The former part of the verse expresses what Naomi means by the *Lord's testifying against her*: she went out full; happy in a husband and two sons; but returned deprived of all, a lonely widow, worn with care, with poverty and age. See ch. ii. 2, 3. Several of the versions render this, *the Lord hath humbled me.*

*Ver. 22. They came to Beth-lehem in the beginning of barley harvest*] The Chaldee paraphrast thus explains these words: “They came to Bethlehem at the beginning of the passover, on the day that the children of Israel began to mow the sheaf which was to be waved, which was of barley.” See Levit. xxiii. 10, 11.

REFLECTIONS.—On now they travelled, and sweetly, no doubt, beguiled the tedious way in such discourse as might confirm Ruth's holy purpose, and comfort them together, in hope of God's blessing upon them. On their arrival at Beth-lehem notice is taken,

1. Of the reception they met with. Collecting together on the rumour of her return, the women, who remembered her former beauty and affluence, and now beheld her wrinkles and poverty, some perhaps in pity, some in scorn and upbraiding, and some in surprise, said, *Is this Naomi?* *Note;* (1.) Age and wrinkles make strange alterations in the fairest face. It is a silly thing to be vain of what is so fading. (2.) They who have any feelings of humanity, and much more those who have the bowels of Christ, will seek compassionately to alleviate the sorrows of the miserable. (3.) They, who have carried themselves most humbly in prosperity, will be most regarded in adversity.

2. Her name reminded her of her former condition; she wishes, therefore, for one more besitting her circumstances: *Call me Mara*, bitterness. She went out full of earthly comforts, with husband and children; but now returns a childless widow: yet, not murmuring at the afflictive providence, she sees and acknowledges God's hand, receives the correction, and submits to his will, as holy, just, and good. *Note;* (1.) It is a blessed sign of a soul devoted to God, when, in humbling providences, the spirit is brought down to the condition. (2.) Though, under affliction, God permits us to complain, he forbids us to murmur. (3.) When God afflicts us, it is not only no more than we deserve, but he knows it is what we need; and therefore whom he loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

3. The harvest was just begun, Providence so ordering it for the sake of the events which were to follow. *Note;* The most minute circumstances of our lives are directed by an over-ruling wisdom.

corn after *him* in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter.

3 And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field *belonging* unto Boaz, who *was* of the kindred of Elimelech.

4 ¶ And, behold, Boaz came from Beth-lehem, and said unto the reapers, The LORD *be* with you. And they answered him, The LORD bless thee.

5 Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel *is* this?

6 And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It *is* the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab:

7 And she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the

morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house.

8 Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens:

9 Let thine eyes *be* on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of *that* which the young men have drawn.

10 Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I *am* a stranger?

11 And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou

## CHAP. II.

*Ver. 4. Boaz came—and said unto the reapers, The Lord be with you]* We are authorized by the events of this history to conclude, that none of them happened by chance, but by the immediate interposition of God. Happy they who in all their ways acknowledge him, and in every state, however low, repose themselves on his all-sufficient care. The present scene affords us a pleasing instance of the simplicity and religion of ancient times, when the masters were wont to pray God to prosper the honest labours of those whom they employed, and when the labourers, in return, offered up their prayers for their masters. Heathens themselves practised this duty: they would not put the sickle to their corn till they had invoked their goddess *Ceres*. See Virgil, Georg. lib. i. ver. 347. How strongly does such a practice reprove the profane impiety of too many masters and labourers in the field!

REFLECTIONS.—We have here an account,

1. Of Boaz, whose name is famous in the following history. He was a near kinsman of Naomi, an inhabitant of Beth-lehem, a man of great wealth and generosity. He had heard of her return, though Naomi, out of modesty, and unwillingness to trouble her rich relations, seems not to have made him acquainted with the distress of her circumstances. *Note;* (1.) The worthless are importunate and clamorous, while the deserving are modest and silent. (2.) Many have rich relations, for whom they are little the better. (3.) It is a sure mark of a proud unthankful heart to overlook or disregard poor relations.

2. Of Ruth the Moabitess, whose character shines with distinguished lustre under the severest pressures of poverty; for such has God chosen, poor in this world, but rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom: and now *that* faith is tried, whether she can prefer the land of Israel, with all the inconveniences that she suffers, to the plenty she might

have enjoyed in Moab. We hear no mention of the least desire in her to return: though unused, probably, to such a method of procuring her living, her mind is conformed to her circumstances. She is willing, not only to work for her own bread, but also to maintain her aged mother. In order to this, she asks leave to go and glean in any field, where she might, through the master's kindness, be admitted. Her mother, pleased with such an instance of filial piety, affectionately permits her to go. *Note;* (1.) None know to what straits they may be reduced. It is not good to be brought up too delicately. (2.) To be content under the pressures of poverty is a blessed evidence of a faithful heart. (3.) They who know the value of their souls will prefer Christ and a crust to all the affluence and glory of the world without him. (4.) They who are poor have need to be thankful for the least favour shewn them. (5.) Industry in young people is highly commendable; and never came there any good from an idle hand.

3. She happened to light on Boaz's field, God directing her thither for purposes of his own glory. *Note;* Circumstances, which to us appear utterly fortuitous, proceed under the peculiar Providence of God: and from the most unexpected incidents, he can bring about the greatest events.

*Ver. 7. That she tarried a little in the house]* Or rather, and hath not been but a moment in the house; i. e. in the tent, which was pitched in the field for the refreshment of the reapers, and of such as were labouring in the field. This is Aben-Ezra's exposition of the word *house*, and it appears extremely natural.

*Ver. 10. That thou shouldest take knowledge of me]* To take knowledge, in Scripture, frequently signifies to *show kindness*, and is the effect of *finding grace*, i. e. favour with any one. The reason of this favour from Boaz to Ruth is mentioned in the next verses, which give us a favourable idea of Boaz.

haft done unto thy mother-in-law ſince the death of thine huſband: and *bow* thou haſt left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou kneweſt not heretofore.

12 The LORD recompenſe thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Iſrael, under whoſe wings thou art come to truſt.

13 Then ſhe ſaid, Let me find favour in

thy ſight, my lord; for that thou haſt comforted me, and for that thou haſt ſpoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens.

14 And Boaz ſaid unto her, At meal-time come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morſel in the vinegar. And ſhe fat beſide the reapers: and he reached her parched *corn*, and ſhe did eat, and was ſufficed, and left.

The phraſe in the 12th verſe, *under the wings of the Lord*, which is very uſual with the Pſalmiſt, is a metaphor taken from the *Cherubim*, whoſe wings ſpread over and covered the mercy-ſeat.

*Ver. 13. Though I be not like unto one of thy handmaidens]* Nothing can be more amiable than this humility of Ruth. Extolling the favour of Boaz to her to the utmoſt, ſhe, as it were, annihilates herſelf; profeſſing, that, ſtranger as ſhe was, and of an idolatrous country, ſhe conſidered herſelf as far inferior in condition to one of his meaneſt maid-ſervants. Bleſſed are they who humble themſelves, for they ſhall be exalted! Houbigant renders this paſſage, *would I might be one of thy handmaids!*

*Ver. 14. Eat of the bread and dip thy morſel in the vinegar]* Under the name *bread*, as we have before remarked, is comprehended all kinds of proviſion. By *צֶמֶת* *chometz*, rendered *vinegar*, is ſignified a kind of *acid* or *ſtrongly fermented wine*, which was very cooling and refreshing in hot ſeaſons, ſuch as the time of harveſt. So Pliny obſerves, lib. xxiii. chap. 1. "*Vinegar, or ſharp wine, is of a moſt refreshing nature.*" The Roman ſoldiers drank of this ſmall wine; and ſome have thought that it was this which they preſented to our Saviour on the croſs. Nothing is more common with the poets, than to mention this vinegar, or acid wine, in their deſcription of common repaſts. For proofs, ſee Calmet and Grotius on the place. Dr. Shaw, ſpeaking of the Arabs' manner of eating, obſerves, that, "when their food is of a more liquid nature, ſuch as *oil* and *vinegar, robb, batted milk, honey, &c.* then, after they have broken their bread or cakes into little bits (*ψωμια*, or *ſops*) they fall on, dipping their hands and their morſels together therein. (Matt. xxvi. 23. Ruth, ii. 14. John, xiii. 26.) At all theſe meals they feed themſelves with their right hand." Travels, p. 232. The application which the rabbis make of this paſſage to the Meſſiah, is very ſingular. They ſay, that the words of Boaz to Ruth, *come thou hither*, are equivalent to *come to thy kingdom*; and that what is added, *dip thy morſel in the vinegar*, denotes the reproaches and torments of the Meſſiah; a commentary which, however abſurd, abundantly proves to us the idea which the ancient Jews had of the Meſſiah. One would believe that the 21ſt verſe of the 69th Pſalm gave riſe to this expoſition. See Huet, Demonſtr. Evang. pars ii. p. 925.

REFLECTIONS.—Boaz was a great man, but not too great to ſuperintend his own buſineſs. The maſter's eye

makes quick work. We have him here viſiting his reapers. Obſerve,

1. The mutual ſalutations which paſſed between them; a proof that Boaz was as pious as proſperous, and that his ſervants under his care had partaken of their maſter's bleſſing. *Note;* (1.) Though a formal "God bleſs you" is often a profanation of the name of God, and a compliment of courſe; a thoughtful and ſerious benediction is the mark of trueſt regard. (2.) It is likely to go well with that family, where the maſter's kindneſs meets with an equal return in the ſervants' hearty regard for him and his concerns.

2. The inquiry that Boaz makes concerning a ſtranger whom he obſerved, probably, ſitting in the booth erected in the field, and the answer given him by the overſeer of the reapers. She was that Moabitish damſel, whoſe love for her mother, and regard for God, had brought her to Beth-lehem: ſhe had modeſtly aſked leave to glean, and, during the whole morning, had been induſtriouſly employed, till juſt now, that in the heat ſhe had reſted for a moment in the houſe, and was again returned to her labour. *Note;* They who are entrusted by their maſters, as overſeers, muſt look carefully to their maſters' intereſts, and make a faithful report.

3. Boaz accoſts the poor ſtranger with great kindneſs, calls her daughter, bids her continue in his field during the harveſt, follow his maidens, and keep them company. He gives orders alſo to the young men to ſhew her no rudeneſs, nor give her any moleſtation; invites her to eat and drink with his reapers, and go as one of them to the booth whenever ſhe was thirſty, and at meal-time ſhare their entertainment. He adds the excellent character he had heard of her, as deſerving every token of his regard; prays God to recompenſe her work of filial piety; and her adherence to the worſhip of Jehovah, under whoſe wing ſhe had taken ſhelter: and then, turning to the reapers, bids them purpoſely drop a handful here and there behind them, and let her glean among the ſheaves, and not reproach her for it, as if ſhe took what was not allowed her. *Note;* (1.) There is a manner of doing a kindneſs that makes it doubly acceptable. (2.) They deſerve commendation and regard, who, for the ſake of God, leave all behind them. (3.) In the end they will be no loſers. (4.) A generous heart is happy in an occaſion to relieve the wants of the deſerving.

4. Ruth, overcome with ſuch kindneſs, is at a loſs to expreſs her gratitude, bows to the earth before him, in token of deepeſt reſpect, profeſſes her unworthineſs of the favour

15 And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not:

16 And let fall also *some* of the handfuls on purpose for her, and leave *them*, that she may glean *them*, and rebuke her not.

17 So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley.

18 ¶ And she took *it* up, and went into the city: and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned: and she brought forth, and gave to her that she had reserved after she was sufficed.

19 And her mother-in-law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to-day? and where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she shewed her mother-in-law with whom she had wrought,

and said, The man's name with whom I wrought to-day *is* Boaz.

20 And Naomi said unto her daughter-in-law, Blessed *be* he of the LORD, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man *is* near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen.

21 And Ruth the Moabitess said, He said unto me also, Thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until they have ended all my harvest.

22 And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter-in-law, *It is* good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field.

23 So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley-harvest and of wheat-harvest; and dwelt with her mother-in-law.

favour shewn her, admires his condescension, begs the continuance of his regard, and receives his speech as the most friendly and reviving cordial. Accordingly, at meal-time she accepts his invitation, and, to make it more welcome, he reaches her the parched corn, and by his own behaviour engages his servants to shew her every kind of civility. *Note;* (1.) A grateful heart often wants expressions to speak its sensibility. (2.) A kind look, or a good word from a superior, is often very useful: so cheap a charity then who need to grudge? (3.) They who are most deserving will have the lowest opinion of their own deserts.

*Ver. 17. So she gleaned in the field—and beat out that she had gleaned]* Ruth availed herself of the goodness of Boaz. She gleaned all the day; and then, according to the custom of those times, *she beat out*, with a rod, the corn, which produced her *an ephah*. See Exod. xvi. 36.

*Ver. 20. Naomi said—The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen]* In the Hebrew, *one of our redeemers*; concerning whom, see Levit. xxv. 25. Deut. xxv. 5. together with what follows in the 4th chapter of this book. Naomi does not say that Boaz was the **גוֹאֵל** *gool*, or *redeemer*; but *one of the redeemers* of her family; the reason is, that the right was not immediately in him, but only in default of some other refusing to fulfil it. See chap. iii. 12.

*Ver. 21. Thou shalt keep fast by my young men]* The word which we render *young men*, signifies all young people in general. We see by the following verse in what manner Naomi understood it. The LXX and Chaldee render it *maidens*, and so, doubtless, it should be read in our version.

REFLECTIONS.—Ruth, having refreshed herself at dinner, returns again with diligence to her work, and at even,

1. She beats out and winnows the corn that she had gathered, which was between six and seven gallons of

barley, and, taking it up, carries it home to her mother. *Note;* Industry and plenty are twin-sisters; even the poor, if industrious, never need want.

2. On her arrival, she shews her mother what she had gleaned, gives her of the provision which she had left at dinner, and, in answer to Naomi's question, who was pleasingly surprised at the quantity she had brought home, relates the adventures of the day, and the kind providence which had directed her to the field of Boaz. *Note;* (1.) A good child will always divide his morsel with his aged parent. (2.) In all our ways we must acknowledge God. (3.) When we go out in the way of duty, we may hope to return and bring a blessing along with us.

3. Naomi hereupon blesses God for the mercy, and prays for *his* prosperity who had so kindly treated her daughter. The name of Boaz awakens her remembrance of former kindness to her family, and she now mentions what either she had forgotten, or had not told her daughter before, that he was a very near kinsman to them. This reflection, perhaps, now first struck her mind, and therefore, in hope of farther kindness, she bids her daughter accept the kind invitation she had received, and, during the harvest, follow his reapers, and go nowhere else. These directions Ruth carefully followed, and, when the harvest was ended, dwelt at home with her mother on the provision which her industry had collected. *Note;* (1.) The best returns for kindness are the prayers of the poor. (2.) Whatever mercies we receive from men, God must have the praise. (3.) Humility will make us silent with respect to our connections, rather than boast, as many do who are poor, the greatness of their relations. (4.) A casual word or hint, dropped undesignedly, is sometimes pregnant with strange consequences. (5.) They who have the blessed Jesus for their redeemer cannot keep too close to him and his reapers: his past favours are the earnest of greater still in store for them.



## C H A P. III.

*By Naomi's instruction, Ruth passes the night at Boaz's feet: Boaz acknowledges the right of a kinsman: Ruth relates to Naomi all that had happened.*

[Before Christ 1376.]

**T**HEN Naomi her mother-in-law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?

2 And now *is* not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley to-night in the threshing-floor.

3 Wash thyself therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor; *but* make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking.

4 And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and

lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do.

5 And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me I will do.

6 ¶ And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother-in-law bade her.

7 And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn: and she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid her down.

8 And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid, and turned himself: and, behold, a woman lay at his feet.

9 And he said, Who *art* thou? And she answered, I *am* Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou *art* a near kinsman.

10 And he said, Blessed *be* thou of the

## C H A P. III.

*Ver. 1. My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee*] This, according to the eastern mode of expression, is a strong affirmative. As Ruth had shewn so much piety and affection to her mother, Naomi thought it her duty to do all in her power to provide for her; and, as Providence had in so remarkable a manner directed her to Boaz, she devised the following method of calling upon him to perform that duty which the law required from him. A circumstance which must be kept in mind, to preserve both Naomi and Ruth from any imputation of immodesty: nor, indeed, ought we to judge too hastily of a history like this, without a due attention, not only to the peculiar laws, but to the striking simplicity of the manners of those times, with a pleasing picture whereof every trait in this history presents us.

*Ver. 2. Behold, he winnoweth barley*] It is plain from the 7th verse, that this was a season of feasting, and that a kind of feast was given upon a completion of the harvest. The Chaldee paraphrase upon the 7th verse is, *the heart of Boaz rejoiced, and he blessed God who had heard his prayer, and removed the famine from the land of Israel.*

*Ver. 3. Put thy raiment upon thee, &c.*] Her *best clothes or ornaments*, as some of the versions express it. It is not easy to tell at this distance of time, and under this difference of manners, why Naomi advised Ruth to this secret method of proceeding. To some persons, it will seem that it would have been better for her to have claimed publicly the right of redemption from Boaz: but, unquestionably, Naomi, who was a pious woman, had sufficient reasons for her mode of proceeding; and, well satisfied of the honour of Boaz, as well as the modesty of Ruth, she had no apprehensions of any consequences which might impugn the reputation of either.

REFLECTIONS.—We have here Naomi's solicitude to get her daughter comfortably settled, and at rest in the house of her husband, that she might no longer be exposed to the difficulties under which they now struggled. She informed Ruth, that Boaz's kindred to her, as she apprehended, laid him under an obligation to take his brother's widow, and raise up seed unto his brother. *Note;* (1.) It seems safest and best, that the younger widows marry, 1 *Tim.* v. 14. (2.) Parents should seek the settlement of their children in marriage, as one great part of their duty respecting them. (3.) The rest of the marriage state consists in union and affection. To have a wandering heart there, is not only to be criminal, but to be wretched.

*Ver. 7. He went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn*] It seems as if this were a temporary kind of rest, and that Boaz reposed here only a short time upon the present occasion; lying down in his clothes, and not going, as usual, to his house and bed: and, possibly, Naomi, knowing this to be the custom, might therefore make choice of the present opportunity. In this situation Ruth came to him, and, dressed as she was in her best raiment, *ver. 3.* laid herself down at his feet.

*Ver. 9. Spread, therefore, thy skirt over thine handmaid*] See chap. ii. 12. In the Hebrew it is, *spread thy wing*. It is a proverbial manner of speaking, signifying in general, *take me under thy protection*; and in particular, *take me under thy protection as a husband*: the Chaldee, therefore, plainly renders it, *let thy name be called upon thine handmaid, by taking me for thy wife*. Even to this day, it is a ceremony among the Jews for the man to *throw the skirt of his talith, or veil*, over his spouse, and to cover her head with it. See Buxtorf. *Synag. Jud.* cap. xxxix. Ruth subjoins the reason of her request; and, to judge properly concerning it, we must,

LORD, my daughter: *for* thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter-end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich.

11 And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou *art* a virtuous woman.

12 And now it is true that I *am thy* near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I.

13 Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning, *that* if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman, well; let him do the kinsman's part: but if he will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, *as* the LORD liveth: lie down until the morning.

14 ¶ And she lay at his feet until the morning: and she rose up before one could know another. And he said, Let it not be known that a woman came into the floor.

15 Also he said, Bring the vail that *thou hast* upon thee, and hold it. And when she held it, he measured six *measures* of barley, and laid *it* on her: and she went into the city.

16 And when she came to her mother-in-law, she said, Who *art* thou, my daughter? And she told her all that the man had done to her.

17 And she said, These six *measures* of barley gave he me; for he said to me, Go not empty unto thy mother-in-law.

18 Then said she, Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day.

C H A P. IV.

*Boaz calls upon the next kinsman, who refuses to redeem: accordingly, Boaz marrieth Ruth; and from this marriage comes Obed, the father of Jesse, the father of David.*

[Before Christ 1376.]

**T**HEN went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there: and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down.

2 And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down.

must, in a great measure, divest ourselves of modern ideas, and consider not only the manners of those times, but the light in which a state of widowhood and celibacy was considered among the Jews. Ruth, a proselyte to the religion of that nation, was full of those expectations which animated the pious women among them; and the sequel of this history fully proves, that her expectations were not ill-grounded.

*Ver. 10. He said, Blessed be thou of the Lord*] Nothing can be more honourable than the testimony which Boaz gives in this and the next verse to the character of Ruth; which, while it removes all suspicions from her reputation, at the same time proves that Boaz acted upon principle, and was a man of true discernment and real piety.

*Ver. 12. Howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I*] He does not reject her petition; but, actuated by a strict regard to the law of Moses, informs her, that he could not properly take her to wife, as there was a person nearer to her than himself: till, therefore, that person could be consulted, it was their duty to wait. He assures her, that there shall be no longer delay than is absolutely requisite; that he will immediately take all necessary steps; and, in the mean time, advises her in quietness and security to remain there that night, under the protection of a man, whom inclination as well as religion led to preserve her virtue, reputation, and happiness. See *ver. 14.* and *Pfiffer's Dubia Vexata*, p. 360.

*Ver. 15. Bring the vail—and hold it*] Respecting the vail, see *Exod. xii. 34.* The Chaldee paraphrase adds these words to the present verse: “*Strength was given her from the Lord to bear it; and immediately it was said in prophecy, that six righteous persons should proceed from her, each of whom should be blessed with six benedictions, David, and Daniel and his three companions, and the King Messiah*” She went into the city, is rendered by the Chaldee, *Boaz went into the city*, and the Hebrew seems to favour this interpretation.

C H A P. IV.

*Ver. 1. Boaz went up to the gate*] See on *Deut. xvi. 18.* The Chaldee paraphrases this, *He went up to the gate of the house of judgment, where the Sanhedrim sat.*

*Ver. 2. Ten men*] This number of witnesses, it seems, was necessary for the ratification of marriages, divorces, and the conveyance of right and property. See *More Nevoch. pars. iii. cap. xlix.* and *Bertram de Rep. Jud. cap. ix.* Boaz, in representing the distress to which Naomi, the sister of their brother, i. e. their common relation, found herself reduced after her return from Moab, tells the kinsman, that, in order to supply her present necessities, she designed to sell the parcel of land which belonged to Elimelech; and that she had a right to do so, in such a state of necessity, is supposed by the best writers on this subject. See *Selden de Success. in Bonis, cap. xv. p. 52.*

*Ver.*

3 And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land, which *was* our brother Elimelech's:

4 And I thought to advertise thee, saying, Buy *it* before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem *it*, redeem *it*: but if thou wilt not redeem *it*, then tell me, that I may know: for *there is* none to redeem *it* besides thee; and I *am* after thee. And he said, I will redeem *it*.

5 Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy *it* also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance.

6 ¶ And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem *it* for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem *it*.

7 Now this *was the manner* in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave *it* to his neighbour: and this *was* a testimony in Israel.

8 Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy *it* for thee. So he drew off his shoe.

9 ¶ And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye *are* witnesses this day, that I have bought all that *was* Elimelech's,

and all that *was* Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hard of Naomi.

10 Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye *are* witnesses this day.

11 And all the people that *were* in the gate, and the elders, said, *We are* witnesses. The LORD make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Bethlehem:

12 And let thy house be like the house of Pharez (whom Tamar bare unto Judah), of the seed which the LORD shall give thee of this young woman.

13 ¶ So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bare a son.

14 And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed *be* the LORD, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel.

15 And he shall be unto thee a restorer of *thy* life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter-in-law, which loveth thee, which

*Ver. 5. Thou must buy it also of Ruth*] This whole speech is rendered very confused by the *present printed* Hebrew text; but if we admit of some alteration from the best manuscripts, the passage will be cleared from obscurity, and when corrected will run thus: *ver. 4. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it; but if thou wilt not redeem it, tell me, that I may know; for there is none but thee to redeem it, except myself, who am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it, ver. 5. Then said Boaz, on the day thou takest the land of the hand of Naomi, thou must also take Ruth the Moabitess. See Kennicott's Dissert. vol. i. p. 447. and Houbigant, who has made the same observation.*

*Ver. 6. I cannot redeem it for myself, &c.*] The Chaldee paraphrases thus: "I cannot redeem it upon this condition, because I have a wife already, and do not choose to bring another into my house, lest quarrels and divisions arise in it, and lest I hurt my own inheritance." The Jewish commentators understand it in the same manner. See Selden de Uxor. Heb. lib. i. cap. 9.

*Ver. 7. This was the manner in former time*] See the note on Deut. xxv. 5. Though the custom there referred to was somewhat different from the present, there can be

no doubt that this was founded upon it; and the ceremony seems to express, that the person refusing to redeem transferred all his right to the man to whom he delivered his shoe. The reason of the custom, as Bishop Patrick says, is plain enough: it being a natural signification that the man resigned his interest in the land, by giving to the person redeeming his shoe, wherewith he used to walk in it, to the end that he might enter in it, and take possession of it himself. The Chaldee, instead of *his shoe*, reads *his right hand glove*. The Germans and Dutch call *gloves the shoes of the hands*. Rabbi Jarchi observes, "It is now the custom with us, that a *handkerchief* or *vail* be given, instead of a *shoe*, when we purchase any thing." It is doubtful from the next verse, whether the kinsman or Boaz drew off the shoe; though it seems most likely to have been the former.

*Ver. 11. The Lord make the woman—like Rachel, and—Leah*] See Gen. xxiv. 60.

*Ver. 12. Like the house of Pharez, &c.*] Pharez, the son of Judah by Tamar, was the chief of the family of Elimelech, and of all the Beth-lehmites. Nothing, therefore, could be more natural than this blessing which the elders of the village give to Boaz and Ruth upon their marriage.

REFLEC-

is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him.

16 And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it.

17 And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

18 ¶ Now these are the generations of

Pharez: Pharez begat Hezron.

19 And Hezron begat Ram, and Ram begat Amminadab,

20 And Amminadab begat Nahshon, and Nahshon begat Salmon,

21 And Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat Obed,

22 And Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David.

REFLECTIONS.—No sooner has the nearest kinsman quitted his right, than Boaz puts in his claim, ready to pay the money for the land to Naomi, and purchase Ruth for his wife; and he calls upon them to witness the contract, and insert it in the public register. *Note;* Thus hath our Goel, our divine Redeemer, when we were poor and destitute, and none were either able or willing to purchase the inheritance which we by sin had so deeply mortgaged, yea, utterly forfeited, paid down the price, even at the expence of marring his own inheritance; having left the realms of bliss and glory for our sake, and then, espousing us to himself, has made us sharers of that glory, to which the Father, as the reward of his sufferings, hath exalted him. What love, what fidelity, constancy, and subjection, then do we owe to him!

*Ver. 17. The women her neighbours gave it a name]* They advised Naomi to give the child such a name as was suitable to their foregoing discourse, and to the case of Naomi. See Luke, i. 59. *Obed* signifies a *servant*, as Josephus interprets it: the Chaldee paraphrases the name, "Obed, who served the Lord of the world with a perfect heart." The sacred historian adds, *he is the father of Jesse, the father of David*; and in these words points out to us what appears to have been the principal design of this book, which was, to inform us of the origin of the family of David, and consequently that of the Messiah; and on this account it is that the genealogy is annexed, ver. 18, &c. We refer to the chronologists for the dates and ages of the persons mentioned in this genealogy, and in particular to Archbishop Usher's Chronol. Sac. pars i. cap. 12.

THE  
**FIRST BOOK of SAMUEL,**  
 OTHERWISE CALLED THE  
**FIRST BOOK of the KINGS.**

*THE sacred history having digressed to relate the idolatry of the house of Micah, and of the Danites, the catastrophe of the Benjamites, and the marriage of Ruth with Boaz, resumes the thread of the narration respecting the judges, and gives us an account of the birth of Samuel, whom God raised up for his people after the death of Samson. The two books that bear the name of Samuel comprehend an historical account of the transactions which happened in the time of the two last judges, Eli and Samuel, and of the two first kings, Saul and David. They were composed, says Mr. Locke, in part by Samuel himself; at least the first twenty-four chapters of the first book; and the next, probably, by Nathan or Gad, or some prophet of those times. See 1 Chron. xxix. 29. The Vulgate stiles the books of Samuel and Kings, the first, second, third, and fourth book of Kings, as they contain the history of the kings of Israel and Judah. Father Simon is of opinion, from several passages in these books, that Samuel could not have been the author of them; but those passages might probably have been inserted by Ezra, when he collected and revised the books of Sacred Scripture.*

C H A P. I.

*Peninnah, one of the wives of Elkanah, reproaches Hannah, his other wife, for her barrenness: Hannah, with many tears, prays to the Lord, and vows, if He will give her a son, that she will dedicate him to the Lord. Samuel is born, and presented to Eli the priest.*

[Before Christ 1115.]

**N**OW there was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim, of mount Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite:

2 And he had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

3 And this man went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the LORD of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the LORD, were there.

4 ¶ And when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions:

C H A P. I.

*Ver. 1. A certain man of Ramathaim-zophim] This might be translated, the Ramahs of the guards; possibly because the village was divided into two parts, situated each upon a hill, where there might be a watch-tower, and centinels placed. Various other reasons are given for*

the name; for which see Buddæus, Hist. v. tom. 2. By comparing the words in this verse with those in 1 Chron. vi. 16. 23. 33, 34. and the following, it appears, that Elkanah was of the tribe of Levi and of the family of Kohath, and consequently was not a priest, as some have supposed, much less the high-priest. See Selden de Success. in Pontif. lib. i. cap. 18.

*Ver.*

5 But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion; for he loved Hannah: but the LORD had shut up her womb.

6 And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the LORD had shut up her womb.

7 And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the LORD, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat.

8 Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons?

9 ¶ So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the LORD.

10 And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore.

*Ver. 5. But the Lord, &c.] For he loved Hannah, though the Lord, &c. Waterland.*

*Ver. 6. Her adversary also provoked her.] Houbigant renders this very well, her rival also provoked her even to wrath on this very account, because the Lord had shut up her womb. The word rendered adversary, or rival, signifies a person that distresses or afflicts. See Parkhurst on גַּז.*

REFLECTIONS.—This chapter opens,

1. With an account of Samuel's parentage and birth-place. His father was of the family of Korah—a good branch from a bad stock.

2. He was the son of pious parents. His father Elkanah, signifying *God hath possessed*, a Levite, went up annually with his family to sacrifice at Shiloh unto the Lord of Sabaoth, or hosts, (which title of God here first occurs,) a rare instance of adherence to God when Israel in general had apostatized from him. *Note;* (1.) It is among the greatest blessings, to be the child of pious parents. (2.) The more others turn away from God, the closer should we cleave to him.

3. Notice is taken of Elkanah's two wives; one ought to have sufficed him. Probably, as he had no children by the first, he was tempted to take a second; but though he obtained his wish on one hand, his comfort was greatly embittered on the other, by the contests and vexations occasioned between Hannah and Peninnah. Hannah signifies *beautiful*, and she had engaged Elkanah's best affections; Peninnah, *a diamond*; she enriched his family with children, but was rough and sharp in her temper. She could not bear Elkanah's partiality to her rival, and therefore took every occasion to provoke and exasperate her. *Note;* (1.) When we step out of the way of God's providence to gather worldly comforts, we shall find the sweet we expected embittered with gall. (2.) Jealous love cannot bear a rival; let it admonish us to keep our hearts single for God.

4. The quarrel breaks out between the two wives, even before the Lord in Shiloh, for what place is there so sacred as to exclude the intrusion of human corruption! Peninnah, envious of Hannah's interest in her husband, upbraids her with her barrenness, seeking maliciously to destroy her comfort, if she cannot engage his regard. And this she did at each returning feast, when the appearance of Elkanah's partial love to Hannah roused her jealousy and resentment. Hannah, unable to bear the aggravating taunts, and afflicted beyond measure under her barrenness, too easily gratified her rival's malice, by the

sensibility she expressed at her reproaches. Melancholy and discontented, she would not eat, and did nothing but weep, instead of rejoicing before the Lord, and counting herself happy in the blessing of her husband's affection. *Note;* (1.) A malicious spirit, like the devil, takes delight in the miseries that others suffer by its means. (2.) Those who are of a fretful temper lay themselves open to continual uneasiness. (3.) Most of our miseries we make ourselves by our unthankfulness: did we weigh our mercies, we should be ashamed to complain.

5. Elkanah by every kind endearment seeks to soothe the sorrows of her heart. His love to her was not at all affected by her barrenness. He carves the nicest part of the festal board to testify his fond regard, and with soft tenderness gently chides the uneasiness that he with grief beheld. Why weepest thou? Why eatest thou not these offerings of peace with a grateful heart to the God of thy mercies? Is not my love better to thee than ten sons? *Note;* (1.) Love hides all blemishes, and sees no faults. (2.) As barrenness is from God, it ill becomes us to quarrel with him; and it were cruel in a husband to add affliction to the afflicted. (3.) We cannot see those whom we love weeping, without feeling for them the tenderest distress, and eagerly longing to relieve them. (4.) Many of our sorrows are of our own making. It were well if we asked ourselves often, Why weepest thou? (5.) That sorrow is to be condemned as sinful, which unfits us for, or diverts us from, the worship of God. (6.) Religion and reason will afford us a cure for all our distresses: if we possess the one, and exercise the other aright, we shall soon dry up our tears.

*Ver. 9. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat, &c.] Eli, who was of the family of Ithamar, was both high-priest and judge at this time. He was born in the end of Gideon's judicature, and died in the middle of the Philistines' tyranny over the Israelites, according to Sir John Marsham, who observes, that his judicature consisted only in hearing and judging causes by his pontifical authority. He did not signalize himself by any victories: he was such a judge as Samuel's sons were, chap. viii. 1. and Samuel himself, after Saul began to reign. See chap. vii. 15. 17. Of the temple of the Lord, in this verse, would be better rendered, Of the tabernacle of the Lord. It appears from the first words of this verse, that Hannah rose up to go to the tabernacle at the time of the evening-sacrifice, for it was after they had dined.*

11 And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man-child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head.

12 ¶ And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli marked her mouth.

13 Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken.

14 And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee.

15 And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I *am* a woman of a sorrowful spirit:

I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD.

16 Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto.

17 Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant *thee* thy petition that thou hast asked of him.

18 And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more *sad*.

19 ¶ And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the LORD, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the LORD remembered her.

20 Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had con-

*Ver. 17. Eli answered and said, Go in peace*] Satisfied by her modest and respectful answer, Eli dismisses her with a blessing; which appears to have given Hannah so much gratification, that she departed in perfect complacency, nothing doubting of the completion of her petition, which the high-priest had condescended himself to enforce. The Chaldee renders it, *go in peace; and the God of Israel will grant thee, &c.*

REFLECTIONS.—1. Hannah took the first opportunity of retiring, to pour out her complaints into the bosom of a compassionate God. She felt a bitterness which only he could remove, and mingled her tears with her prayers in the fervour of her devotion. *Note;* (1.) No relief like prayer for an afflicted soul. (2.) The tears we shed upon our knees are those *sittings* that God *puts in his bottle*, and which this Father of Mercies will wipe away by an answer of peace to the burdened soul.

2. Eli observing her move her lips, but not hearing her voice, (for her prayer was mental, and the Lord, who saw her heart, read her importunate desires,) hastily concludes her drunken, and gives her a sharp rebuke for her supposed impiety. *Note;* (1.) Hasty suspicions and rash censures are very sinful. (2.) The prayer of the heart is that which God chiefly regards, and without words he can read our desires.

3. Hannah's answer is as respectful and humble, as Eli's charge was hasty and censorious. Far from being provoked at an accusation so contrary to the truth, she with reverence addresses him, My Lord, and meekly explains the true cause of her behaviour. She begs him not to have so ill an opinion of her, as to think her such a daughter of Belial. It was not wine, but the bitterness of her affliction, that made her appear discomposed and disordered. Her cry was internal to the God of mercy, and her

lips moved not in folly, but in prayer. *Note;* (1.) Every drunkard is a child of Belial; but a drunken woman is doubly infamous. (2.) When unjustly censured, let us never return railing for railing. (3.) We do well to explain the motives of our conduct, and to remove those prejudices of our brethren which may be entertained against us, however unjustly.

4. Eli readily receives her plea, rejoices in her vindication, is sorry for his own rashness, and makes her amends by the benediction he bestows, and his earnestly seconding her prayers by his supplication to God in her behalf for an answer of peace. *Note;* (1.) We should be pleased to find ourselves mistaken in our misapprehension of our brethren, and endeavour to repair the error immediately. (2.) A good man's benediction and prayers are valuable blessings.

5. Hannah, having now cast her care upon God, puts off her sorrow, and regains a peaceful mind, departing in faith that the Lord had heard, and would answer the voice of her humble petitions. *Note;* The prayer of faith can cheer the sinking heart, and smooth the discomposed countenance of the afflicted.

*Ver. 20. Called his name Samuel, &c.*] We have often had occasion to observe, that the reason of names imposed is given in the context; which being the case here, it is surprising that interpreters should have wearied themselves in search of other etymologies. According to Marsham, Samuel was born in the interval of the forty years that the people of Israel served the Philistines. Vignoles thinks that Eli had abdicated the high-priesthood, that he was only judge when Samuel was born, and that he was born in the third year of Eli's administration. See his Chronol. tom. i. p. 76.

ceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, *saying*, Because I have asked him of the LORD.

21 And the man Elkanah, and all his house, went up to offer unto the LORD the yearly sacrifice, and his vow.

22 But Hannah went not up; for she said unto her husband, *I will not go up* until the child be weaned, and *then* I will bring him, that he may appear before the LORD, and there abide for ever.

23 And Elkanah her husband said unto her, Do what seemeth thee good; tarry until thou hast weaned him; only the LORD establish his word. So the woman abode, and gave her son suck until she weaned him.

24 ¶ And when she had weaned him, she

took him up with her, with three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of the LORD in Shiloh: and the child *was* young.

25 And they slew a bullock, and brought the child to Eli.

26 And she said, Oh my lord, *as thy soul liveth*, my lord, I *am* the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the LORD.

27 For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of him:

28 Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD. And he worshipped the LORD there.

*Ver. 21. And his vow*] It is most likely that Elkanah had united with Hannah in the vow she made, ver. 11. and moreover had promised, in case of its completion, to offer some extraordinary sacrifice.

*Ver. 22. I will not go up until, &c.*] There is nothing in the Hebrew for, *I will not go up*. It has been observed, that Elkanah and Hannah treat one another with the greatest propriety and tenderness, and present us with a fine example of a sensible and affectionate couple.

*Ver. 23. Only the Lord establish his word*] Houbigant renders this, *only the Lord establish that which thou hast said*. We prefer, says he, to the common reading דברו *debaro*, his word, דבארך *debarek*, thy word, which the LXX, Syriac, and Arabic follow; for it does not appear that God had promised Hannah any thing concerning the condition and future life of her son. Therefore the words, *may the Lord establish what thou hast spoken*, signify "may the Lord grant that what thou hast vowed may be fulfilled, and that the child may live which is born to us."

*Ver. 24. With three bullocks*] As *one bullock* only is mentioned in the next verse, the LXX, Syriac, and Arabic, read *one bullock of three years old*, which Houbigant approves and follows; observing, that in the 25th verse the demonstrative ה *he*, being prefixed, particularizes *this very bullock*, i. e. of three years old. *And the child was young*, Houbigant renders, *was yet a crying infant*, *puerum vagientem*.

*Ver. 28. Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord, &c.*] *Therefore also I have given him, according to my petition, unto the Lord, for as long as I promised in my petition to give him unto the Lord, &c.* Waterland. This version of Dr. Waterland's seems perfectly conformable to the original; from a survey of which it appears evident, that Hannah herein refers to the petition which she made for a son, to whom also she gave a name agreeable to this petition. The Vulgate, Syriac, and Arabic, instead of, *and he worshipped*, read, *and they worshipped*.

REFLECTIONS.—The day of the solemn feast being accomplished, we have,

1. The return of Elkanah and his family, after having risen up early to worship God, before they proceeded on their journey. *Note*; (1.) Early devotions promise a happy day. (2.) However urgent our journey, we shall lose nothing by taking God's blessing along with us before we set off.

2. Hannah becomes a joyful mother. God answers her according to her prayers, and she acknowledges the mercy in the name she gives her son, *Samuel*, as *asked of the Lord*. *Note*; God's mercies deserve to be kept in everlasting remembrance.

3. The care she took in nursing the infant. She was not unnatural, like some mothers, who deny their breasts to the fruit of their womb, but suckled him herself. *Note*; (1.) When we have a lawful hindrance from the house of God, such as suckling an infant; we may look up with comfort to him over the cradle, and expect God's blessing and presence there. (2.) The best improvement of our mercies received from God is to devote them to God.

4. When the child is weaned, as it is generally thought at three years old, Hannah performs her vows, goes up with her son, and takes along with her sacrifices and offerings, as grateful acknowledgments of the mercy that God had bestowed. Presenting him to Eli, she reminds him of what had passed, and surrenders up the precious gift to the perpetual service of the God that gave him; then offers her sacrifice, and rejoices before the Lord. *Note*; (1.) Though we may have just reason to delay, yet must we in their season pay our vows. (2.) They who are surrendered up to God, must henceforth regard themselves no longer as their own, but his for ever.

5. Samuel was early taught: no sooner had he learned to lisp, than prayer was the language. Though a child, he worshipped before the Lord. *Note*; (1.) Children should early be taught the way to a throne of grace. (2.) The minds of little ones are very early susceptible of religious impressions.



## C H A P. II.

*Hannah's song. The sin of Eli's sons. Eli reproveth them very gently for their great crimes: a prophet of the Lord foretels him, that the priesthood should pass from his family into another, and that a priest should arise to walk before God and his anointed for ever.*

[Before Christ 1112.]

**A**ND Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD; my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation.

2 *There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God.*

3 Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by his actions are weighed.

4 The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength.

5 *They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble.*

6 The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up,

7 The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up.

8 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD's, and he hath set the world upon them.

9 He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail.

10 The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the LORD shall judge the

## C H A P. II.

*Ver. 1. And Hannah prayed]* This might be rendered with greater propriety, and Hannah sang praise. See Psalm lxxii. 15. 20.

*Ver. 3. For the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by his actions are weighed]* Houbigant renders this, *for the Lord foreknoweth all things: your designed counsels shall not succeed; nearly conformable to the Arabic and Syriac.*

*Ver. 5. And they that were hungry, ceased]* Houbigant renders this, *they that were oppressed with famine, shall no longer be so; whilst the barren shall bring forth seven, and she who had many children shall be deprived of strength.* All the expressions in this and the other verses are designed to humble the pride of man, and to set forth the greatness, wisdom, and uncontrollable power of God.

*Ver. 8. He—lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, &c.]* The author of the Observations remarks, that dried dung being usually burnt in the East, heaps of this sort of turf were commonly laid up in their cottages. Hence he thinks the present expression is elucidated; "He raiseth a beggar from a dunghill, out of a cottage, that is, in which heaps of dried dung are piled up for fuel, as some of the worst accommodated of the poor practise with respect to the turf of this country: or rather, he raiseth up a poor exile, forced to beg his bread in his wanderings, and to lodge in some out-house where dung is laid up, out of the city, in order to set him on the throne of a royal palace, built in the midst of it." When Hannah says, that the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, she urges a strong reason in proof of all she had advanced; namely, that GOD, being the founder, supporter, and upholder of the earth itself,

could certainly do with the inhabitants of it as he pleased. The true meaning of the word rendered pillars, מצוקי *metzukei*, is somewhat doubtful. It seems to express those grand instruments, whatever they be, of supporting and retaining in its orbit the globe of the earth. But did it signify pillars, as we have rendered it, every one sees that the word must be understood in a figurative sense.

*Ver. 10. And he shall give strength unto his king]* By king and anointed in this place, say some, is meant David, of whom Hannah prophesies; though it seems most probable that the reference is to the Messiah. See Psalm lxxxix. 24. "Who doth not perceive," saith St. Augustine, "that the spirit which animated this woman, whose name, Hannah, signifies grace, prophesied of the Christian religion, 'the city of God, whose king and founder is Christ?'" See de Civ. Dei, lib. xvii. cap. 4. This seems to be the chief aim and object of Hannah's song. She is the first person, as Bishop Patrick observes, who names the Messiah or anointed; there being no such word in all the foregoing books: and when we consider the terms in which this beautiful song is expressed; the perfect resemblance there is between this and that of the Blessed Virgin, Luke, i. 46; and the allusion which the father of John the Baptist makes to the latter part of it, Luke, i. 69, 70. We cannot persuade ourselves but that Hannah had a respect to something higher than to Peninnah her rival, or to the triumphs even of David himself. The expressions are too magnificent and sublime to be confined to such objects. Kimchi was so struck with them, that he ingeniously acknowledges, that the king, of whom Hannah speaks here, is the Messiah; of whom she spake either by prophecy or tradition: "For," continues he, "there was a tradition among

ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed.

11 And Elkanah went to Ramah to his house. And the child did minister unto the LORD before Eli the priest.

12 ¶ Now the sons of Eli *were* sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD.

13 And the priests' custom with the people *was, that*, when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a flesh-hook of three teeth in his hand;

14 And he struck *it* into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the flesh-hook brought up the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came thither.

15 Also before they burned the fat, the priest's servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw.

16 And *if* any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and *then* take *as much* as thy soul desireth; then he would answer him, *Nay*; but thou shalt give *it me* now: and if not, I will take *it* by force.

17 Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD: for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.

18 ¶ But Samuel ministered before the LORD, *being* a child, girded with a linen ephod.

19 Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought *it* to him from year to year; when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.

20 ¶ And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, The LORD give thee seed of this woman for the loan which is lent to the LORD. And they went unto their own home.

21 And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the LORD.

22 ¶ Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled *at* the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

23 And he said unto them, Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people.

24 Nay, my sons; for *it is* no good report that I hear: ye make the LORD's people to transgress.

25 If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the LORD, who shall entreat for him? Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the LORD would slay them.

“ among the Israelites, that a great king should arise in Israel; and she seals up her song with celebrating this king, who was to deliver them from all their enemies.” In short, all the particulars of the 9th and 10th verses especially, perfectly characterize the reign of the Messiah; his protection of his saints; the vain efforts of their enemies; their triumph over them; the extent of his kingdom, and the perpetual increase of his power. See Witii Miscel. Sacr. tom. i. lib. 1.

Ver. 16. *And if any man said unto him, let them not fail, &c.*] The great sin of these sons of Eli consisted, not only in demanding more than their right; (see Lev. vii. 32.) but in assuming what they chose, before that which belonged to God had been offered to him. See Lev. ii. 16. vii. 23. 25.

Ver. 18. *Girded with a linen ephod*] As the birth, appointment, and ministry of Samuel were extraordinary, he was therefore indulged with an extraordinary dress. Schachus conjectures, that from hence was derived the *latus clavus* among the Romans, which was a vestment

peculiar to their senators and presidents. It was brought by Tullus Hostilius from the Etruscans when he conquered them, whose ancient language agrees so much with the Hebrew, that we may easily believe they derived many things from them. See Mirotheca, cap. iii. sect. 43.

Ver. 21. *And the child Samuel grew before the Lord*] See ver. 26. and Luke, ii. 52. As he increased in stature, he increased in wisdom; as parents may be assured will always be the case with those children whom they dedicate early to the Lord, and into whose young minds they carefully instill the divine precepts of religion and truth.

Ver. 25. *If one man sin against another, the judge, &c.*] That is, if one neighbour do an injury to another, the business may be adjusted by the judge, who, interposing his authority, sets the matter right; but if one injure the judge himself, as was the present case, who can intercede in his behalf? Houbigant observes, that the word rendered *shall judge him*, would more properly and more consistently be rendered, *shall be entreated; interceded with* for the man. The words, *because the Lord would slay them*, are rendered

26 (And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the LORD, and also with men.)

27 ¶ And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house?

28 And did I chuse him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to offer upon mine altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? and did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel?

29 Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded

rendered by Dr. Waterland, *wherefore the Lord would slay them*; a better translation than the common one; which yet may very well be justified; as the Lord, when people become incorrigible, gives them up to their own hardness of heart, and its consequent destruction.

REFLECTIONS.—The characters of these families, thus contrasted, appear more conspicuous. The negligence of Eli, the high-priest, makes Elkanah's diligence more remarkable; and the piety of Samuel casts a double gloom upon the ungodliness of Eli's sons.

I. Concerning Elkanah and his family, we have,

1. Their return unto Ramah, leaving Samuel behind, with Eli's blessing upon them for the loan they had lent unto the Lord, and the effect of that blessing taking place, in five children given to Hannah in return for Samuel. *Note*; Nothing returns so surely with interest, as that which is lent unto the Lord, and devoted to his service.

2. Their regular and stated worship of God at Shiloh, and their care of their darling son, providing him with clothes during his novitiate at the tabernacle. *Note*; (1.) Though we must be in spirit always worshipping, yet regular and stated returns for prayer are carefully to be kept up. (2.) A due provision for children is a parent's duty, and should be their delight, never grudging the expense of it.

3. The progress Samuel made under Eli's care and inspection. Though surrounded with the bad examples of Eli's sons, he carefully attended to Eli's instructions, and ministered before him in any little service in which he was capable of being employed; and Eli, observing, no doubt, his extraordinary delight in the work, and reflecting on the extraordinary circumstances of his birth, took care betimes to train him up to the service of the tabernacle, and put on him a linen ephod, though not a priest, and before he was of the usual age to minister before the Lord. As he increased in stature, his understanding and gracious dispositions, like the expanding rose-bud, disclosed their sweet perfume, and attracted the regard of God and man. *Note*; (1.) Under careful and pious teachers, we may hope for the blossoms of early piety. (2.) God is pleased with the graces he bestows.

II. Concerning Eli and his house, we are told,

1. Their exceeding bad character. *They were sons of Belial.* Though born of so godly a man, and, during their youth, brought up under his prayers and instructions, yet they turned out profane and profligate. *They knew not the Lord*, paid him no regard, made their office a mere benefice, and, though priests, were atheistical per-

haps in opinions, certainly in their practice. *Note*; (1.) The best of parents have often lived to see themselves in Eli's unhappy case. Grace cannot be communicated but from God alone. (2.) It were greatly to be wished, that Eli's sons had been the last of such priests; but there are still too many of their successors, whose profession makes their immoralities and infidelity more infamous and more criminal.

2. The particular acts of their wickedness are recorded to their everlasting shame. They were *rapacious, profane, and adulterous*. In view of such abominations, it cannot be wondered that the people abhorred the offerings of the Lord where such impiety was practised, and that God with a deep brand stamped their wickedness before him, to be remembered afterwards to their eternal confusion. *Note*; (1.) A rapacious priest is accursed of God, and abhorred of men. (2.) They who make a god of their belly, only add to their impiety by the mockery of wearing Christ's livery. (3.) To abuse the credit of the sacred office, in order to succeed in the gratification of bestial appetite, is the highest step of human villainy and abandoned wickedness.

3. Their hardened resistance of their father's reproof. He heard of their ill-doings: the injured, no doubt, complained to him; but he was old, and unable therefore himself to inspect the concerns of his office; and his sons were too headstrong to be restrained by him. Yet he remonstrates with them on their evil doings, expostulates on the ill-tendency of their wickedness, in leading God's people to transgress, and warns them of the dreadful danger of it to their own souls, when, without an advocate, they should appear before God, and receive that eternal condemnation which their crimes provoked. But words signified little to them; they needed severer correction; and for Eli's sinful indulgence of them, God will visit him when he takes vengeance on them: for, having resolved to slay them, God had given them up to the blindness and hardness of their own hearts; and therefore they hearkened not to their father, but went on in their iniquities. *Note*; (1.) There is not a more hopeless character, than a disobedient child. (2.) Parents have often much reason to blame their sinful lenity and indulgence, and not only are chargeable with guilt before God for withholding the rod of correction, but are made here to smart for it by their children's undutifulness and sufferings. (3.) There is a sin unto death, for which there is no entreating: let us tremble at every approach to this unpardonable state.

III. Samuel's character closes the narrative. His piety served to remove that disgust which Eli's sons had given, and

*in my habitation*; and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people?

30 Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, I said indeed *that* thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the LORD saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.

31 Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house.

32 And thou shalt see an enemy *in my habitation*, in all *the wealth* which God shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old man in thine house for ever.

33 And the man of thine, *whom* I shall not cut off from mine altar, *shall be* to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart: and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age.

34 And this *shall be* a sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas; in one day they shall die both of them.

35 And I will raise me up a faithful priest, *that* shall do according to *that* which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever.

36 And it shall come to pass, *that* every one that is left in thine house shall come and crouch to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and shall say, Put me, I pray

and his behaviour the more conciliated the regard of God's people, as it appeared more eminent and exemplary in the midst of such bad company. *Note*; It is some comfort, when great impiety and wickedness have crept into the church of God, that some burning and shining lights continue to be raised up in it, that we may not be as Sodom, nor become like unto Gomorrah.

*Ver. 30. Wherefore the Lord God of Israel saith, I said, &c.]* The office of the high-priesthood was first settled upon Eleazar the eldest son of Aaron, and upon his posterity; for the very same promise is made to Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, Numb. xxv. 13. which is here said to be made to Eli, who was descended from Ithamar, the youngest son of Aaron. The high-priesthood was translated to him from the family of Eleazar, for some sin or other, as now it was resolved it should be translated back again, from the family of Ithamar to that of Eleazar, because of the horrid sins of the sons of Eli. We frequently read of God's conditional decrees in Scripture; see particularly Jer. xviii. 7, 9, 10. and Selden de Success. in Pontif. lib. i. cap. 2. We cannot too carefully attend to the solemn declaration at the close of this verse, which, while it highly magnifies the goodness of God to us, warns us at the same time, in the strongest manner, to be active in the performance of our duties.

*Ver. 31. I will cut off—the arm of thy father's house]* i. e. The power and authority; of which the arm in Scripture is the emblem. The Chaldee renders it, *I will cut off the strength of thy seed.*

*Ver. 32. And thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation]* The rendering in the margin of our Bibles seems most agreeable to the history; *thou shalt see the affliction of thy tabernacle.* See chap. iv. 4. 11. Calmet, Saurin, and others, suppose the meaning to be, that Eli should see a rival in the sanctuary; but in that case, the sacred writer must be understood to speak not of Eli, when he says

*thou*, but of his posterity, as Eli died so soon after; and therefore the former seems the preferable interpretation.

*Ver. 35. And I will raise me up a faithful priest]* i. e. Zadok, as it is generally supposed, who was anointed in the room of Abiathar, the last descendant of Eli in the pontificate. See 1 Kings, ii. 27. 35. *I will build him a sure house:* i. e. "I will give him a numerous posterity, and I will renew with him the promise which I made to Phinehas the son of Eleazar;" a prediction which was fully justified by the event. See Ezek. xl. 16. and Josephus Antiquit. lib. x. cap. 4. *He shall walk before mine anointed:* i. e. "Zadok and his descendants shall continually perform the office of high-priest before that king whom God shall anoint, and before his successors." Procopius Gazæus well remarks, that though, according to the history, this is meant of, and may properly be applied to Zadok, who was put into the priesthood by Solomon; yet it belongs to none in its sublimest sense, but to our Lord Jesus Christ, the anointed of the Father, and the faithful high-priest, who offered up the great sacrifice of himself for the sins of mankind.

*Ver. 36. Put me, I pray thee, &c.]* See 1 Kings, ii. 27: From a review of this useful and instructive chapter, we may draw several reflections of importance. The song of Hannah the mother of Samuel, and her public and solemn thanksgiving to God, are a new proof of her piety, and teach us to express our gratitude, and bless the Lord when he grants us any signal favour. We learn particularly in this song, that Providence overrules all things; that God confounds the proud; that he takes care of the weak and afflicted who fear him; that he protects them, and hears their prayers. This is a doctrine full of comfort and consolation to good men, supporting them in their trials, and leading them to holiness, and trust in God. The account of the horrid impiety and sacrilege of the sons of Eli should convince us, that the loose and evil life of the ministers of religion is the greatest of all scandals; and that

thee, into one of the priests' offices, that I may eat a piece of bread.

### C H A P. III.

*The child Samuel, sleeping in the house of God by night, is called three times by the Lord; who foretels to him the evils which he would shortly bring upon the house of Eli. Samuel declares to Eli all that the Lord had told him.*

[Before Christ 1102.]

**A**ND the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; *there was* no open vision.

2 And it came to pass at that time, when Eli *was* laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, *that* he could not see;

3 And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God *was*, and Samuel was laid down to *sleep*;

4 That the LORD called Samuel: and he answered, Here *am* I.

5 And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here *am*

I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down.

6 And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose, and went to Eli, and said, Here *am* I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son, lie down again.

7 Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him.

8 And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here *am* I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child.

9 Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

10 And the LORD came, and stood, and

that nothing corrupts the people more, nor more certainly exposes them to the judgments of God. The conduct of Eli demands our serious attention; instead of punishing his sons as they deserved, he only gently reproveth them; and therefore God by his prophet declared, that for this very thing his children and his posterity should be destroyed. This very remarkable example should teach parents, that indulging their children is a very great sin; that God punishes such over-tender and indulgent parents by the children themselves; and that it often occasions the ruin and destruction of families. But this indulgence is particularly sinful in persons of a public character, and especially in church-governors and magistrates, when they do not suppress vice and irregularity by opposing it with becoming steadiness and resolution to the utmost of their power. God's sharp reproof of Eli by the prophet, and the miseries which soon after befel his children and all the people, prove, that great misfortunes are owing to this indulgence; and that not only private persons, but the public likewise, are thereby exposed to the divine vengeance. See Ostervald.

### C H A P. III.

*Ver. 1. The child Samuel ministered unto the Lord*] That is, he performed in the tabernacle the services whereof he was capable, for the assistance and under the direction of Eli. Josephus supposes that he was then about twelve years old. *The word of the Lord* was precious in those days. God then seldom revealed himself in an immediate and particular manner, as it is explained in the next words; *there was no open vision*. See ver. 21. In the whole Book

of Judges we have mention but of two prophets. Judg. iv. 6. vi. 8.

*Ver. 3. And ere the lamp*] Dr. Waterland renders this verse, *and the lamp of God went not yet out, (and Samuel was sleeping) in the temple, where the ark of God was*. See Exod. xxvii. 20.

*Ver. 4. The Lord called Samuel*] The voice came, most probably, out of the *most holy place*. So the Chaldee renders it; *a voice was heard out of the tabernacle of the Lord*. Here *am* I, was a form of speech implying attention to what was said, and readiness to execute what was commanded.

*Ver. 7. Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord*] The second clause in this verse explains the first: Samuel was not yet instructed in the will of GOD as a prophet; he had not yet received any immediate revelation from him.

*Ver. 10. The Lord came, and stood, &c.*] These last words, which are the same as those used in the history of Balaam, Numb. xxii. 22, 23, 31. are employed to denote some appearance; and, therefore, both Jewish and Christian interpreters have supposed, that GOD revealed himself to Samuel under some bright and glorious symbol.

REFLECTIONS.—Justly provoked with the ill-conduct of the priests, God had withdrawn his gracious appearances from them. Darkness now reigns in the desolate sanctuary, and neither vision nor dream had for a long time been vouchsafed; but God having raised up Samuel for extraordinary services, and early prepared him, by his exemplary piety, for communion with his blessed self, begins, while he is yet a youth, to manifest himself to him in Shiloh. *Note*: Early piety is usually favoured with especial impartings of divine consolations. We have,

1. The

called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth.

11 ¶ And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle.

12 In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end.

13 For I have told him, that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.

14 And therefore I have sworn unto the

house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever.

15 ¶ And Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of the LORD. And Samuel feared to shew Eli the vision.

16 Then Eli called Samuel, and said, Samuel, my son. And he answered, Here am I.

17 And he said, What is the thing that the LORD hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide any thing from me of all the things that he said unto thee.

18 And Samuel told him every whit, and

1. The time when God appeared to him,—in the night, when Eli, sinking under age and infirmities, was retired for repose, and Samuel in some room near him, to be ready at Eli's call. *Note*; We have to bless God for the bed of repose on which we can sleep in peace, and still more if by refreshing dreams he makes that repose doubly profitable for our souls as well as bodies.

2. The manner in which he appeared. By an audible voice, calling Samuel by his name; who, either awakened with the sound, or awake before, and employed in holy meditation before the morning light, answers immediately, supposing it Eli's voice, and runs to his chamber, to inquire what he wanted. Eli assures him he did not call, and bids him lie down again. *Note*; (1.) A willing servant runs at his master's voice, happy, and therefore in haste, to serve him. (2.) They who see their servants officious to please them, ought, in return, to shew themselves tender of them, and to consult their comfort and repose.

3. Repeated calls are given, and Samuel returns to Eli, persuaded that the voice was his; for he was a child, and had not as yet been used to any such extraordinary manifestations of God's presence, nor had received any prophetic revelation from him. At first Eli sends him back to his bed; but after a second and third call, he began to reflect, and to conclude that the voice was divine; he therefore bids him lie down again, and at the next call, to answer, Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth, as attentive to the notice, and ready to obey the command. Hereupon, no sooner was he composed on his bed, than the Lord stood before him, probably in a human form, as he afterwards appeared in earnest, and called him Samuel, Samuel. Samuel, according to Eli's instructions, answers, Speak, for thy servant heareth. *Note*; (1.) We may expect some gracious manifestation from God, when our obedient ear is attentive to the Divine call, and out of his word we are inquiring, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? (2.) Such as are elder, and more experienced in the ways of God, should delight to instruct the younger who are training up in the same ways. (3.) They who are careful to observe

the good instructions they receive, will find the blessing of so doing.

*Ver. 12. When I begin, I will also make an end*] God declares to Samuel, that he will execute upon the house of Eli all that he had threatened against him by the prophet whom he had heretofore sent; that he would not delay it; nor would he discontinue it till the just measure of his chastisements was fulfilled. Eli and his sons perished first; eighty-five priests of this family fell afterwards by the sword of Doeg; then Abiathar was degraded; and thus the house of Eli was reduced to the greatest misery.

*Ver. 13. Because his sons made themselves vile, &c.*] Here we read the crime of Eli, and the sad cause of all his misfortunes. He knew the wickedness of his sons, and, content with chiding them gently, he had not resolution enough to chastise them with severity. The Hebrew is very expressive: it says, that the sons of Eli rendered themselves execrable, or accursed; or, according to Houbigant, that they caused the name of God to be blasphemed. Their intolerable conduct cried aloud for vengeance; yet their father frowned not upon them: he shewed only a slight indignation, instead of testifying a just horror of their crimes, by chastising them in an exemplary manner, and removing them from the priest's office. Unhappy those superiors, and more particularly those parents, who, by a blind indulgence, omit to chastise their inferiors and children for their crimes! They provide for themselves the most vexatious evils, and afflictive punishments.

*Ver. 16—18. Then Eli called Samuel, and said*] Either that he might not afflict Eli, or displease God, Samuel feared to tell this unhappy father what had been revealed to him. But Eli, naturally distressed and uneasy, presses him earnestly to conceal nothing from him: he adjures him by a solemn imprecation, *God do so to thee, &c.* which obliged Samuel to satisfy his desire. The manner in which Eli received this terrible denunciation does great credit to his character. He acknowledged the greatness of his fault, and humbly resigned himself to the will of God.

hid nothing from him. And he said, *It is the LORD*: let him do what seemeth him good.

19 ¶ And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.

20 And all Israel from Dan even to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel *was* established to be a prophet of the LORD.

21 And the LORD appeared again in Shiloh: for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD.

#### CHAP. IV.

*The Israelites are overcome by the Philistines, who take the ark: Eli, upon hearing the news, falls from his seat, and breaks his neck.*

[Before Christ 1095.]

**A**ND the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle, and pitched beside Eben-ezer: and the Philistines pitched in Aphek.

2 And the Philistines put themselves in array against Israel: and when they joined battle, Israel was smitten before the Philistines: and they slew of the army in the field about four thousand men.

3 ¶ And when the people were come into

the camp; the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the LORD smitten us to-day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies.

4 So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from thence the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth *between* the cherubims: and the two sons of Eli, Hophni, and Phinehas, *were* there with the ark of the covenant of God.

5 And when the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again.

6 And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, What *meaneth* the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews? And they understood that the ark of the LORD was come into the camp.

7 And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore.

8 Woe unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty Gods? these *are*

*Ver. 19, 20. The Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall, &c.]* None of the predictions of Samuel were unaccomplished; in the same manner as an arrow shot by a good archer fails not to arrive at its mark; for this is the metaphor. See Schultens's Orig. Heb. pars ii. page 143. Thus *the Lord* shewed that he *was with him*, or blessed him. Compare Gen. xxxi. 2.

*Ver. 21. By the word of the Lord] i. e. By his Son, who is called the Word of the Lord by way of eminence. See Acts, iii. 24.*

REFLECTIONS.—As Samuel increased in years, he grew more distinguished by Divine manifestations, and more esteemed by the people of God.

1. The Lord appeared to him again, by the word of the Lord, the incarnate Word, whose voice had spoken to him before; and all his predictions were verified in the accomplishment, and all his words weighty and profitable. *Note*: (1.) They who improve one gracious visit from God shall not be long without a second. (2.) God will not suffer the words of his ministers to be spilt as water on the ground, or drop as an arrow to the earth ere it hath reached the mark; but will cause his word in their mouth to be clothed with power, and to accomplish the thing whereunto he sendeth it.

2. The people knew and honoured the rising prophet; his fame spread throughout the land, and his piety made

him as distinguished as his prophesy. *Note*: Though we are not to seek our own honour, yet we should reckon it a valuable acquisition to possess the esteem and respect of good men.

#### CHAP. IV.

*Ver. 1. Now Israel went out, &c.]* Probably the Israelites were encouraged to this undertaking, by the confusion into which the Philistines must have been thrown by the slaughter of their great men which Samson made at his death. The name *Ebenezer* was not given to this place till some time after; ch. vii. 12. but it was so called at the time that the historian wrote this book.

*Ver. 3. Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us to-day]* The Israelites seem not only to have undertaken this war without consulting God, but to have vainly thought that, as being His people, they must necessarily be crowned with success; and in this vain confidence, they send for the ark of the covenant; not considering, that there could be little hope of God's assistance while they lived in notorious disobedience to his laws.

*Ver. 8. Who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty Gods?]* As no such thing had been done in all the former battles of the Israelites as bringing the ark into the camp, the Philistines, full of the ideas of local and tutelary deities, express their fear and surprize. It was, no doubt, in

the Gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness.

9 Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you: quit yourselves like men, and fight.

10 ¶ And the Philistines fought, and Israel was smitten, and they fled every man into his tent: and there was a very great slaughter; for there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen.

11. And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni, and Phinehas, were slain.

12 ¶ And there ran a man of Benjamin out of the army, and came to Shiloh the same day with his clothes rent, and with earth upon his head.

13 And when he came, lo, Eli sat upon a seat by the wayside, watching: for his heart trembled for the ark of God. And when the man came into the city, and told *it*, all the city cried out.

14 And when Eli heard the noise of the crying, he said, What *meaneth* the noise of this tumult? And the man came in hastily, and told Eli:

15 Now Eli was ninety and eight years old; and his eyes were dim, that he could not see.

16 And the man said unto Eli, I *am* he that came out of the army, and I fled to-day out of the army. And he said, What is there done, my son?

17 And the messenger answered and said, Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there

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in conformity to the ideas of the Philistines, that our translators render *elohim, gods*, in this place, though it would certainly have been rendered more properly, *this mighty God*, and *this is the God*, as in the seventh verse. It was a very common custom among the ancients to carry the most sacred symbols of their religion to war with them. As the Egyptians were not punished in the wilderness, Houbigant, following the Chaldee and Syriac, reads, *and did wonders in the wilderness*; agreeably to which the French version reads, *who smote Egypt in the wilderness, outre toutes les autres plaies, besides all their other plagues.*

REFLECTIONS.—The prophecy of Samuel concerning Eli's house was soon spread, and men waited with suspense for the fulfilment, which quickly began in this war with the Philistines, which is here recorded, and happened towards the latter end of Eli's government, about forty years after the death of Samson.

1. There was a pitched battle between the hosts of Israel and Philistia, wherein the former were worsted with the loss of four thousand men; nor need we wonder, when they seem neither to have consulted God in their war, nor to have repented of their sins.

2. On retiring to their camp, a council of war is held; wherein they seem not so much to have ascribed the stroke to God under an humbling sense of their deserts, as to express their anger for his Providence; and, instead of consulting his will, foolishly propose a contrivance of their own to secure their future victory, by bringing down the ark of God among them; as if the presence of that would ensure to them the power of him who dwelt between the cherubims over it. The resolution is no sooner taken than put in force, the ark sent for, and Eli's ungodly sons bring it down: how little blessing could be hoped from the ark in such hands. *Note*; (1.) The afflictive providences which humble the penitent, exasperate the hardened, and make them fret against the Lord. (2.) They who are most destitute of the power of godliness have the greatest

dependance on the form of it, are most zealous for the ark, the liturgy, the priesthood, and the ritual observances, and trust more in these for salvation, than in the blood, the merit, and grace of the Redeemer, working the spiritual renovation of their hearts. (3.) However good any establishment may be, whilst the ministers are graceless, the ark they bear will be an empty coffer, and no divine blessing can be expected to attend them.

3. Joy and triumph now swell the heart of every Israelite, and they shout till the earth rings with their acclamations. *Note*; They usually glory most in external privileges who have least experience of inward religion; and their shouting, like Israel's, is the prelude not of victory, but of their everlasting shame and confusion.

4. The Philistines heard the shouts of Israel, and by their spies quickly learned the cause, which filled their host with consternation. Supposing the ark was Israel's God, they express their apprehensions of his presence: they had not so shouted before, nor was the ark of God with them when they were before defeated; and reflecting upon the traditionary notices of the former wonders that God had wrought in Egypt, though they mistake the circumstances, they tremble for the consequences. However, their leaders encourage the soldiers not utterly to despond, but if the danger be great, to exert the greater courage to extricate themselves from it, reminding them of their former victories over Israel, and holding up to them the ignominy of servitude under those who had served them. *Note*; Their triumphing will be short, whose trust is formal, and whose hope is delusion. The event little corresponded with the sanguine expectations of the Israelites. They were smitten before their enemies, thirty thousand of them slain in the battle, among whom fell the wicked sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas; and, to crown the victory, that ark in which they trusted, falls into the hands of their enemies. *Note*; (1.) The wickedness of those who undertake a measure often makes a good cause suffer. (2.) The first and forest judgments of God will



hath been also a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God is taken.

18 And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off the feat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died: for he was an old man, and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years.

19 ¶ And his daughter-in-law, Phinehas' wife, was with child, *near* to be delivered: and when she heard the tidings that the ark of God was taken, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she bowed herself and travailed; for her pains came upon her.

20 And about the time of her death the women that stood by her said unto her, Fear not; for thou hast born a son. But she answered not, neither did she regard it.

21 And she named the child I-chabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father-in-law and her husband.

22 And she said, The glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken.

## C H A P. V.

*The Philistines bring the ark into the house of Dagon: Dagon is found in his temple fallen to the earth before the ark: the Philistines are smitten with emerods: they deliberate concerning the return of the ark.*

[Before Christ 1094.]

**A**ND the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it from Eben-ezer unto Ashdod.

2 When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon.

3 ¶ And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon *was* fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the LORD. And they took Dagon, and set him in his place again.

4 And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon *was* fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD; and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands *were* cut off upon the threshold; only *the stump* of Dagon was left to him.

5 Therefore neither the priests of Dagon, nor any that come into Dagon's house, tread

fall upon the heads of wicked and faithless ministers. (3.) They who go out of God's way, and act without his advice, can expect no success in their enterprises.

*Ver. 18. When he made mention of the ark of God*] Eli supported himself under his private calamities; but he no sooner heard of the loss of the ark, than his heart failed him, and his concern for religion affected him in the deepest manner; for, except that he was too indulgent a father, he appears to have been a worthy man. He judged Israel forty years, which certainly aggravated the calamity of his family. The higher and the longer he was elevated, the more terrible was his fall. The Jews observe, that on the day of his death God forsook his tabernacle in Shiloh, *having delivered his strength into captivity.* See Psalm lxxviii. 60. Mr. Saurin observes respecting Eli, that he was more unhappy than blameable, if one may judge of his misfortunes at the tribunal of flesh and blood; since his crimes proceeded less from a spirit of rebellion against the divine laws, than from a principle of weakness for a family towards which indulgence seems so excusable. But the greater our tenderness for our children, the more is it likely to excite the wrath of God when loosed from those ties which unite us to him; ties to which all others should give place, and which will ever be most pleasing to reasonable creatures, whom God permits to love him, and whom he himself deigns to honour with his love.

*Ver. 21, 22. And she named the child I-chabod, &c.]* Here, as usual, the reason of the name imposed is given: *I-chabod* signifying literally *inglorious*, or *without glory*; glory being departed; i. e. the ark of God taken. Houbigant supposes the 22d verse not to be the words of the mother of I-chabod, but those of the historian. The Arabic and some other versions omit that verse. Houbigant renders the two verses thus, ver. 21. *But she named the child I-chabod, because it was told her that the ark of God was taken.* Ver. 22. *For she said, The glory is departed from Israel, since the ark of God is taken.*

*Note;* If God depart from us, if his ordinances are removed, and the light of his countenance withheld, neither earth, nor the things of it, have any more sweetness or glory; all is under a dismal eclipse, universal darkness reigns, and the soul experiences the foretastes of the outer darkness in eternal death.

## C H A P. V.

*Ver. 1. Unto Ashdod*] See Josh. xi. 22.

*Ver. 4. Only the stump of Dagon was left to him*] In the Hebrew it is, *only Dagon remained to him*; where *Dagon*, says Houbigant, is taken for the principal part of his statue, or the trunk of his body. Kimchi says, *nothing but the form of a fish remained to him.* Thus the Lord shewed that there was no God besides him. His ark, though taken

on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod unto this day.

6 ¶ But the hand of the LORD was heavy upon them of Ashdod, and he destroyed them, and smote them with emerods, *even* Ashdod and the coast thereof.

7 And when the men of Ashdod saw that *it was* so, they said, The ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us: for his hand is sore upon us, and upon Dagon our god.

8 ¶ They sent therefore and gathered all the lords of the Philistines unto them, and said, What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel? And they answered, Let the ark of the God of Israel be carried about unto Gath. And they carried the ark of the God of Israel about *thither*.

9 And it was *so*, that, after they had carried it about, the hand of the LORD was against the city with a very great destruction:

and he smote the men of the city, both small and great, and they had emerods in their secret parts.

10 ¶ Therefore they sent the ark of God to Ekron. And it came to pass, as the ark of God came to Ekron, that the Ekronites cried out, saying, They have brought about the ark of the God of Israel to us, to slay us and our people.

11 So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go again to his own place, that it slay us not, and our people: for there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there.

12 And the men that died not were smitten with the emerods: and the cry of the city went up to heaven.

captive and carried into a strange land, threw down their idol twice; thereby demonstrating that the Israelites were not overthrown for want of any power in their God to defend them, but for the iniquity of those who worshipped him. See Bishop Patrick, and St. Chrysostom's Orat. v. adversus Jud.

REFLECTIONS.—Though Israel seem utterly to have neglected the ark of God, and neither by force nor treaty seek to recover it, yet God will not suffer the ungodly to triumph for ever. We have here,

1. The Philistines triumphing over their prisoner. With solemnity they carry it down to their principal city Ashdod, and place it in the temple of their great idol Dagon, as a trophy of the glorious victory obtained under his auspices. *Note;* (1.) The cause of God is often sunk so low, that it seems past recovery, and given up into the enemy's hand. (2.) God does then more gloriously display his power, and make it appear how vain a thing they imagine, who shout, Down with it, down with it, even to the ground.

2. Little honour does Dagon get from the vicinity of his captive. When his devotees arose to worship him, or his priests to rehearse the praises of his victory, behold the miserable idol on his face in the dust, prostrate before the ark, as if confessing his own vanity, and directing them to that God who is the only true object of worship. Thus shall all the powers of darkness, error, and corruption, fall before the bright beams of truth, and the mighty work of God's spirit on the hearts of men. Let the oppressed church be comforted, and the soul that is fainting under the power of corruption hang still upon God: their distresses shall but magnify his glory and grace in their deliverance.

3. In vain his worshippers seek to repair his disgrace, by fastening him again in his place: the next morning pre-

sents him still more despicable; his stump, the fishy tail, joined to the human body, only remained; his head and hands cut off lay on the threshold, presenting him a headless monster, emblem of their folly who worshipped him; and handleless, to intimate the impotence of his arm to save himself or them. *Note;* (1.) The papist who worships the images of saints that never lived, is more culpable and abominable, in the eyes of God, than the Philistines who worshipped monsters that never existed. (2.) All the devices of wicked men and devils against the church of God shall, in the issue, prove as impotent as this attempt to fasten Dagon in his place again.

4. The folly of worshipping such a wretched god, who could not help himself, one should think, must now have appeared: yet, strange to tell! they reverence the very place of his disgrace, and honour that threshold where his mutilated limbs were laid. *Note;* Where superstition reigns, nothing is so absurd or impious but it may be consecrated into an act of religion, as we see in the church of Rome, even to the paying of respect unto dead men's bones, and the very broken pieces of their wretched images.

*Ver. 6. Smote them with emerods]* See Deut. xxviii. 27. and compare ver. 9. At the end of this verse the LXX and Vulgate add, that "a great number of mice started up out of the earth, and over-running the fields, made a great waste;" which words Houbigant admits into his text; though they seem likely to have been a mere gloss in the Margin taken from the 4th and 5th verses of the next chapter.

*Ver. 12. And the men that died not, &c.]* The doctrine of intercommunity led the heathens into the custom of changing one tutelary deity for another; but the God of the Israelites had an absolute abhorrence of all community  
or

## C H A P. VI.

*The Philistines consult how to send back the ark: they lay it upon a new cart, and send it to Beth-shemesh. Fifty thousand of the men of Beth-shemesh are smitten by the Lord.*

[Before Christ 1094.]

**A**ND the ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines seven months.

2 And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying, What shall we do to the ark of the LORD? tell us wherewith we shall send it to his place.

3 And they said, If ye send away the ark

of the God of Israel, send it not empty; but in any wise return him a trespass-offering: then ye shall be healed; and it shall be known to you why his hand is not removed from you.

4 Then said they, What shall be the trespass-offering which we shall return to him? They answered, Five golden emerods, and five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines: for one plague was on you all, and on your lords.

5 Wherefore ye shall make images of your emerods, and images of your mice that mar

or alliance with the gods of the Gentiles: and the present instance of his power has set this opinion beyond all contradiction. When the Philistines had taken the ark from the Israelites in battle, and carried it as another *palladium* to Ashdod, they placed it in the temple of their god Dagon, which was in consequence of their doctrine of intercommunity; but their deity passed two such bad nights with his new guest, that on the second morning he was found pared away to his *stump*; and this disaster was followed by a desolating pestilence. The people of Ashdod, who hitherto had intended to keep the ark as one of their *idol protectors*, now declared that it *should not abide with them, for that the hand of the God of Israel was sore upon them, and upon Dagon their God*. They sent it therefore to Gath, another of their cities, and there having carried it about in a religious procession, it made the same havoc among them. It was then removed a third time, with an intent to send it to Ekron; but the men of that city, terrified by the two preceding calamities, refused to receive it, saying, *they had brought the ark of the God of Israel to lay them and their people*. At length the Philistines were brought by sad experience to understand, that it was the best course to send it back to its owners; which they did with great honour, with gifts and trespass-offerings to appease the offended divinity. And from this time we hear no more of any attempts of the Gentile nations to join the Jewish worship to their own; but they considered the God of Israel as a tutelary deity absolutely *unsociable*, who would have nothing to do with any but that people, or with such particular people as would worship him alone; and therefore, in this respect, different from all the other tutelary gods, each of which was willing to live in community with all the rest. Div. Leg. vol. iv. p. 54.

## C H A P. VI.

*Ver. 5. Ye shall make images of your emerods, and images of your mice that mar the land*] “It was an ancient rite,” says Mr. Locke, “that in case a city or country was infected with any plague of diseases or noxious creatures, the talismans were consulted, and desired to erect an image of the plague, under a certain influence of celestial configuration; and this was the cause why the Phi-

“listine astrologers gave counsel that golden images should, “be made of the hemoroides, and the mice that marred the “land, to give glory to the God of Israel. These astrologers, “who knew the history of the Israelites, see ver. 6. had “perceived that this God had been pleased with the brazen “serpent which *Moses* the *talisman* [so they would ac- “count him] set upon a pole in the wilderness; Numb. “xxi. 8.; and I need not hesitate to affirm, that this “brazen serpent against the fiery serpents, was the first “occasion, I say not *given* but *taken*, of all these talif- “manical practices, says the learned Gregory.” Tavernier tells us, that something similar to what is related in the text is still practised among the Indians: for when a pilgrim there goes to a pagod for the cure of any disease, he brings the figure of the member affected, made either of gold, silver, or copper, according to his quality, which he offers to his god, and then falls a singing, as all others do after they have offered. See Travels, p. 92. It was also a custom among the ancient heathens, to consecrate to their gods the monuments of their deliverances.

REFLECTIONS.—At the Ekronites’ importunate request, we have here,

1. A new council assembled. The ark of God had been with them now seven months, and long months they seemed, when every day presented new scenes of sorrow. The princes consult the priests and diviners, and their unanimous voice is to send it back without delay. *Note*; (1.) They who keep back their sins only prolong their sorrows. (2.) The heathen princes revered and consulted the priests of Dagon. Shall not they condemn the present irreligious contempt of the ministers of God?

2. How it must be sent, is the next consideration; and the priests and diviners direct the manner, and urge instant compliance. (1.) They admonish them of the danger of delay, from the history of Pharaoh and the Egyptians, with which they appear to be acquainted. Experience of what Israel’s God had done, should warn them not to harden their hearts. *Note*, It is far better to be warned by others’ experience than by our own. (2.) They prescribe a trespass-offering, that it may not return empty, but with an acknowledgment of their humiliation according to the nature of their plagues, five golden images

the land; and ye shall give glory unto the God of Israel: peradventure he will lighten his hand from off you, and from off your gods, and from off your land.

6 Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? when he had wrought wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go, and they departed?

7 Now therefore make a new cart, and take two milch-kine, on which there hath come no yoke, and tie the kine to the cart, and bring their calves home from them:

8 And take the ark of the LORD, and lay it upon the cart; and put the jewels of gold,

which ye return him for a trespass-offering, in a coffer by the side thereof; and send it away, that it may go.

9 And see, if it goeth up by the way of his own coast to Beth-shemesh, then he hath done us this great evil: but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that smote us; it was a chance that happened to us.

10 ¶ And the men did so; and took two milch-kine, and tied them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home:

11 And they laid the ark of the LORD upon the cart, and the coffer with the mice of gold and the images of their emerods.

12 And the kine took the straight-way to

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images of the hemorrhoids, and five golden mice, according to the number of their princes; for it seems this contemptible animal made as great havock in their fields, as the vile disease did on their persons. They seem to have learnt the necessity of a satisfaction to offended justice, though they miserably mistook the way. (3.) In this case, they hoped the disease would be removed, or alleviated; and this would be a proof that their detention of the ark was the cause of it. *Note;* When we have repented of our sin, we may hope for the removal of our sorrow. (4.) To put the case beyond all doubt, whether their plagues were of God, they prescribe a cart to carry it, drawn by two milch-kine, whose calves being detained at home, they would naturally return thither, and who, being without a driver, would hardly be supposed of themselves to take the road of Beth-shemesh, the nearest city of Israel; yet on this they would rest the evidence, from whose hands their plagues came; and if the beasts went not the direct road, which were a miracle itself if they did, they would conclude their disease to be a mere chance, and not of God. *Note;* (1.) Wicked men would fain shift off their convictions, and ascribe their sufferings to any cause rather than the hand of God. (2.) The very means men take to confirm themselves in infidelity, through God's infinite grace, sometimes turn out to their more unanswerable conviction of the truth.

*Ver. 11. They laid the ark of the Lord upon the cart]* The excess of their wickedness, says a sensible writer, provoked the Almighty to deliver the Israelites into the hands of the Philistines, who not only overthrew them, but, to complete their misfortune, took from them the ark of God. Now this, in appearance, was a fatal stroke to the cause of religion; for the Israelites, we may conclude, would soon abandon the worship and service of God, when departed from them; nor could the Philistines have any veneration for him, whom they now looked upon in the contemptible light of a vanquished captive to their own tutelary deity. In this state of things, may we not expect that God would interpose in some extraordinary manner, as well to vindicate his own authority, as to recover the

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ark to his despairing people? It is natural to expect it; nor are we left to expect it in vain; for when the Philistines had carried away the ark in triumph, and placed it by Dagon as a monument of his victory, behold, the next morning they found their God prostrate before it; an evident token of his subjection and inferiority; but evident as it was, his deluded votaries were yet blind to it: the succeeding day, however, brought them clearer evidence; for when they saw him again in the same posture of humiliation, dismembered of his head and hands, they could no longer doubt that his fall was owing to that Being whom he had neither policy nor power to withstand. And now, perhaps, they thought it advisable to detain the ark as a means of drawing over this superior deity. But God soon convinced them that he chose not to reside amongst them, for he smote them with plagues till the ark was dismissed, and shewed the concern he had for its return, by restraining the natural affections, and directing the steps of those beasts which were harnessed to the carriage; causing them in a miraculous manner to take a particular road, and to stop at a particular place; at *Bethshemesh*, which was a city of the priests. See Dr. Owen on Scripture Miracles.

**REFLECTIONS.**—In haste to get rid of the ark, they immediately prepare the offering of golden hemorrhoids and mice, put them in a little coffer, and, with the ark, send them away on the new cart, drawn by two milch-kine.

1. No sooner were they yoked in, than, wonderful to behold! though unaccustomed to draw without a driver, the way quite strange to them, and the strong attractive of their calves behind them, lowing with parental instinct to leave them, yet without the least mistake or reluctance, they pursue the straight road to Beth-shemesh, whilst the lords of the Philistines, who followed them, were fully convinced from whose hands their plagues came.

2. Little thought the men of Beth-shemesh what an invaluable present was sent them. They were reaping when the ark arrived; and, with a transport of wonder, laid down their hooks to run to welcome it. *Note;* (1.) Though industry is highly commendable, it becomes sinful selfish-

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the way of Beth-shemesh, and went along the highway, lowing as they went, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left; and the lords of the Philistines went after them unto the border of Beth-shemesh.

13 And they of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat-harvest in the valley: and they lifted up their eyes, and saw the ark, and rejoiced to see it.

14 And the cart came into the field of Joshua, a Beth-shemite, and stood there, where there was a great stone: and they clave the wood of the cart, and offered the kine a burnt-offering unto the LORD.

15 And the Levites took down the ark of the LORD, and the coffer that was with it, wherein the jewels of gold were, and put them on the great stone: and the men of Beth-shemesh offered burnt-offerings and sacrificed sacrifices the same day unto the LORD.

16 And when the five lords of the Philistines had seen it, they returned to Ekron the same day.

17 And these are the golden emerods which the Philistines returned for a trespass-offering

unto the LORD; for Ashdod one, for Gaza one, for Askelon one, for Gath one, for Ekron one;

18 And the golden mice, according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five lords, both of fenced cities, and of country villages, even unto the great stone of Abel, whereon they set down the ark of the LORD: which stone remaineth unto this day in the field of Joshua, the Beth-shemite.

19 ¶ And he smote the men of Beth-shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the LORD, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men: and the people lamented, because the LORD had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter.

20 And the men of Beth-shemesh said, Who is able to stand before this holy LORD God? and to whom shall he go up from us?

21 ¶ And they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjath-jearim, saying, The Philistines have brought again the ark of the LORD; come ye down, and fetch it up to you.

ness, when it makes us neglect the most needful work of prayer and praise to God. (2.) The return of God's presence, and the revival of his pure worship, is matter of unspeakable delight to every faithful soul.

3. They immediately remove the ark and coffer with the jewels of gold, and place them on a great stone, in the field of Joshua, near which the kine had stopped, as at their journey's end; the Levites (among whom might be priests also), to whom this city belonged, take it down; and as the case was so extraordinary, they think themselves authorized to offer sacrifices before the ark, though out of the instituted way. The cart serves for fuel, and the kine which drew it, though females, are offered up for a burnt-offering: besides which, they add other sacrifices, in token of their thankfulness for the mercy. Note, If, in extraordinary cases, a man moved with zeal for God's glory steps out of the instituted way of worship, we ought not to be severe censurers of the irregularity.

4. The stone whereon the ark rested, with the coffer containing the mice and emerods, to which every city under each of the five lords seems to have contributed, long remained a memorial of Philistia's shame, and of the glory of Israel's God.

Ver. 19. And he smote the men of Beth-shemesh] The people of Beth-shemesh could not but know that God had forbidden, on pain of death, not only the common people, but even the Levites, to look into the ark. But their

curiosity caused them to forget their duty, and they were accordingly punished for it. This history, as Bochart remarks, has given rise to many stories among the heathens. See his Canaan, lib. i. cap. 18. Dr. Waterland renders the next clause, he smote of the people fifty thousand, &c.: thus, he smote of the people threescore and ten men out of fifty thousand: which, says he, is a juster rendering of the Hebrew, and is well defended by Le Clerc upon the place. Bochart had before led the way towards correcting the common translations; rendering the words thus: seventy men; viz. fifty out of a thousand men, which was a much better rendering than the common translations; and his reasonings upon the text afforded great light to all that came after. Le Clerc's will suit as well with the letter of the Hebrew, and appears more natural and less perplexed. Houbigant understands the passage in its rigour, and translates thus; but the Lord smote in Beth-shemesh seventy men, because they had looked into the ark of the Lord; and of the people [who he supposed had come from the neighbouring countries to see the ark] fifty thousand men; so that the lamentation was great, &c. One of this great critic's reasons for supposing that more than seventy were slain is, that this is called a great slaughter: but surely it might well cause much lamentation, and might with propriety be called a great slaughter, when so many as seventy of the people perished at once by a stroke from heaven for an offence of this nature; and as the Hebrew will bear the interpretation given by Dr. Waterland and Le Clerc, one would.

## C H A P. VII.

*The ark is brought to Kirjath-jearim: by Samuel's means, the Israelites repent solemnly at Mizpeh: Samuel prays unto the Lord, and the Philistines are discomfited: he erects a stone in memory of the victory.*

[Before Christ 1074.]

**A**ND the men of Kirjath-jearim came, and fetched up the ark of the LORD, and brought it into the house of Abinadab in the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the LORD.

2 And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjath-jearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD.

3 ¶ And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, *then* put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.

4 Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the LORD only.

5 And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to

Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the LORD.

6 And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured *it* out before the LORD, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the LORD. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh.

7 ¶ And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard *it*, they were afraid of the Philistines.

8 And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the LORD our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines.

9 ¶ And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered *it* for a burnt-offering wholly unto the LORD: and Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel; and the LORD heard him.

10 And as Samuel was offering up the burnt-offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the

would certainly rather wish to understand it in this light, than in that wherein we see it in the common translation. We just observe, that Josephus mentions only *seventy* Bethshemites as punished on this occasion. See his *Antiq.* book vi. cap. 2. and Kennicott's *Dissert.* vol. i. p. 532.

## C H A P. VII.

*Ver. 2. That the time was long—twenty years*] Houbigant renders this verse much more intelligibly: *but after many days had passed from the time that the ark abode in Kirjath-jearim, and when the twentieth year was passed, the whole house of Israel sought after the Lord with tears.* Samuel was now grown up, and by his instrumentality the Israelites, after this period of rebellion against their God, were recovered to a right sense of themselves and their duty.

*Ver. 3. Put away the strange gods, and Ashtaroth*] *Put away the strange gods, Baalim and Ashtaroth.* Houb.

*Ver. 6. They gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out*] The reason why they *drew water and poured it out*, says Houbigant, is expressed in the next words; for they *fasted that day.* So David poured on the ground the water which some of his soldiers brought him at the hazard of their lives through the midst of the enemy; for this was a part of the ceremonial of fasting. The Chaldee, however, renders the words, *they poured out their souls in penitence, like waters before the Lord;* and Grotius expressly asserts, that the waters poured out signify *tears.*

There are a variety of other conjectures on this passage. L'Empereur refers the words to those in *Isai. xii. 3.* compared with *John, vii. 37, 38;* supposing that the water was poured out in token of joy, after they had fasted and confessed their sins, (for he translates the words *after they had fasted on that day,*) as they always did on the feast of tabernacles: libations of water were anciently very common. We learn from Porphyry, that at the beginning libations were usually made with *water;* honey was afterwards employed, and then wine. See Porphyry de *Abstinent.* lib. ii. p. 156. We have proofs of this in *Homér* too, *Od. lib. xiv. ver. 350.* and *Virg. Æn. iv. ver. 512.* Though the law ordains nothing respecting libations of water, it nowhere forbids them, especially upon extraordinary occasions. See *Calmet* on the place.

*Ver. 10. The Lord thundered with a great thunder*] Baldwin the Second, with other princes, marching to Damascus, fully resolved to take it by surrender or storm, met with a check in foraging, which enraged the army so much, that they immediately flew to their arms to chastise the affront; when suddenly God, against whose will men can do nothing, sent such violent showers, such darkness in the sky, such difficulty in the roads by means of the vast quantities of water, that scarcely any one could hope for life; which darkness of the air, and thickness of the clouds, the irregular blowing of the winds, the thunders, and continual lightnings, signified before hand. But as the human mind

Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel.

11 And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until *they came* under Beth-car.

12 Then Samuel took a stone, and set *it* between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Eben-ezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us.

13 ¶ So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel:

and the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.

14 And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even unto Gath; and the coasts thereof did Israel deliver out of the hands of the Philistines. And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.

15 ¶ And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.

16 And he went from year to year in cir-

is ignorant of futurity, they did not attend to the divine patience calling to them to refrain, but strove to proceed in an impossible attempt. The intemperateness of the weather, however, obliged them to desist; and made those who had been at first such a terror to their enemies that they thought they had no means of escaping, look upon it as a great thing to be able to get back again. This account, says the author of the *Observations*, I cite as no improper comment on the present passage. See *Observations*, p. 352.

REFLECTIONS.—Satan will begin to roar when sinners begin to pray.

1. No sooner was Israel assembled at Mizpeh to repent, than the Philistines took the alarm, and assembled to crush them, suspecting (as the suspicious are very ready to do) that their designs were evil, and construing their repentance towards God into rebellion against them. *Note*; The first struggles for glory are often the hardest.

2. The news terrifies the people; broken with their long servitude, though they had never less reason to fear than when thus found on their knees before God, they cry to Samuel to help them with his prayers, more dependent now on the arm of God for their safety than on the arm of flesh. *Note*; Weak as we are to encounter the numerous hosts of our spiritual enemies, we have a prevailing advocate with the Father; and if he pray for us, while we trust in him it is impossible that we should fail.

3. Samuel, deeply interested in Israel's safety, *is as ready to pray as they to desire him*. A sucking lamb he offers for a burnt-offering, and with the blood of atonement to plead, in faith and prayer approaches the throne of grace. *Note*; (1.) Jesus Christ is the slain lamb, offered up to God for us sinners. (2.) Through the efficacy of his sacrifice, we may come before God; assured that whatsoever we ask, believing, we shall receive.

4. God hears, and answers his request. The Philistines drew near while the sacrifice was offering; and never was an attack so ill-timed for them, so critical for Israel. Armed with hot thunder bolts, in wrath the God of Israel arose; and who can stand before the blasting breath of his displeasure? The flashing lightnings glare around, the terrible thunders roll above them, terror and amaze seize their affrighted hosts, they turn, they fly; while the men of Israel, shouting, pursue their defenceless foes, and smite them down like sheep appointed for the slaughter. *Note*; (1.) When God arises his enemies must be scattered.

(2.) Glorious and instant are the answers that God often gives to the prayer of faith.

5. Samuel commemorates the victory, by setting up a great stone on the spot, and calling it Ebenezer, *The Stone of help*. And it is remarkable, that this was the very place where Israel, chap. iv. 1. were defeated by the Philistines; in which passage this name is given it by anticipation. *Note*; (1.) Answers of prayer deserve memorials of gratitude. (2.) Every christian may, by experience, set up his Ebenezer, and, whilst he acknowledges past help, confidently depend on the continuance of the same protection.

*Ver. 11. Under Beth-car*] *Beth-shan*, says Houbigant, after the Syriac and Arabic.

*Ver. 14. There was peace between Israel and the Amorites*]. The misfortunes which beset the Philistines influenced the conduct of all the other Canaanites. The Amorites, who, on account of their superiority, sometimes gave name to all the rest, continued in a respectful peace, without attempting any thing to disturb the tranquillity which God gave to his people.

*Ver. 15, &c. And Samuel judged Israel*] “According to Le Clerc,” says Mr. Locke, “these words could not have been written by Samuel. But surely the objection is very weak; for all that the text says comes only to this, that Samuel discharged his office with the greatest exactness, and that he employed himself in it every day of his life. What is there in this which could lead one to think that he did not write these words, and thus do justice to his own fidelity? And even supposing that the hand of Esdras, or of any other person, might have inserted these verses in the text, would it follow from thence, that the body of the work was not from the pen of Samuel, as Hobbes and his followers would infer?”

REFLECTIONS.—Great were the blessings which followed this victory under Samuel's wife and spirited administration.

1. The Philistines were so broken and intimidated, that they gave Israel no more disturbance while Samuel presided, but quitted peaceably to them all the cities which they had taken between Ekron and Gaza. And the Amorites, now struck with terror, were glad to be left quiet; so that peace was perfectly restored within their borders. *Note*; (1.) When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh his enemies to be at peace with him. (2.) Prayer and penitence can do more for a nation than the sword.

cuit to Beth-el, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places.

17 And his return *was* to Ramah; for there *was* his house; and there he judged Israel; and there he built an altar unto the LORD.

CHAP. VIII.

*Samuel, grown old, makes his sons judges; who walking not in their father's ways, the people desire Samuel to set a king over them: Samuel, by the command of the Lord, hearkens to their voice, and informs them what will be the manner of their king.*

[Before Christ 1067.]

**A**N D it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel.

2 Now the name of his first-born was Joel; and the name of his second, Abiah: *they were* judges in Beer-sheba.

3 And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.

4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah,

5 And said unto him, Behold, thou art old,

and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.

6 ¶ But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD.

7 And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

8 According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee.

9 Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.

10 ¶ And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king.

11 And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint *them* for himself, for his chariots, and *to be* his horsemen; and *some* shall run before his chariots.

2. The internal peace of the people was secured to them by the regular administration of justice. Samuel went his yearly circuit to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpeh, where he heard and determined the causes which were brought before him; and at his residence in Ramah, judged Israel, who brought their complaints thither, and abode by his decisions; and perhaps came thither to worship and offer sacrifices, to hear his preaching, and partake of his prayers: for Samuel had built an altar at Ramah, as no other place was yet fixed for stated offerings to God. As a prophet raised up of God, he might be authorized to offer his own and the people's sacrifices there, till the ark and tabernacle-worship should be again set up. *Note;* (1.) The administration of impartial justice is among the greatest blessings that any land can enjoy. (2.) They will be upright in their decisions among men, who, like Samuel, keep God always before them, and walk in his fear and worship. An irreligious judge cannot be truly impartial.

CHAP. VIII.

*Ver. 3. And his sons walked not in his ways]* Eli was punished for the wickedness of his sons, but Samuel was not; because it does not appear that the crimes of Samuel's sons were in any respect so flagrant as those of the sons of Eli, nor does it appear that Samuel knew of their crimes. They lived at a great distance from him, and might receive the bribes secretly: nor, further, does it appear, that he was wanting in a proper chastisement of

them when he did know of their enormities; at least nothing of this kind is recorded in history.

*Ver. 7. They have rejected me, &c.]* Samuel had now, by a wise and painful direction of affairs, restored the purity of religion, and rescued the nation from the power of the Philistines, and their other hostile neighbours, against whom they were utterly unable to make head when he entered upon the administration. At this very time, the people, debauched as usual by power and prosperity, took the pretence of the corrupt conduct of the prophet's two sons, to go in a tumultuous manner and demand a king: but the secret spring of their rebellion was the ambition of their leaders, who could live no longer without the splendor of a regal court and household. *Give me,* say they, in Hosea, xiii. 10. *a king and princes,* where every one of them might shine a distinguished officer of state. They could get nothing when their affairs led them to their judges' poor residence, in the *schools of the prophets,* but the *GIFT* of the *Holy Spirit;* which a courtier, I suppose, would not prize even at the rate at which Simon Magus held it, of a paltry piece of money. This it was, and this only, that made their demand criminal; for the choosing regal rather than aristocratic viceroys, was a thing plainly indulged to them by the law of Moses. Deut. xvii. 14, 15. *Div. Leg.* vol. iv. p. 80.

*Ver. 11. This will be the manner of the king]* They had desired such a king to judge or rule over them as all the nations had. Now it is very well known, that all the eastern



12 And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and *will set them* to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots.

13 And he will take your daughters *to be* confectionaries, and *to be* cooks, and *to be* bakers.

14 And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your olive-yards, *even the best of them*, and give *them* to his servants.

15 And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants.

16 And he will take your men-servants, and

your maid-servants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put *them* to his work.

17 He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants.

18 And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day.

19 ¶ Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us;

20 That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us; and go out before us, and fight our battles.

21 And Samuel heard all the words of the

eastern nations were under despotic government. It is, therefore, such a kind of government which Samuel sets forth in the following verses, in order to dissuade them from their purpose. This is very evident from the 18th verse particularly. The people of Israel, says Baron Puffendorff, had hitherto lived under governors raised up by God, who had exacted no tribute of them, nor put them to any charge; but, little content with this form of government, they desire to have a king like other nations, who should live in magnificence and pomp, keep armies, and be ready to resist any invasion. Samuel informs them what it was that they desired, that when they understood it they might consider whether they would persist in their choice. If they would have a king splendidly attended, he tells them, that he *would take their sons for his chariots, &c.* If they would have him keep up constant forces, then he would *appoint* them for colonels and *captains*, and employ those in his wars who were accustomed to follow their family business: and since, after the manner of other kings, he must keep a stately court, they must be content that their daughters should serve in several offices, which the king would think below the dignity of his wives and daughters; ver. 13. Many ministers also, in several departments both of war and peace, must have salaries to support them, which must be paid out of their *fields and vineyards*; ver. 14. In one word, that, to sustain his dignity, their king would exact the 10th of all they possessed, and be maintained in a royal manner out of their estates. See Puffendorff de Rebus Gestis Philippi.

Ver. 20. *That we may be like all other nations*] What unaccountable blindness was it in the Israelites, not to perceive that their happiness principally consisted in their not being like other nations, but under the immediate government of that Almighty King who had chosen them for his own peculiar people and possession!

REFLECTIONS.—We have here a motion made for the alteration of the government, and the introduction of monarchy among the Jewish people.

1. Taking occasion from the ill conduct of Samuel's sons, some intriguing spirits excite the people in general to a change of government; and for this purpose they assemble

in a body at Ramah, with a remonstrance of their grievance, and a petition for redress in the appointment of a king over them, like the nations around them, that he might keep a *court*, and appear in *state* and dignity among them: a request not only highly sinful against God, but most ungrateful to Samuel, whose own administration had been so upright, and who deserved no blame for his sons' ill conduct, having given them better advice, and being ready to supersede their commissions on the people's just complaints. *Note*: It is not unusual for those to meet with ungrateful returns, and to be neglected when they are old, who have spent their lives in the service of the public.

2. Samuel deeply resents the proposal, not because of their ill usage of himself, but sensible of their great sin against God; and therefore, ere he returns an answer, he flies to God for direction, and probably intercedes with him for their pardon, fearing lest wrath should go forth against them. *Note*: (1.) When we are in difficulties, it is a great relief to have a God of wisdom and love to fly to. (2.) They who use us ungratefully must have a remembrance in our prayer, not only to engage God to pardon them, but ourselves to forgive and love them.

3. God answers his prayer, and gives him directions what to reply to the people. He must not be grieved at the insult offered him, since it was more directly aimed against God himself. He was their king, and is rejected by them; nor was their ingratitude to their governors a new thing: ever since they came from Ægypt they had acted thus, even to Moses and Aaron; nor was it to be wondered that they sought a new king, when they had so often sought new gods: let them, therefore, have their request; but it shall be a king in anger, and of this Samuel must solemnly warn them. *Note*: (1.) When we come to God in prayer, he will answer us for our direction and comfort. (2.) We need not expect kind returns from those who have shewn their ingratitude to others before us.

4. Samuel makes a faithful report of the Divine message; admonishing them of God's displeasure at their request, and the consequences that would follow from the establishment of that kingly government upon which their minds were so bent. They looked only to the pomp, but considered not that they must bear the burden. Under

people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the LORD.

22 And the LORD said to Samuel, Harken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city.

C H A P. IX.

*Saul is sent by his father to seek the asses which were lost: Samuel meets Saul, invites him to a feast with him, and assures him that the asses were found: and because he had been commanded by God to anoint Saul king, he orders the servant to pass on before that he might declare God's commands to him alone.*

[Before Christ 1067.]

**N**OW there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power.

2 And he had a son, whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and

his despotic sway, their sons would be enslaved, listed in his guards as soldiers, or as footmen attendant on his chariots, or as servants employed to till and reap his ground. His table, covered with luxury, would require their daughters' laborious service to prepare for it provisions and delicacies: to gratify his favourites, or reward his officers, the instruments of his oppression, the best of their possessions would be plundered; whilst, rivalling the tabernacle of God, another tenth of their increase must be paid for support of his grandeur. When these burdens were felt they would complain, but to no purpose: God would justly reject their petitions, and leave them to the misery they had courted. *Note;* (1.) The gratification of our inordinate desires brings a plague along with it. (2.) They who reject God are justly rejected by him.

5. Far from desisting on this representation, they obstinately persevere in their demands, and will have a king, discrediting Samuel's report, perhaps suspecting him of design. They will be like the nations, though slaves; and have a king to go before them to battle, though taught by late experience, how much better it was to have God to fight for them than to fight for themselves. *Note;* (1.) No reproofs will restrain the obstinate sinner. (2.) The kindest advice is sometimes liable to be misrepresented as selfish and designing.

6. Samuel, at God's command, consents to their request. Having retired, to wait upon God and know his final resolution, he is commanded to assure them that they shall have a king; and he bids them in the mean time return, and expect shortly to hear the nomination of the person that God would choose to reign in Israel.

upward *be was* higher than any of the people.

3 And the asses of Kish, Saul's father, were lost. And Kish said to Saul his son, Take now one of the servants with thee, and arise, go seek the asses.

4 And he passed through mount Ephraim, and passed through the land of Shalisha, but they found *them* not: then they passed through the land of Shalim, and *there they were* not: and he passed through the land of the Benjamites, but they found *them* not.

5 And when they were come to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant that *was* with him, Come, and let us return; left my father leave *caring* for the asses, and take thought for us.

6 And he said unto him, Behold now, *there is* in this city a man of God, and *he is* an honourable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass: now let us go thither; peradventure he can shew us our way that we should go.

7 Then said Saul to his servant, But, behold, *if* we go, what shall we bring the man? for

C H A P. IX.

*Ver. 1. A mighty man of power]* *A strong man.* Houb. This seems to be the true interpretation, as Saul's family was not considerable for its wealth or dignity. See ver. 21. and chap. x. 27.

*Ver. 2. A choice young man, and a goodly]* Almost all ancient writers supply us with proofs of the singular regard which, in early days, was had to appearance and person in the choice of monarchs. See Doughty's *Annal. Sacr. Excurf. 76.*

*Ver. 3. Kish said to Saul his son, Take now one of the servants with thee]* This commision was but mean, if we are to judge of it by our manners; but in ancient times every thing which pertained to rural life was honourable. We see in Homer, gods, heroes, and princes keeping flocks: such was the occupation of the patriarchs. The Scripture speaks of a prince descended from Esau, who kept the asses of his father. Gen. xxxvi. 24. *Asses* were a considerable part of their substance in Judæa, and persons of the first distinction there commonly rode upon them till the time of Solomon. See Judg. x. 4.

*Ver. 5. When they were come to the land of Zuph]* See chap. i. 1. *Zuph* was a territory in the tribe of Ephraim, where some of Samuel's ancestors had lived; and *Ramah*, where Samuel now dwelt, must have been in it, as we collect from the next verse.

*Ver. 7. But, behold, if we go, what shall we bring the man?]* Such as are prejudiced against the sacred history, and unacquainted with eastern customs, may be ready, from the donations to the prophets, to imagine that they were a mercenary set of people, and rudely to rank them with cunning

the bread is spent in our vessels, and *there is* not a present to bring to the man of God: what have we?

8 And the servant answered Saul again, and said, Behold, I have here at hand the fourth part of a shekel of silver: *that* will I give to the man of God, to tell us our way.

9 (Before-time in Israel, when a man went to enquire of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the seer: for *he that is* now called a Prophet was before-time called a Seer.)

10 Then said Saul to his servant, Well said; come, let us go. So they went unto the city where the man of God *was*.

11 ¶ And as they went up the hill to the city, they found young maidens going out to draw water, and said unto them, Is the seer here?

12 And they answered them, and said, He is; behold, *he is* before you: make haste now, for he came to-day to the city; for *there is* a sacrifice of the people to-day in the high place.

13 As soon as ye be come into the city, ye shall straightway find him, before he go up to the high place to eat: for the people will not eat until he come, because he doth bless the sacrifice; and afterwards they eat that be bidden. Now therefore get you up; for about this time ye shall find him.

14 And they went up into the city: and when they were come into the city, behold, Samuel came out against them, for to go up to the high place.

15 ¶ Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying,

cunning men and fortune-tellers, who will not from principles of benevolence reveal those secrets, or foretell those future events, of the perfect knowledge of which they are supposed to be possessed, without demanding of the anxious inquirer a large reward. This, however, will make impressions on none but those who know not the Oriental usages, which Maundrell long since applied with such clearness and force to the present passage, that he has sufficiently satisfied my mind upon this point. I shall first give Maundrell's words, and then add a few remarks of my own. "Thursday, March 11. This day we all dined " at Consul Hastings' house, and after dinner went to wait " upon Ostan, the bassa of Tripoli, having first sent our " present, as the manner is among the Turks, to procure " a propitious reception. It is counted uncivil to visit in " this country without an offering in hand. All great " men expect it as a kind of tribute due to their character " and authority, and look upon themselves as affronted, " and even defrauded, when this compliment is omitted. " Even in familiar visits amongst inferior people, you shall " seldom have them come without bringing a flower, or " an orange, or some other such token of their respect to " the person visited; the Turks in this point keeping up " to the ancient Oriental custom, hinted 1 Sam. ix. 7. " *If we go (says Saul), what shall we bring the man of God? " there is not a present, &c.* which words are unquestioned " to be understood in conformity to this eastern custom, " as relating to a token of respect, and not a price of " Divination." See Journey from Aleppo, p. 26. Maundrell does not tell us what the present was which they made Ostan. It will be more entirely satisfying then to the mind to observe, that in the East they not only universally send before them a present, or carry one with them, especially when they visit superiors, either civil or ecclesiastical; but that this present is frequently a *piece of money*, and that of no very great value. So Bishop Pococke tells us, that he presented an Arab sheik of an illustrious descent, on

whom he waited, and who attended him to the ancient Hierapolis, with a *piece of money* which he was told he expected; and that in Ægypt an aga being dissatisfied with the present he made him, he sent for the bishop's servant, and told him, that he ought to have given him a piece of cloth; and if he had none, *two sequins*, worth about a guinea, must be brought to him, otherwise he should see him no more: with which demand he complied. In the one case a piece of money was *expected*, in the other *two sequins demanded*. A trifling present of money to a person of distinction among us would be an affront: it is not so; it seems, in the East. Agreeably to these accounts of Dr. Pococke, we are told in the Travels of Egmont and Heyman, that the well of Joseph in the castle of Cairo was not to be seen without leave from the commandant; which having obtained, they in return *presented* him with a *sequin*. See *Observations*, p. 233.

Ver. 12. *In the high place*] Though the word בַּמָּוֶה *bamah*, says Mr. Locke, properly signifies a *high place*, or place of sacrifice; yet it is here rendered by the Targum, as it is often elsewhere, *domus accubitus*, an *house of feasting*, because feasting and sacrifice were generally concomitants of one another. See Cudworth on the Sacrament. Mr. Locke goes on to observe, that the phrase in the next verse, *he doth bless the sacrifice*, alludes to the custom among the Hebrews of giving thanks before their meals. It was usual also for him who gave thanks to break and distribute the food. The Chaldee paraphrase therefore has it, *for he is to divide the victim*. Luke, xxiv. 30. seems to allude to this.

Ver. 14. *Behold, Samuel came out against them, &c.*] *Samuel met them, as he was about to ascend the high place.* Houb. *God told Samuel in his ear*, in the next verse, signifies that he privately revealed to him.

REFLECTIONS.—Few would have looked for a king chosen from such an employment as that of Saul; but  
God's

16 To-morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him *to be* captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me.

17 And when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! this same shall reign over my people.

18 Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house *is*.

19 And Samuel answered Saul, and said, I *am* the seer: go up before me unto the high place; for ye shall eat with me to-day, and to-morrow I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that *is* in thine heart.

20 And as for thine asses that were lost three

days ago, set not thy mind on them; for they are found. And on whom *is* all the desire of Israel? *Is it* not on thee, and on all thy father's house?

21 And Saul answered and said, *Am* not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me?

22 And Samuel took Saul and his servant, and brought them into the parlour, and made them sit in the chiefest place among them that were bidden, which *were* about thirty persons.

23 And Samuel said unto the cook, Bring the portion which I gave thee, of which I said unto thee, Set it by thee.

24 And the cook took up the shoulder, and *that* which *was* upon it, and set *it* before Saul. And Samuel said, Behold that which is left! set *it* before thee, *and* eat: for unto this time

God's choice is often marvellous in our eyes. We have here,

1. Saul sent to seek his father's asses which were strayed. Agreeable to the simplicity of those times, when no man was too great to mind his own affairs, Kish sends his son with a servant in quest of the strayed asses; and his son, forward to obey his parent's orders, and industrious in his business, immediately sets himself to make search after them.

2. Their search was long and fruitless; and Saul, apprehensive that his father would be uneasy at his absence, resolves to give over and return. Dutiful children will always thus tenderly consult their parents' peace.

3. The servant reflecting that they were near Ramah, where Samuel dwelt, suggests whether it might not be worth their while to consult him on the occasion: he gives him a great character as a man of God, and a most respectable person; a seer, whose prophecies always came to pass, and who might be able to inform them of their lost asses. *Note;* (1.) When we are near a man of God, it is worth while to call upon him, and not to pass by without a word of advice. (2.) People are usually more solicitous about the things of the world than the things of God: and so preposterous in their care, that they would run to consult a minister of God, could he direct them to the recovery of lost goods, will neither consult nor be directed by him for the recovery of their lost souls.

4. Samuel was just coming from his door when Saul appeared in sight. He had, by a secret whisper from God the preceding day, been informed of his design to send to him the person appointed to be the ruler of his people; and though in anger this king was given, yet God has designs of grace to answer: though they shall smart by their king, they shall be saved by him from their enemies. Their cry God has heard, whether the cry of distress

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from fear of the Philistines, or their former supplication to Samuel: and now behold the man whom God has appointed *to reign over* Israel as a king; or as the word signifies, *to restrain* them from the evil of their ways. *Note;* When God will punish his people, he will in wrath remember mercy.

*Ver. 21. Saul answered and said, Am not I a Benjamite, &c.]* Samuel convinced Saul that he was a prophet, by informing him of the business for which he came to consult him; and this done, he acquaints him with God's future designation of him to the throne of Israel: for which Saul replies in terms equally modest and humble with those of Gideon. Judg. vi. 15.

*Ver. 23, 24. Samuel said unto the cook, Bring the portion, &c.]* The author of the *Observations* remarks, that the *shoulder of a lamb* is thought in the East a great delicacy. "Abdolmelick the caliph," says he, "upon his entering into Cufah, made a splendid entertainment. When he was set down, Amron the son of Hareth, an ancient Mechzumian, came in: he called to him, and placing him by him upon his sofa, asked him, what meat he liked best of all that ever he had eaten; the old Mechzumian answered, 'An ass's neck well seasoned and roasted.'—'You do nothing,' says Abdolmelick; 'what say you to a leg or a *shoulder* of a sucking lamb, well roasted, and covered over with butter and milk?' The history adds, that while he was at supper, he said, 'How sweetly we should live if a shadow would lurk!' This prince then thought the *shoulder* of a sucking lamb one of the most exquisite of dishes: and what he says explains Samuel's ordering it to be reserved for the future king of Israel, as well as what *that* was *which was upon it*, the *butter* and the *milk*; which circumstance the sacred historian distinctly mentions, and which an European reader

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hath it been kept for thee since I said, I have invited the people. So Saul did eat with Samuel that day.

25 ¶ And when they were come down from the high place into the city, *Samuel* communed with Saul upon the top of the house.

26 And they arose early: and it came to pass about the spring of the day, that Samuel called Saul to the top of the house, saying, Up, that I may send thee away. And Saul arose, and they went out both of them, he and Samuel, abroad.

27 *And* as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on,) but stand thou still awhile, that I may shew thee the word of God.

### C H A P. X.

*Samuel anointeth Saul: Saul meets a company of the prophets, and prophesies amongst them: he is chosen king at Mizpeh.*

[Before Christ 1067.]

**T**HEN Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him,

and said, *Is it* not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?

2 When thou art departed from me to-day, then thou shalt find two men by Rachel's sepulchre in the border of Benjamin at Zelzah; and they will say unto thee, The asses which thou wentest to seek are found: and, lo, thy father hath left the care of the asses, and sorroweth for you, saying, What shall I do for my son?

3 Then shalt thou go on forward from thence, and thou shalt come to the plain of Tabor, and there shall meet thee three men going up to God to Beth-el, one carrying three kids, and another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a bottle of wine:

4 And they will salute thee, and give thee two loaves of bread; which thou shalt receive of their hands.

5 After that thou shalt come to the hill of God; where is the garrison of the Philistines: and it shall come to pass, when thou art come thither to the city, that thou shalt meet a com-

“ is apt to wonder what it should mean, but which added “ so much to the delicacy of the meat, that an eastern “ prince, as well as an eastern author, was led distinctly “ to mention it.” See *Observations*, p. 173. Josephus calls the shoulder, *the royal portion*.

*Ver. 25.* When they were come down from the high place, &c.] The Vulgate adds at the close of this verse, and Saul prepared him a bed on the top of the house and slept; which Houbigant approves. We refer to his note. He renders the whole thus: *Samuel communed with Saul upon the top of the house, and Saul prepared him a bed there and slept; ver. 26.* Then about the spring of the day, Samuel called Saul at the top of the house, saying, Arise, &c. Houbigant's criticism is justified by the following remark: At Aleppo, says the author of the *Observations*, they sleep in the summer on the tops of houses, and they do the same in Judea. Thus Egmont and Heyman inform us, that at Caipha, at the foot of mount Carmel, the houses are small and have flat roofs, where, during the summer, the inhabitants sleep in arbours made of the boughs of trees. They also mention tents of rushes on the terraces of the houses at Tiberias, which are doubtless for the same purpose, though they do not say so. Dr. Pococke in like manner tells us, that when he was at Tiberias in Galilee, he was entertained by the sheik's steward, the sheik himself having much company with him, but sending him provisions from his own kitchen; and that they supped on the top of the house for coolness, according to their custom, and lodged there likewise, in a sort of closet about eight feet square, of wicker-work, plaistered round towards the bottom, but without any

door, each person having his cell. In Galilee then, we find, they lodged a stranger whom they treated with respect on the top of the house, and even caused him to sup there. This may, perhaps, lead us to the true explanation of the present passage; which tells us, that *Samuel conversed with Saul on the house-top*, and that at the spring of the day Samuel called Saul to the house-top, or, as it may be equally well translated, on the house-top (see Noldius); that is, Samuel conversed with him for coolness on the house-top in the evening, and in the morning called Saul, who lodged there all night, and was not stirring; saying, *Up, that I may send thee away.* The LXX seem to have understood it very much in this light; for they thus translate the passage: *and they spread a bed for Saul on the house-top, and he slept;* which shews how agreeable this explanation is to those who are acquainted with eastern customs. See *Observations*, p. 92.

### C H A P. X.

*Ver. 1.* Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head] It appears from the last verse of the preceding chapter, that Samuel did this in the open field. Anointing was, from the earliest times, made use of at the inauguration of kings, as well as of priests. See *Judg.* ix. 8. The kiss which Samuel gave Saul was in token of subjection and reverence to him. See *Gen.* xli. 40. The reason why Samuel foretels to Saul the several particulars in the subsequent verses, is to convince him of his prophetic spirit, and, consequently, of the truth of what he had advanced concerning the kingdom. Houbigant, after the

pany of prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp, before them; and they shall prophesy:

6 And the Spirit of the LORD will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man.

7 And let it be, when these signs are come unto thee, *that* thou do as occasion serve thee; for God *is* with thee.

8 And thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal; and, behold, I will come down unto thee, to offer burnt-offerings, *and* to sacrifice sacrifices of peace-offerings: seven days shalt thou tarry, till I come to thee, and shew thee

what thou shalt do.

9 ¶ And it was so, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day.

10 And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them.

11 And it came to pass, when all that knew him before-time saw that, behold, he prophesied among the prophets, then the people said one to another, What *is* this *that* is come unto the son of Kish? *Is* Saul also among the prophets?

LXX, adds what follows to this verse, which, whether it be genuine Scripture or not, will at least tend to explain it: *Then Samuel, having taken a phial, poured oil upon his head, and kissed him, saying, Behold, the Lord hath anointed thee prince over his inheritance: thou shalt rule over the people of the Lord: thou shalt deliver them from their enemies which are round about.* Ver. 2. *But this shall be a sign unto thee, that the Lord hath anointed thee prince over his inheritance: when thou shalt depart from me to-day, thou shalt find, &c.*

Ver. 3. *To the plain of Tabor] To the high-oak of Tabor.* Hiller, 359.

Ver. 5, 6. *After that thou shalt come to the hill of God]* This hill was so called, either because they were used to sacrifice there, or because there was a school of the prophets, who were called *men of God*. As there is no verb in the sentence, *where the garrison of the Philistines*, we might as well insert *was as is; where was a garrison of the Philistines*: which seems most agreeable to the circumstances here related. Concerning the *prophets* and prophesying here spoken of, we refer to the notes on Numb. xi. 25. where this matter is discussed at large. The author of the *Observations* produces the following passage from an account of the eastern customs: "When the children have gone through the Koran, their relations borrow a fine horse and furniture, and *carry them about the town in procession*, with the book in their hands, the rest of their *companions following*, and all *sorts of music* of the country going before." Dr. Shaw, in p. 195. mentions the same custom, adding the *acclamations* of their *school-fellows*, but taking no notice of the music. We have no reason, however, to doubt the fact on account of the doctor's silence, especially as it relates to another part of Barbary, and is given us by those who resided some years in the country. The doctor makes no use of this circumstance relating to the education of youth in Barbary; but the account of the procession above given, seems to be a lively comment on that ancient Jewish custom mentioned in these verses. That the word *prophets* often signifies *sons*, or *scholars* of the prophets, and *prophesying*, *singing*, has been often remarked; but no author, that I know of, has given any account of the nature of

this procession, or its design. We are sometimes told, that *high places* were used for sacrifices; and, in one case, *music*, it is certain, played before them when they went up to worship. See *Isai. xxx. 29*. But did they not also return from sacrificing with it? We are told, that music was used by the prophets to calm and compose them, and to invite the divine influences, which is indeed very true; but is it to the purpose? Did they go forth in this manner *from their college*, into the *noise* and *interruptions* of the world, to call down the prophetic impulse? But if we consider them as a company of the *sons of the prophets*, going in procession with *songs of praise*, and *music* playing before them, and recollect that it is usual at this day for *young scholars* to go in procession with acclamations and music, the whole mystery seems to be unraveled. To which may be added, that Saul was to *meet them*, and find himself *turned into another man*, into a man, perhaps, who is instantaneously made as knowing in the law of God as the *youth* to whom the above honours were doing, or any of his convoy; which acquaintance with the law of God, was very necessary for one who was to judge among his brethren as their king. For this reason, the Jewish kings were to write out a copy of the law of God, and read it continually, that they might be *perfect masters* of it, *Deut. xvii. 18—20*; which accomplishment some youth had gained whom Saul met with, and who was honoured with the solemnity which the sacred historian speaks of, if the customs of South Barbary may be supposed to be explanatory of those of Judea. See *Observations*, p. 286.

Ver. 8. *And thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal]* Respecting this matter, see on chap. xiii. 8.

Ver. 9. *God gave him another heart]* An expression explanatory of that in the 6th verse, *thou shalt be turned into another man*: the meaning seems to be, that God inspired him with ideas fit for the rank and station in life which he was now to bear; with such a spirit as might qualify him for the government of God's people.

Ver. 10. *And when they came thither to the hill]* We refer to the notes on the latter part of the 19th chapter for a relation of the particulars mentioned in this verse.

12 And one of the same place answered and said, But who *is* their father? Therefore it became a proverb, *Is* Saul also among the prophets?

13 And when he had made an end of prophesying, he came to the high place.

14 ¶ And Saul's uncle said unto him and to his servant, Whither went ye? And he said, To seek the asses: and when we saw that *they were* no where, we came to Samuel.

15 And Saul's uncle said, Tell me, I pray thee, what Samuel said unto you.

16 And Saul said unto his uncle, He told us plainly that the asses were found. But of the matter of the kingdom, whereof Samuel spake, he told him not.

17 ¶ And Samuel called the people together unto the LORD to Mizpeh;

18 And said unto the children of Israel,

Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all kingdoms, and of them that oppressed you:

19 And ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations; and ye have said unto him, *Nay*, but set a king over us. Now therefore present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes, and by your thousands.

20 And when Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, the tribe of Benjamin was taken.

21 When he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their families, the family of Matri was taken, and Saul the son of Kish was taken: and when they sought him, he could not be found.

*Ver. 12. But who is their father?*] Houbigant renders this verse, *But one of these who were present said thus, For who is his father? Is not Kish? Hence therefore came the proverb, Is Saul amongst the prophets?* And he observes, that the Syriac, Arabic, Alexandrian, Roman, and Complutensian editions of the LXX read *his father*. The Alexandrian adds, *Is not Kish?* which we add (continues he), that the sentence may be filled up in the usual manner of the Hebrews: and as we read in the Gospel, *Is not this the son of Joseph?*

REFLECTIONS.—Saul and Samuel now part. Saul returns homeward, and feels a wondrous change passed upon him; no longer groveling cares nor servile labours engage his thoughts; but high and elevated sentiments becoming a king, the redressing Israel's grievances, and the weighty concerns of the state, possess his soul. The signs happened according to the prediction, and the last of them is particularly taken notice of.

No sooner was he come to the hill, than he met the prophets, and instantly joined in their devout exercises. As he was so near home, and well known there, those who saw him expressed their astonishment, that an untutored husbandman, the son of Kish, should be thus engaged; when one of the company well observed, *Who is their father?* Is not all prophecy from God? What signifies whose son he is, or what was his employment, if God calls and qualifies him? This afterwards became a proverb, *Is Saul also among the prophets?* Note; (1.) Many such wonders has divine grace wrought, where the chief of sinners have become most eminent among the saints. (2.) Let not great and sudden changes be too much depended on. A man may have a new tongue, new company, new manners, and yet not truly become a new man.

When he had made an end of prophesying, the gift not continuing always, he came to the high place to acknow-

ledge the mercies that he had received, and then returned. His uncle, meeting him as he arrived, inquired of his journey, the cause of which he informs him, and their visit to Samuel; on which his uncle, perhaps suspecting something from the universal expectation which was raised of a king, is solicitous to know what passed. But Saul prudently concealed what related to the kingdom; as it seemed not yet a proper occasion to declare himself, and Samuel might have enjoined him to secrecy till the time came when his election should be publicly notified; and therefore he only speaks of the answer that Samuel gave him concerning the asses. Note; (1.) The art of prudent concealment is a piece of true wisdom. (2.) The heirs of God's kingdom will be content to be unknown in the world, till God himself shall proclaim their glory.

*Ver. 21. And when they sought him, he could not be found.]* When the lot of Saul, appointing him to the kingdom, came up, he, who already knew what would be the case, had withdrawn himself; moved either by modesty, or by a dread of the weight of so great an office. The Jews have a good observation upon this occasion, that "who-soever flies dominion, him dominion follows."

REFLECTIONS on ver. 17—27.—The people's impatience for a king is now to be gratified. A solemn convocation is called at Mizpeh, under Samuel as president, in order to fix on the person.

1. Samuel opens the convocation with a severe rebuke of their wickedness in thus resolving to have a king, which was, in fact, rejecting God, who had hitherto governed them more immediately himself, and saved them by multiplied miracles. What man could they choose like unto him? Note; They who reject God's government, sin against their own mercies.

2. The choice of the person being yet to be referred to God, Samuel causes the tribes to come near, by their representa-

22 Therefore they enquired of the LORD further, if the man should yet come thither. And the LORD answered, Behold, he hath hid himself among the stuff.

23 And they ran and fetched him thence: and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward.

24 And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the LORD hath chosen, that *there is none like him among all the people?* And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king.

25 Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote *it* in a book, and laid *it* up before the LORD. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house.

26 ¶ And Saul also went home to Gibeah; and there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched.

27 But the children of Belial said, How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought him no presents. But he held his peace.

## C H A P. XI.

*Nahash, king of the Ammonites, besieges the city of Jabesh-gilead, which calls for aid from the Israelites: Saul collects an army, and conquers the Ammonites: the people being gathered together at Gilgal, Samuel renews the kingdom of Saul there.*

[Before Christ 1067.]

**T**HEN Nahash the Ammonite came up, and encamped against Jabesh-gilead: and all the men of Jabesh said unto Nahash, Make a covenant with us, and we will serve thee.

2 And Nahash the Ammonite answered them, On this *condition* will I make a covenant with you, that I may thrust out all your right eyes, and lay *it* for a reproach upon all Israel.

3 And the elders of Jabesh said unto him,

presentatives, in order to cast lots, and Benjamin is chosen. Of the families of Benjamin, the lot falls on that of Matri, and Saul the son of Kish is fixed upon as the man. But while any other man would have been eager to shew himself, they cannot find him: for, perceiving how the lot was going, and expecting from what had passed that it would fall on him, he hid himself, unwilling to take a charge for which he apprehended he was unqualified; fearing too, perhaps, that this crown would be a crown of thorns, when God's displeasure at the matter had been so solemnly declared, and the state of affairs from the Philistines and Amorites looked so lowering and dangerous.

3. The people hereupon inquire farther; whether he who was chosen should yet come to the assembly, or how they might find him? And they are directed to fetch him from his hiding-place among the baggage, which was immediately done.

4. When he appeared, his majestic presence seemed designed for the dignity to which he was advanced. Samuel bids them look upon him, tall as a cedar, and admire the divine choice of a person so suited to their wishes: hereupon the earth rings with shouting, *God save the king, or Let the king live*; let his reign be long and glorious, under the Divine protection and blessing. *Note*; It is the duty of every good subject to pray for the life and prosperity of the sovereign whom God appoints over him.

5. The king, being chosen of God, must rule according to divine prescription. The manner of the kingdom, how he must govern, and they obey, Samuel declares; and for the continual observance of these rules, writes them in a book, to be laid up in the tabernacle, and referred to on occasion. *Note*; Kings must remember, though they are above others, they ought not to be above law.

6. The congregation broke up with very different senti-

ments of their king. Some respected the Divine choice, and when Saul returned to his house at Gibeah they accompanied him as a body-guard to do him honour, having *their hearts touched of God*, and being inclined to pay the duty that they owed to their new sovereign. But others, sons of Belial, who had no regard for a king of God's appointment, arrogantly conceiving that they could have chosen a man of greater power, influence, and rank, than the son of Kish, perhaps envious at his advancement, and thinking themselves injured by the preference given him, despised him as a mean contemptible fellow, unfit to be a king, and would not congratulate him on his accession, nor bring him any presents in token of their submission and allegiance. This contempt Saul wisely overlooked, till a proper occasion offered to shew how deserving he was of the honour conferred on him, by deeds of valour which should shame his enemies to an acknowledgment of his desert. *Note*; (1.) When God touches the heart, we shall be inclined to follow cheerfully Jesus our king. (2.) They who are offended at the meanness of Jesus in the manger, will tremble before him when he shall come at the head of his angelic hosts. (3.) It is sometimes wisdom to conceal our knowledge of the wrongs done us, lest the breach be made irreparable which patience and forbearance might have healed.

## C H A P. XI.

*Ver. 1, 2. Then Nahash the Ammonite*] Saul had not long to wait for an occasion to shew himself worthy of the kingdom of Israel. Nahash, a king or general of the Ammonites, came against Israel. This was one of the pretences which the Israelites made use of for a change of government, ch. xii. 12.; and it seems that they had sufficient grounds for a fear of this invasion, as Nahash ap-

pears



Give us seven days' respite, that we may send messengers unto all the coasts of Israel: and then, if *there be* no man to save us, we will come out to thee.

4 ¶ Then came the messengers to Gibeah of Saul, and told the tidings in the ears of the people: and all the people lifted up their voices, and wept.

5 And, behold, Saul came after the herd out of the field; and Saul said, What *aieth* the people that they weep? And they told him the tidings of the men of Jabesh.

6 And the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard those tidings, and his anger was kindled greatly.

7 And he took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces, and sent *them* throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen. And the fear of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out with one consent.

8 And when he numbered them in Bezek, the children of Israel were three hundred thousand, and the men of Judah thirty thousand.

9 And they said unto the messengers that came, Thus shall ye say unto the men of Jabesh-gilead, To-morrow, by *that time* the

sun be hot, ye shall have help. And the messengers came and shewed *it* to the men of Jabesh; and they were glad.

10 Therefore the men of Jabesh said, To-morrow we will come out unto you, and ye shall do with us all that seemeth good unto you.

11 And it was *so* on the morrow, that Saul put the people in three companies; and they came into the midst of the host in the morning-watch, and slew the Ammonites until the heat of the day: and it came to pass, that they which remained were scattered, so that two of them were not left together.

12 ¶ And the people said unto Samuel, Who *is* he that said, Shall Saul reign over us? bring the men, that we may put them to death.

13 And Saul said, There shall not a man be put to death this day: for to-day the LORD hath wrought salvation in Israel.

14 ¶ Then said Samuel to the people, Come, and let us go to Gilgal, and renew the kingdom there.

15 And all the people went to Gilgal; and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal; and there they sacrificed sacrifices of peace-offerings before the LORD; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

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pears to have been a man of a most cruel and insolent disposition, from the terms which he proposed to the men of Jabesh, which were no less disgraceful than barbarous. See *Psalmanazar's* last Essay.

*Ver. 7. Took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces*] See the note on Judg. xix. 29. Bochart Hieroz. pars i. lib. 2. cap. 33. and Martin's *Explic. des Textes*.

*Ver. 12. And the people said unto Samuel*] We have here a fine picture of the capricious disposition of the common people, and of the prodigious alteration which great success makes in their affections. The moderation of Saul, ver. 13. deserves as much praise, as their precipitate thirst for revenge deserves condemnation.

*Ver. 15. There they made Saul king*] The meaning is, that there they proclaimed and publicly acknowledged Saul for their king. The Targum expresses it very well, *they made Saul to reign*.

REFLECTIONS.—The sons of Belial now shall see whether Saul is able to save them, or not.

1. Saul was in the field, tending his cattle, when the message came. Though chosen to be a king, yet returning to his old employment till God should call him out to

action, as he followed his cattle home, the cry of the people excited his inquiry; and when he heard the cause, anger against the inhuman Ammonite kindled in his bosom; he felt his spirit moved with unusual ardour, and instantly resolved the rescue of Jabesh-gilead. *Note*, (1.) We must not hear the sorrows of the afflicted without kind inquiries, and proffering ready help to alleviate their miseries. (2.) A holy indignation against deeds of cruelty and wickedness is highly commendable.

2. The method that he took to raise the forces of Israel. He hewed a yoke of oxen in pieces, and sent these by the messengers into all the coasts, threatening so to do by their oxen who should be absent from the general rendezvous; and joined Samuel's name with his own, both to pay him honour, and to engage the readier submission. The effect produced was great; God put his fear upon the people, and they instantly assembled from every quarter, to the number of three hundred thousand men of Israel, besides thirty thousand of Judah; whose proportion, though apparently smaller than might be expected, may easily be accounted for, as the Philistines lay on their borders, against whom they must be guarded. *Note*; Where the fear of God is in the heart, there men will make conscience

## C H A P. XII.

*Samuel, being grown old, testifies his integrity before the people; reproves them for their ingratitude, and exhorts them to future obedience. At his prayer, the Lord sends thunder and rain in harvest-time: the people entreat him to pray to God for them, which he promises to do.*

[Before Christ 1067.]

**A**ND Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you.

2 And now, behold, the king walketh before you: and I am old and grey-headed; and, behold, my sons *are* with you: and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day.

3 Behold, here *I am*: witness against me before the LORD, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received *any* bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you.

4 And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken

ought of any man's hand.

5 And he said unto them, The LORD *is* witness against you, and his anointed *is* witness this day, that ye have not found ought in my hand. And they answered, *He is* witness.

6 ¶ And Samuel said unto the people, *It is* the LORD that advanced Moses and Aaron, and that brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt.

7 Now therefore stand still, that I may reason with you before the LORD of all the righteous acts of the LORD which he did to you and to your fathers.

8 When Jacob was come into Egypt, and your fathers cried unto the LORD, then the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, which brought forth your fathers out of Egypt, and made them dwell in this place.

9 And when they forgot the LORD their God, he sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the host of Habor, and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them.

10 And they cried unto the LORD, and

science of their duty in every station, and be, on principle, good subjects, good soldiers, and good servants.

3. Confident of success, Saul sends the messengers back with assurance of immediate relief: he doubted not but on the morrow he should be with them, which filled the city with joy. To perform his promise, he marches instantly in three bodies; and though the distance was sixty miles, and all on foot, on the third day before the morning-watch, he broke into the camp of the Ammonites, lulled into security with the message which the men of Jabesh-gilead had sent them on the return of the messengers, that they would come out to them the next day. A general route ensued; till mid-day, they made havock of the flying Ammonites; and so dispersed and destroyed them, that not two of all their numerous hosts were left together. *Note*: When we go out, dependant upon God, we shall return crowned with victory.

4. Samuel, it seems, had either accompanied them in the expedition, or met them on their return: and, jealous now for the honour of their king, endeared to them by his victory, though they had before taken notice of the insult, the people apply to him, as judge in Israel, for the death of these sons of Belial, who had despised the anointed of the Lord. Saul, like a good king, taking more pleasure in exercising his clemency, than executing the offenders, interposes, and will not have that day stained with Israelitish blood, in which God had wrought so great a salvation for them. *Note*: All our successes must be

ascribed to God; for it is his arm alone that obtains the victory for us over our enemies spiritual and temporal. Samuel now seizes the favourable disposition of the people, to confirm the kingdom to Saul: he led them to Gilgal; and, amidst the joyful sacrifices for their past victory, Saul is solemnly invested with the supreme power by universal consent, and with great solemnity. *Note*: It is good to make use of a favourable gale while it blows.

## C H A P. XII.

*Ver. 1. And Samuel said unto all Israel*] Saul being now publicly recognised for the king of Israel, Samuel takes the occasion of this solemn meeting to appeal to the people in the presence of their king, in justification of himself and his conduct since he had been judge over them: his office ceasing of course, now that God had given them a king.

*Ver. 2. Behold, the king walketh before you*] When Samuel says, *and my sons are with you*, he seems to mean that the sons of whom they complained are now in their hands, deprived of their public station, reduced to the rank of subjects to the king, like the rest of the people, and punishable before his tribunal, according to their deserts. See Wall's note on the place. This fine apology which Samuel makes for himself puts one in mind of St. Paul's upon the like occasion. See Acts, xx. 33.

*Ver.*

said, We have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD, and have served Baalim and Ashtaroth: but now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, and we will serve thee.

11 And the LORD sent Jerubbaal, and Bedan, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and ye dwelled safe.

12 And when ye saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, ye said unto me, Nay; but a king shall reign over us: when the LORD your God *was* your king.

13 Now therefore behold the king whom ye have chosen, *and* whom ye have desired! and, behold, the LORD hath set a king over you.

14 If ye will fear the LORD, and serve him,

and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall both ye and also the king that reigneth over you continue following the LORD your God:

15 But if ye will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall the hand of the LORD be against you, as *it was* against your fathers.

16 Now therefore stand and see this great thing, which the LORD will do before your eyes.

17 *Is it* not wheat-harvest to-day? I will call unto the LORD, and he shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness *is* great, which ye have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking you a king.

18 ¶ So Samuel called unto the LORD;

*Ver. 11. The Lord sent Jerubbaal, and Bedan, and Jephthah, and Samuel.]* Houbigant, after several of the versions, reads, *Jerubbaal, Debarah and Barak, Jephthah and Samson.* St. Paul seems to confirm this reading; for in Hebrews, xi. 32. he says, *the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, of Barak, of Samson, of Jephthah, &c.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Before Samuel parts with the assembly, he addresses himself to them,

1. By way of appeal for his own integrity among them. He had now resigned the government; their king stood before them, and he was a subject as well as they, and ready to answer any man who would call him to account; and his sons are now private persons, and open to any accusation which might be laid against them. He reminds them of his grey hairs, which they should have regarded with greater reverence, as coming upon him in their service, in which from earliest infancy he had been employed.—He challenges them to lay the least crime to his charge, of bribery or oppression committed by him during all his administration; and therein tacitly reflects upon their own sin and folly in rejecting one who, without fee or reward, had governed them with such impartial justice. *Note;* (1.) To vindicate our character from the aspersions of calumny, is a debt due to a man's good name. (2.) They who are conscious of their own integrity are not afraid of inquiry into their conduct.

2. The people willingly bear testimony to his uprightness among them. He had never oppressed them in the least matter, nor received aught at their hands, as a reward for his service. The Lord, therefore, is appealed to against any future charge, as their own confessions proclaim his innocence; and they replied, *He is witness,* that they had fully cleared him from every suspicion of mal-administration. *Note;* It is a great comfort to have God for a witness to our integrity.

2dly, Samuel, having vindicated himself, proceeds to remind them of what God had done for them, as a proof

of their ingratitude in rejecting him; yet with instructions how this change might operate to their good.

1. He abridges their history. God had delivered them from Egypt; but their ungrateful fathers forsook him for idols, and brought themselves thereby into bitter distress, under Sisera, the Philistines, and Moabites: yet, whenever they returned to him in penitence, he returned to them in mercy, and delivered them by the hands of judges divinely raised up, until his own time, who had been the last of them. Notwithstanding this, they were bent on a king, and God had gratified them. He reasons with them, therefore, on the obligation they were under to this gracious God, and their ingratitude in resolving to have another king; in which also his compliance with their request was a fresh token of his patience and mercy towards them. *Note;* (1.) The more we reflect upon God's dealings with us, the more reason we shall have to choose his government, and to condemn the folly and ingratitude of ever leaving him. (2.) Past experience should be remembered for present conduct. They who ever forsook God always suffered for it.

2. He instructs them how the alteration of the government might turn to their good. If they were faithful to God, observant of his worship, and persevering in his service, then God would keep them in his holy ways, and it would go well with them and their king: but if they apostatized from God, then they might expect to feel his heavy hand, till they were consumed together. *Note;* (1.) They who are faithful to the grace bestowed, as their reward, shall have that grace confirmed and strengthened. (2.) God's service brings a present reward along with it now, and ensures an eternal reward hereafter. (3.) They who will not be brought under the yoke of God's laws, must be broken by the rod of his judgments.

*Ver. 16—18. Now, therefore, stand and see, &c.]* Rain indiscriminately in the winter months, and none at all in the summer, is what is most common in the East; so it is at

Aleppo,

and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day : and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel.

19 And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the LORD thy God, that we die not : for we have added unto all our sins *this* evil, to ask us a king.

20 ¶ And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not : (ye have done all this wickedness : yet turn not aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart ;

21 And turn ye not aside : for *then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver ; for they are vain.*)

22 For the LORD will not forsake his people for his great name's sake : because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people.

23 Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you : but I will teach you the good and the right way :

24 Only fear the LORD, and serve him in

Aleppo, and about Algiers : and so Jacobus de Vitriaco assures us it is in Judea : for he observes, that " lightning and thunder are wont, in the western countries, to be in the summer, but happen in the Holy Land in winter : that in the summer it *seldom* or *never* rains there ; but in winter, though the returns of rain are not so frequent, yet after they begin to fall, they pour down for three or four nights together, most vehemently as if they would drown the country." See *Gesta Dei per Francos*, vol. i. p. 1097. But though commonly there is no rain at Aleppo through the whole summer, yet sometimes there is such a thing as a smart *thunder-shower*. So Dr. Russel tells us, that in the night between the first and second of July 1743, some severe thunder-showers fell : but he adds, that it was a thing *very extraordinary* at that season. Possibly it may be more uncommon still at Jerusalem ; for St. Jerome, who lived long in the Holy Land, declares, in his Commentary on Amos, that he never saw rain in those provinces, and especially in Judea, in the *end of June*, or in the month of *July* : but if it should be found to be otherwise, and that, though St. Jerome had never seen it, such a thing may now and then happen there, as it did at Aleppo while Dr. Russel resided in that city ; the fact here recorded might nevertheless be an authentic proof of what Samuel affirmed ; since a *very rare and unusual event*, happening immediately, without any preceding appearance of such a thing, upon the prediction of a person professing himself to be a prophet, and giving this as an attestation of his being a messenger of God, is a sufficient proof of a divine mission, (as is also its happening at any other time distinctly marked out) though a like event has sometimes happened without any such declared interposition of God, and therefore understood on all hands to be casual, and without design. Bishop Warburton has sufficiently argued this point in his *Juban*, where he supposes that those fiery eruptions, crosses, &c. which happened upon that emperor's attempt to rebuild the Jewish temple at Jerusalem, were such as have happened at other times, without any particular meaning ; and yet, as they were then circumstanced, were an authentic attestation to the truth of Christianity. It should not be forgotten, that this thunder and rain of Samuel's seem to have been in the *day-time*, and while Samuel and the Israelites continued together, solemnizing Saul's inauguration ; which circumstance added considerably to the energy of this event ; Dr. Russel informing us, that the rains in those countries usually fall in the night, as

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did those uncommon thunder-showers of July 1743. See *Observations*, p. 4: 6. and Scheuchzer on the place.

*Ver. 21, &c. Vain things, which cannot profit*] Samuel in these gentle terms dissuades them from idolatry, the practice of which was as useless to themselves as it was disgraceful to God. We have a fine instance in this chapter of the pleasing comfort, and satisfaction of heart, which those judges must enjoy who have conscientiously discharged their duty. How great must be their peace, when about to render up an account of their administration to GOD, the Judge of all ! The remonstrances which Samuel makes to the Israelites concerning their frequent deviations, and God's paternal mercy towards them, supply us with a convincing proof of the infinite goodness of God towards men, and of his wonderful patience and long suffering. Blessed with favours far more excellent than those conferred on the Israelites by the Lord, how inexcusable shall we be if we rebel against Him ! Samuel gives us to know, that the felicity or downfall of states depends upon the religion both of the prince and of the people. Those states where piety, virtue, and justice flourish and abound will be blessed of God ; but where indifference to each prevails, both prince and people will, sooner or later, feel his avenging hand. Happy the nation in which there are Samuels, faithful pastors and good magistrates, who have the most tender affection for those committed to their trust ; who never cease to pray for them ; who never are weary of instructing them in the good and the right way which leads to present and eternal felicity !

REFLECTIONS.—Whatever God pleased of his Almighty grace to do for them in a way of mercy, that did not at all lessen their guilt before him. Therefore, though he had given them a promise just before, and they were now to appearance successful in their choice, yet he would remind them that their sin was great. *Note*, Success in an evil way never sanctifies it. To convince them of this, he uses an argument more effectual than words, to which they might be inattentive, and dull of hearing. For,

1. He prays to God in their presence, and instantly terrible thunders utter their voice, and the thick clouds gather round and pour down a torrent of water. These were manifest evidences of God's displeasure at their folly in preferring the sword of a king, before the prayers of such a prophet ; and warnings how soon their sin would turn their present peaceful calm into a storm of wrath.

E e

*Note*;

truth with all your heart: for consider how great *things* he hath done for you.

25 But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king.

### C H A P. XIII.

*The army of the Philistines approaching, the Israelites hide themselves in caves: Saul, about to engage, offers sacrifices, not waiting for Samuel: Samuel declares to him that the kingdom shall not be perpetual. Israel, under the oppression of the Philistines, have neither sword nor spear.*

[Before Christ 1065.]

**S**AUL reigned one year, and when he had reigned two years over Israel,

2 Saul chose him three thousand *men* of Israel; *whereof* two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in mount Beth-el, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin: and the rest of the people he sent every man to his tent.

3 ¶ And Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that *was* in Geba, and the Philistines heard *of it*. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear.

4 And all Israel heard say *that* Saul had smitten a garrison of the Philistines, and *that* Israel also was had in abomination with the Philistines. And the people were called together after Saul to Gilgal.

5 ¶ And the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which *is* on the sea-shore in multitude: and they came up, and pitched in Michmash, eastward from Beth-aven.

6 ¶ When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait, (for the people were distressed,) then the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits.

7 And *some of* the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he *was* yet in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.

8 ¶ And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel *had appointed*: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him.

9 And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt-offer-

*Note;* (1.) All the elements are ready armed to avenge God's quarrels, whenever he pleases to send them. (2.) It is a dangerous thing to turn the prayers of God's ministers against us, for their quarrel is the Lord's.

2. Terror and dismay seize the affrighted congregation. Fearing God's displeasure, and perceiving the power of Samuel's prayers, they confess their guilt and folly, and earnestly intreat him to intercede for them, that they perish not, as they were conscious they had deserved to do.

*Note;* (1.) The time will come, when sinners will cry for the prayers of them whom now they despise. (2.) Though the terrors of the Lord put men into a fright, they of themselves work no lasting change; when the storm is blown over, men quickly relapse into their former ways.

3. Samuel kindly undertakes to be their advocate, their comforter, and friendly adviser. He bids them not fear. These thunders were not to destroy, but to humble them, and bring them to a sense of their great wickedness. For his own part, he could not but pray for them without ceasing, and should continue to give them his best advice, to preserve them in fidelity to their covenant God, exhorting them earnestly to fear the Lord, and serve him in simplicity, both in gratitude and love, for the great things he had already done for them, and lest their disobedience should provoke him to destroy both them and the king in whom they gloried. *Note;* (1.) Whatever creature engages our affections from God, it makes the heart idolatrous, and will deceive our expectations. (2.) Those who in-

jure us, we must still pray for; how much more those who turn and say, Forgive. (3.) Ministers must not cease to teach people the good and right way, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. (4.) The more we consider what God has done for us, the more shall we feel ourselves constrained to love and serve him. (5.) When a minister is faithful, if the people continue refractory, he will have the comfort of having delivered his own soul.

### C H A P. XIII.

*Ver. 1. Saul reigned one year, &c.]* The Hebrew here literally is, *Saul was the son of a year, and he reigned two years.* A passage which almost all the versions render differently, and upon which the commentators are greatly divided. Dr. Waterland renders it, *Saul had reigned one year, and was reigning on two years over Israel.* Houbigant, after one of the versions in the Hexapla, reads, *Saul when he began to reign was thirty years old, and he reigned two years.*

*Ver. 5. Thirty thousand chariots.]*

|   |                                 |                |
|---|---------------------------------|----------------|
| } | Three thousand chariots.        |                |
|   | Syr. Arab.                      |                |
|   | A thousand princes in chariots. | Bucher. Praef. |

Houbigant also reads *three thousand*; a reading, says he, which Bochart has shewn to be just, for very good reasons; for it appears that the number of *thirty thousand chariots* was never heard of even in the largest armies.

ing to me, and peace-offerings. And he offered the burnt-offering.

10 And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt-offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him.

11 ¶ And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and *that* thou camest not within the days appointed, and *that* the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash;

12 Therefore said I, The Philistines will

come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt-offering.

13 And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever.

14 But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath fought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded

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*Ver. 13. Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly]* Samuel had ordered him to *stay seven days; even until I come to thee, and shew thee what thou shalt do;* which Josephus explains as a promise *that he would come after seven days; i. e. after the seventh was begun; that they might sacrifice on the seventh of those days.* Saul tarried the seven days; i. e. till the seventh day came: and when he saw that Samuel came not, למועד הימים *lemoed haiaimim, according to the appointed time of the days, the seventh day being far gone, and the prophet not appearing, impatient at the delay, and knowing that the sacrifices were to be offered on the seventh day, he determined to wait for the prophet no longer, and by his own authority orders the solemnity instantly to begin. In the midst of it Samuel appears, and justly reproves him for his presumption and impatience. The prophet, therefore, kept his appointment; but Saul, under a cloak of piety, (ver. 12.) transgressed the commandment of God which the prophet delivered him, and thereby shewed that he intended to be absolute and arbitrary; to act as king, independent on the orders and without the direction of God, and to pay no regard to the established laws and religion, whenever his ambition or policy should prompt him to act contrary to them. And though some writers have endeavoured to extenuate this fault of Saul, and think it hard that he should be rejected for so comparatively small an offence; yet to me it appears in a quite different light, and to be a very heinous and aggravated instance of disobedience, and a thorough specimen of what the man would afterwards prove. Samuel expressly says, *thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee.* What was this commandment? Why, not only to wait seven days till Samuel came to assist at the sacrifice, but to receive God's direction by the prophet, *what he should do, or what measures he was to take, upon the invasion of the Philistines, and not to act in so critical a conjuncture without his orders.* Saul, under a pretence of piety, *and making supplication to the Lord, absolutely contradicts the command, thinks himself above waiting for the prophet, takes upon himself the ordinance of an affair that no way belonged to him; and, as if God's direction by the prophet was of no consequence to him, resolves to act for himself, and deal with the Philistines as well as he could. Let any inferior prince thus violate the orders of his sovereign, and act in**

any affair of importance directly contrary to his instructions and duty, and no one will scruple to pronounce him guilty of rebellion, or think he was too hardly treated, by being removed from his dignity and government. Indeed, this instance of Saul's disobedience in the beginning of his reign, before he was well versed in the affairs of state, or experienced in war, or the kingdom made hereditary in his family; when all his people were in terror on account of the Philistines, and the delay of Samuel's coming made them apprehensive lest God should refuse to appear for their deliverance, was a strong specimen of that obstinate, rash, and impetuous temper, which made him unfit for the government to which he was raised, and was the true reason of his being rejected by God. Of this disposition he gave two proofs immediately after that of which I have been speaking: For when, upon Jonathan's invasion of the Philistines' garrison, the whole army was struck with a panic, so that in their terror they slew one another; what did the heroic Saul do? Why, *he adjured the people, saying, cursed be the man that eateth any food until the evening, that I may be avenged of mine enemies:* an execration fit only for a madman to utter, and than which nothing could be more extravagant, unless it was what immediately followed it, his laying himself under an execration to put to death his son Jonathan, for tasting a little honey without knowing that he incurred his father's curse upon eating it. The reader will observe here one or two immediate effects of Saul's acting without the advice of the prophet; his being denied the honour of gaining the victory, and having the dishonour to render it incomplete by his rashness; and the impertinency of part of his excuse for disobeying the prophet's orders, *viz. that the people were scattered from him;* when this very victory was obtained by two men only, Jonathan and his armour-bearer, who struck a terror into the whole hosts of the Philistines, so that in their haste to escape they destroyed one another. After this, he will not wonder that God determined *Saul's kingdom should not continue,* or that Samuel was displeas'd with, and gave him the rebuke that he so justly deserved. See Chandler's Review of the History of David, p. 25. and the notes on chap. xv.

*Ver. 14. A man after his own heart]* A variety of able writers amongst us have lately fully explained and vindicated this expression from the insults of free-thinkers. We

him *to be* captain over his people, because thou hast not kept *that* which the LORD commanded thee.

15 And Samuel arose, and gat him up from Gilgal unto Gibeah of Benjamin. And Saul numbered the people *that were* present with him, about six hundred men.

16 And Saul, and Jonathan his son, and the people *that were* present with them, abode in Gibeah of Benjamin: but the Philistines encamped in Michmash.

17 ¶ And the spoilers came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies: one company turned unto the way *that leadeth to* Ophrah, unto the land of Shual:

18 And another company turned the way *to* Beth-horon: and another company turned *to* the way of the border that looketh to the valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness.

19 Now there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel: (for the Philistines said, Lest the Hebrews make *them* swords or spears:)

20 But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his share, and his coulter, and his axe, and his mattock.

21 Yet they had a file for the mattocks, and for the coulters, and for the forks, and

for the axes, and to sharpen the goads.

22 So it came to pass in the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that *were* with Saul and Jonathan: but with Saul and with Jonathan his son was there found.

23 And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the passage of Michmash.

#### C H A P. XIV.

*Jonathan and his armour-bearer climb a rock, and kill twenty of the Philistines; the rest, being terrified, fly: Saul pursueth them: Jonathan, ignorant of an adjuration which Saul had made, eats honey, and is condemned to death by his father; but is delivered by the people.*

[Before Christ 1065.]

**N**OW it came to pass upon a day, that Jonathan the son of Saul said unto the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go-over to the Philistines' garrison, that *is* on the other side. But he told not his father.

2 And Saul tarried in the uttermost part of Gibeah under a pomegranate-tree which *is* in Migron: and the people that *were* with him *were* about six hundred men;

3 And Ahiah, the son of Ahitub, I-chabod's brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the LORD's priest in Shiloh, wearing an ephod.

will refer at the end of the note to some of them, while we produce Bishop Warburton's Exposition, which appears to us extremely just. "David was a man of so opposite a character to Saul with regard to his sentiments of the law, that it appears to have been for this difference alone that he was decreed by God to succeed the other in the kingdom. Now David sojourned some time in Natioth, which was the *academy of the prophets*, chap. xix. 18. And here it was, as we may reasonably conclude, that he so greatly cultivated and improved his natural disposition of love and zeal for the law, as to merit that most glorious of all titles, *the man after God's own heart* for, till this time, his employment and way of life had been very different; his childhood and youth were spent in the country, and his early manhood in camps and courts. But it is of importance to know, that this character was not given him for his private morals, but his public, his zeal for the advancement of the glory of the theocracy. This is seen from the first mention of him in this passage: and if we would but seek for the reason of this pre-eminence in David's *public*, not in his *private* character, we should see that it afforded no occasion of scandal. His zeal for the law was constantly the same; and above all he never fell into idolatry. But

"the phrase itself of a man after God's own heart, is best explained in the case of Samuel. Eli the prophet was rejected, and Samuel put into his place, just in the same manner as David superseded Saul. On this occasion, when God's purpose was denounced to Eli, we find it expressed in the same manner, chap. ii. 35. *I will raise me up a faithful priest, who shall do according to that which is in my heart.* And is not he who does according to what *is in God's heart*, a man after God's heart?" See Div. Leg. vol. iv. p. 360. Chandler's Review, p. 85, Patten's Vindication of David, &c. &c.

*Ver. 20. All the Israelites went down to the Philistines]* That is, all the men of Israel went to such garrisons of the Philistines as were placed in their land; for we are not to suppose, that the Israelites went, for this purpose, into the country of the Philistines. This particular appears to have been mentioned to shew the interposition of God, and to magnify the greatness of the victory in consequence. See Judg. v. 8. and xx. 15, 16.

#### C H A P. XIV.

*Ver. 2. A pomegranate tree, &c.] A grove of pomegranate trees, [Hiller. 144.] which is by Migron.*

*Ver.*

And the people knew not that Jonathan was gone.

4 And between the passages, by which Jonathan sought to go over unto the Philistines' garrison, *there was* a sharp rock on the one side, and a sharp rock on the other side: and the name of the one *was* Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh.

5 The forefront of the one *was* situate northward over against Michmash, and the other southward over against Gibeah.

6 And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the LORD will work for us: for *there is* no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few.

7 And his armour-bearer said unto him, Do all that *is* in thine heart: turn thee; behold, I *am* with thee according to thy heart.

8 Then said Jonathan, Behold, we will pass over unto *these* men, and we will discover ourselves unto them.

9 If they say thus unto us, Tarry until we come to you; then we will stand still in our place, and will not go up unto them.

10 But if they say thus, come up unto us; then we will go up: for the LORD hath delivered them into our hand: and this *shall be* a sign unto us.

11 And both of them discovered themselves unto the garrison of the Philistines: and the Philistines said, Behold, the Hebrews come forth out of the holes where they had hid themselves.

12 And the men of the garrison answered Jonathan and his armour-bearer, and said, Come up to us, and we will shew you a thing. And Jonathan said unto his armour-bearer, Come up after me: for the LORD hath delivered them into the hand of Israel.

13 And Jonathan climbed up upon his hands and upon his feet, and his armour-bearer after him: and they fell before Jonathan; and his armour-bearer slew after him.

14 And that first slaughter, which Jonathan and his armour-bearer made, was about twenty men, within as it were an half-acre of land, *which* a yoke of oxen might plow.

15 ¶ And there was trembling in the host, in the field, and among all the people: the garrison, and the spoilers, they also trembled, and the earth quaked: so it was a very great trembling.

16 And the watchmen of Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin looked; and, behold, the multitude melted away, and they went on beating down *one another*.

Ver. 6. Jonathan said to the young man [that bare his armour] We are to consider this whole exploit as undertaken and carried on by the immediate impulse of God. Josephus supposes that Jonathan went away in the night. Do all that is in thine heart, in the next verse, signifies, whatever thou devisest and approvest. And I am with thee, according to thy heart, means, in every thing in which thou canst desire or command my concurrence. See Chandler's Review, p. 87. and the note on ver. 14. of the foregoing chapter.

Ver. 14. That first slaughter, &c.] The expression in this verse, possibly, was proverbial. It imports only, that this slaughter was made in a very small compass: that Jonathan slew twenty men within the space of half an acre of ground. This sudden and unexpected attack of Jonathan's threw them into a panic fear; and as their army consisted, it is most likely, of different nations, (see chap. xiii. 5.) they fell into the greater confusion, as not understanding, and perhaps suspecting each other. Pindar has finely observed upon panic fears, that "when men are struck with divine terrors, even the children of the gods, i. e. the most heroic spirits, betake themselves to flight." Nem. ix. ver. 63. Some have supposed from the expres-

sion, ver. 15. and the earth quaked, that the Lord sent a real earthquake to terrify them: but the expression is figurative; meaning that the whole place, the whole district where the Philistine army was encamped, was in an extraordinary emotion. The French version renders the 15th verse very intelligibly. And there was a great terror in the camp, in the field, and among the people. The garrison and the spoilers were terrified; and the place was in consternation, as if a mighty terror had been sent by God. We refer to Hallet, vol. ii. p. 21. and Kennicott's Dissertation, vol. i. p. 453. for some critical observations on the 14th verse.

REFLECTIONS.—Never did Israel appear in a more distressed situation: they have neither courage nor arms; God is offended; their enemies are at the gate; and they without place to flee to, or power to resist: but, for his own name's sake, God will not utterly forsake his people, though they so justly deserve it. We have here,

1. Saul reduced to the greatest straits; no increase of his army; retired to the uttermost part of Gibeah, for the greater security, or more ready flight, if the Philistines advanced; his tent spread under a grove of pomegranates. Hither, to consult God in his difficulties, since Samuel had left



17 ¶ Then said Saul unto the people that were with him, Number now, and see who is gone from us. And when they had numbered, behold, Jonathan and his armour-bearer were not there.

18 And Saul said unto Ahiah, Bring hither the ark of God (for the ark of God was at that time with the children of Israel).

19 And it came to pass, while Saul talked unto the priest, that the noise that was in the host of the Philistines went on and increased: and Saul said unto the priest, Withdraw thine hand.

20 And Saul and all the people that were with him assembled themselves, and they came to the battle: and, behold, every man's sword was against his fellow, and there was a very great discomfiture.

21 Moreover, the Hebrews that were with the Philistines before that time, which went up with them into the camp from the country round about, even they also turned to be with the Israelites that were with Saul and Jonathan.

22 Likewise all the men of Israel which had hid themselves in mount Ephraim, when

left him, he sends for the ark of God, and Ahiah the high-priest, hoping by this application to God in his own way that he might have better success than when he sacrificed for himself. *Note;* (1.) Drowning men catch at straws. They will have the priest and sacrament at their dying bed, who, in their lives, were negligent of both. (2.) If the power of godliness be absent, the form of it can profit us nothing: nay, only deceive us, if we trust in it, to our ruin.

2. Jonathan's noble exploit. Moved, as we must suppose, by a divine impulse, he secretly quits the camp in Gibeah, and, with his armour-bearer, advances towards the Philistines' garrison, who seem to have been posted on one of the craggy rocks near Michmash, to guard the pass that was between them. Jonathan proposes to his armour-bearer to go boldly up and fall upon them, since, if the Lord pleased, he could save as well by few as many. The proposal being agreed to, Jonathan determines to rest the matter upon a providential issue. He would appear in sight of the garrison: if the men called to them to stand, and threatened to come over, then they should advance no further; but if they said, in contempt of them, Come up; then they should fall on, assuredly concluding that God was with them. Just as he said, God directed their word. The Philistines concluded them famished for hunger, and forced to surrender, and therefore deridingly bid them come up, and then they should see how they would treat them. Inspired with divine courage and confidence, they now advance, assuredly concluding that God had delivered the Philistines into their hands. Though steep the precipice, they climb the craggy rock, whilst, expecting no danger, the Philistines probably looked on, and amused themselves with the eagerness of these despised Hebrews. But no sooner had Jonathan and his armour-bearer firm footing, than they fell on furiously and unexpectedly, and twenty men presently were slain within the space of half an acre of land. Probably these were a party of scouts, who, thus smitten, fled, and carried a panic along with them into the garrison and camp, God spreading the terror on every side. *Notes;* (1.) The greatness of danger serves only for the more glorious exercise of faith in the saints of God. (2.) Whatever our difficulties are, if we have Omnipotence on our side, we may boldly advance. (3.) It is good to follow the leadings of Providence. (4.) They

who sport at God's Israel, will do it at their cost. (5.) God can with secret terrors reach the hearts of his enemies, and turn their own swords against them. (6.) They who commit their ways unto the Lord, will find that he can bring to pass the most improbable events. No man ever trusted him, and was confounded.

*Ver. 17. Then said Saul—number now, &c.]* Though Saul must easily have missed Jonathan, he could not suppose that he would fall upon the Philistines without a number of resolute persons to assist him. But when he found that his armour-bearer alone attended him, desirous to enquire into the reason of the matter, he consults with the high-priest, (ver. 18.) ordering him to bring the ark of God (or, rather as the LXX have it, the ephod, which appears to be the true reading; see Houbigant's note). But while he was doing so, the tumult increasing, and it being evident that the Philistines were routed, Saul found it necessary to lose no longer time, but halted immediately to make the best of this wonderful victory, ver. 20. Josephus assures us, that Saul did not attempt any thing upon this occasion till Ahiah promised him victory in the name of the Lord.

*Ver. 21. Moreover, the Hebrews, &c.]* Our translators have well expressed here the sense of the text. But it seems hard to allow them the liberty of inserting so many words as they have done, which are not in the Hebrew. To make out the sense they have put in the words *that*, and *from the country*, and *turned*. As to the first, I make no doubt but that the word אשר *asher*, *that* or *who*, is here implied, as the Vulgate, Latin, and the LXX represent it. The other two insertions, *from the country*, and *turned*, will be altogether needless, if, instead of סבִּיב *sabib*, we read, as the Vulgate and LXX plainly did, סִבְּבוּ *sabebu*. Then the place must be rendered, *the Hebrews who were with the Philistines before that time, who went up with them to the camp, they also turned to be with the Israelites*. It may be further noted, that the LXX in the beginning of the verse read עֲבָדִים *abadim*, *slaves*, instead of עֲבָרִים *ibrim*, *Hebrews*. Whether the LXX or the present Hebrew copies are here to be preferred, I cannot say. If the true reading is *Hebrews*, still they were slaves to the Philistines, whom they had made captive before.

REFLEC-

they heard that the Philistines fled, even they also followed hard after them in the battle.

23 So the LORD saved Israel that day: and the battle passed over unto Beth-aven.

24 ¶ And the men of Israel were distressed that day: for Saul had adjured the people, saying, Cursed *be* the man that eateth *any* food until evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies. So none of the people tasted *any* food.

25 And all *they* of the land came to a wood; and there was honey upon the ground.

26 And when the people were come into the wood, behold, the honey dropped; but no man put his hand to his mouth: for the people feared the oath.

27 But Jonathan heard not when his father charged the people with the oath: wherefore

he put forth the end of the rod that *was* in his hand, and dipped it in an honey-comb, and put his hand to his mouth; and his eyes were enlightened.

28 Then answered one of the people, and said, Thy father straitly charged the people with an oath, saying, Cursed *be* the man that eateth *any* food this day. And the people were faint.

29 Then said Jonathan, My father hath troubled the land: see, I pray you, how mine eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey.

30 How much more, if haply the people had eaten freely to-day of the spoil of their enemies which they found? for had there not been now a much greater slaughter among the Philistines?

REFLECTIONS.—The terror of the Philistines was soon observed by the sentinels in Gibeah, who, to their astonishment, beheld them melting like snow, and falling one on another. Tidings are instantly brought to Saul, who calls over the muster-roll, that he may see who is absent, and Jonathan and his armour-bearer are wanting. Hereupon,

1. Saul bids Ahiah bring the ark, and consult God about what he should do in the case; but while he was talking with him, the noise increasing, and the flight of the Philistines being evident, he bids him desist, being in haste to pursue. *Note;* (1.) In all our proceedings, to enquire of God's word is the surest way to succeed. (2.) They who are impatient to run before they are sent, will be in danger of making more haste than good speed.

2. They immediately follow the flying hosts, nor needed sword or spear, for the Philistines fell faster by the hands of each other. Not only the six hundred men who were with Saul assembled, but the deserters and prisoners turned upon the fugitives; and those who had refused to fight, and fled to the mountains, dare now pursue. Thus the Lord saved Israel, and the discomfiture here was very great, because it was his doing. *Note;* (1.) All our salvation must be ascribed to God's free grace and mercy alone. (2.) The Lord Jesus has conquered for us; let us not then, weak as we are, fear to pursue and seize the prey.

*Ver. 24.* And the men of Israel were distressed, &c.] Houbigant renders this verse in the following manner: *On the same day, after the Israelites were assembled together, Saul bound them by the following oath, saying, Cursed be the man that eateth any food before the evening, until I be avenged of mine enemies. Therefore none of the army took any food.* In consequence of this rash oath, whereof Jonathan, as being absent, was ignorant, he became subject to the curse. The people, for want of refreshment, were so faint that they could not pursue the enemy, and make the utmost of this great victory (ver. 30, 31.); and at the same time,

through their great hunger, became transgressors of the law of God, ver. 33. See the note on chap. xiii. 13.

*Ver. 26, 27.* And when the people were come into the wood, &c.] Wild honey, which was part of St. John Baptist's food in the wilderness, may give us an idea of the great plenty of it in those deserts; and that consequently, by taking the hint of nature, and enticing the bees into hives and larger colonies, a much greater increase might be made of it. Accordingly Josephus (Bell. Jud. lib. v. cap. 4.) calls *Jericho μελιτότροπον χωραν a country fertile in honey.* We find, moreover, that wild honey is often mentioned in Scripture. 1 Sam. xiv. 25, 26. Deut. xxxii. 13. Psa. lxxxii. 16. Job, xx. 17. Diodorus Siculus, lib. xix. speaks of the *μελι άγριον wild honey, that dropped from the trees;* which some have taken, perhaps too hastily, for a honey-dew only, or some liquid kind of manna: whereas bees are known to swarm, as well in the hollow trunks, and upon the branches of trees, as in the clefts of rocks: honey, therefore, may be equally expected from both places. See Dr. Shaw's Travels, p. 337. Jonathan, who was ignorant of his father's adjuration, being weary with the fatigue of the pursuit, eats some of the wild honey which abounded in the present wood; and his eyes were enlightened, i. e. his spirits and strength, which were quite exhausted by long abstinence from food, so that he could scarcely see, were restored to him, and he became fresh and lively to proceed in the pursuit of the enemy: for it is a fact, that famine and fatigue, by weakening the spirits, dim the sight; and as all meat and drink refreshes and enlivens, so wine and honey, in a remarkable degree, produce this effect; for their spirits are both very subtle, and quickly diffuse themselves through the human frame. See Bishop Patrick, and Vollius de Orig. et Prog. Idol. lib. iv. cap. 69.

*Ver. 29.* See—how mine eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted] See—how mine eyes have <sup>sparkled</sup> <sub>shone</sub> } since I tasted. Waterland.

*Ver.*

31 ¶ And they smote the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon: and the people were very faint.

32 And the people slew upon the spoil, and took sheep, and oxen, and calves, and slew *them* on the ground: and the people did eat *them* with the blood.

33 Then they told Saul, saying, Behold, the people sin against the LORD, in that they eat with the blood. And he said, Ye have transgressed: roll a great stone unto me this day.

34 And Saul said, Disperse yourselves among the people, and say unto them, Bring me hither every man his ox, and every man his sheep, and slay *them* here, and eat; and sin not against the LORD in eating with the blood. And all the people brought every man his ox with him that night, and slew *them* there.

35 ¶ And Saul built an altar unto the LORD: the same was the first altar that he built unto the LORD.

36 And Saul said, Let us go down after the Philistines by night, and spoil them until the morning light, and let us not leave a man of them. And they said, Do whatsoever seemeth good unto thee. Then said the priest, Let us draw near hither unto God.

37 ¶ And Saul asked counsel of God, Shall I go down after the Philistines? wilt thou de-

liver them into the hand of Israel? But he answered him not that day.

38 ¶ And Saul said, Draw ye near hither, all the chief of the people: and know and see wherein this sin hath been this day.

39 For, *as* the LORD liveth, which saveth Israel, though it be in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die. But *there was* not a man among all the people *that* answered him.

40 Then said he unto all Israel, Be ye on one side, and I and Jonathan my son will be on the other side. And the people said unto Saul, Do what seemeth good unto thee.

41 Therefore Saul said unto the LORD God of Israel, Give a perfect *lot*. And Saul and Jonathan were taken: but the people escaped.

42 And Saul said, Cast *lots* between me and Jonathan my son. And Jonathan was taken.

43 Then Saul said to Jonathan, Tell me what thou hast done. And Jonathan told him, and said, I did but taste a little honey with the end of the rod that *was* in mine hand, *and*, lo, I must die,

44 And Saul answered, God do so and more also: for thou shalt surely die, Jonathan.

45 And the people said unto Saul, Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid: *as* the LORD liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall

*Ver. 33. And he said, Ye have transgressed: roll a great stone unto me*] The people were so extremely faint through want of food, that they slew upon the spoil, ver. 32. like ravenous birds, and forgot to pour out the blood upon the ground, according to the precepts of their law: to prevent the repetition of which, Saul orders a *great stone* to be rolled, or brought to him, that an altar might be erected for the sacrificing of peace-offerings, and that the blood might there be properly poured out. The French version renders this, *You roll a great stone upon me this day*; as much as to say, according to a proverbial manner of speaking, that they would bring upon him and his kingdom the greatest misfortunes. See Martin's note upon the verse.

*Ver. 35. The same was the first altar that he built unto the Lord*] In the Margin of our Bibles, *that altar he began to build unto the Lord*; i. e. he laid the first stone himself. Houbigant after the Arabic reads, *and when he had begun to build an altar unto the Lord*, ver. 36. *He said, Let us, &c.*

*Ver. 37. And Saul asked counsel of God*] The people being ready to go down with Saul, the high-priest advised him first to take counsel of God; to which he readily consented. The high-priest, doubtless, had his reasons, as the event shews; for, in consequence of Jonathan's invo-

luntary offence, no answer could be had that day from the divine oracle.

*Ver. 41. Give a perfect lot*] There is nothing for *lot* in the original, and our Marginal *show the innocent*, is rather an explanation than a version. The following is Houbigant's version: *And Saul said unto the Lord God of Israel, [show unto us why thou hast not answered thy servant Saul this day. If this iniquity is in me, or in Jonathan my son, discover it by Urim, or if this iniquity is in the people,] discover it by Thummim.*

*Ver. 45. And the people said unto Saul*] Lowman, speaking of the authority of the congregation or general assembly of the people of Israel, observes, that "like the popular assemblies of other governments, they had some jurisdiction in criminal causes. When Saul had adjudged Israel not to eat any food till the evening, his own son Jonathan transgressed his order; and upon his confession, Saul his father, then king and general, determines to put him to death. *And Saul answered, God do so to me, and more also; for thou shalt surely die, Jonathan.* This sentence passed by Saul might appear to be without appeal, and that there was no authority to reverse it; however, *the people said unto Saul, Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought*

to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day. So the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not.

46 Then Saul went up from following the Philistines: and the Philistines went to their own place.

47 ¶ So Saul took the kingdom over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, and against the children of Ammon, and against Edom, and against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines:

and whithersoever he turned himself, he vexed them.

48 And he gathered an host, and smote the Amalekites, and delivered Israel out of the hands of them that spoiled them.

49 ¶ Now the sons of Saul were Jonathan, and Ishui, and Melchi-shua: and the names of his two daughters were these; the name of the first-born Merab, and the name of the younger Michal:

50 And the name of Saul's wife was Ahi-

“ *this great salvation for Israel? God forbid! As the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day: so the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not.* Bishop Patrick justly observes, that ‘the people did not rescue Jonathan by violence or force.’ It was not a mutinous act of an army: yet the expressions of the history will no ways suit with his further supposition, that ‘they delivered him by petition to Saul;’ or as Grotius, ‘not by authority, but entreaty.’ *As the Lord liveth, there shall not an hair of his head fall to the ground,* has very little of the style of an humble petition: it seems a very full resolution, and which it appears they understood to be their right. And why may it not be so understood, when the authority of condemning or absolving criminals is known to have belonged to the assembly of the people in the most celebrated governments of Greece and Rome? Josephus mentions, indeed, that ‘they offered prayers to God, that he would forgive Jonathan’s sin:’ he makes no mention, however, of any petition that they made to his father Saul; but that ‘they rescued him from his father’s anger and rash curse:’ which words can hardly, I think, be understood of a petition, but must mean either force or authority. And the words in the original seem to mean neither force nor petition, but an act of their own authority, whereby Jonathan was redeemed from the sentence of death, or whereby he was pardoned, and the sentence of death passed upon him was reversed in the general court of Israel. This interpretation is greatly favoured, as judgment in criminal cases is given to the congregation by an express law on some occasions.” See Numb. xxxv. 24, 25. and Lowman’s Civ. Gov. of the Hebrews, p. 115.

*Ver. 49. Now the sons of Saul were Jonathan, &c.]* i, e. three sons, who signalised themselves in the wars here mentioned. *Ishui*, mentioned 1 Chron. viii. 33. under the name of *Esh-baal*, was too young to go to war, and therefore he is omitted in this place.

*Reflections on ver. 36—52.*—1st. Saul has no sooner given his army a moment’s refreshment, than he is eager to pursue again the flying Philistines; and, though weary and wanting repose, his men, as faithful soldiers, are submissive to his orders, and ready to follow him. But,

1. Ahiah desires to consult God first, and Saul consents; but when they drew near, God gave them no answer.

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*Note;* It is good to have near us a faithful minister to advise and admonish us of our duty.

2. Saul hereupon concludes, that some sin had been committed, which provoked God thus to withdraw; and therefore as passionately resolves to punish, as he had imprudently bound the people under a curse. To determine the case, lots are cast; and, though none dared or cared to inform against Jonathan, God is pleased to give the discovery in the person of Jonathan, on whom the lot fell. *Note;* (1.) We may well conclude that God is angry, when our prayers find no answer of peace from him. (2.) We should solicitously inquire what it is wherein we have offended, that we may put away iniquity from us.

3. Jonathan, at Saul’s injunction, acknowledges that he had tasted a little honey that day in the wood; and, though he thinks it hard to die for such a fault, he speaks as expecting it from his father’s rash and unrelenting spirit; whilst Saul, agreeably to his character, binds his resolution with a solemn oath, that nothing should save him. *Note;* (1.) Violent tempers will sacrifice to their passions even the dearest relatives. (2.) An angry judge cannot but pass a rash and unjust sentence. (3.) They who swear in heat will often be guilty not only of profaneness, but perjury.

4. The people are highly displeas’d at Saul’s resolve, and bind themselves by oath to prevent its execution. It was unjust to condemn Jonathan for unwittingly offending; and ungrateful to put to death him, who, under God, had that day saved their lives and all Israel; therefore they rescued, or redeemed, him out of his hands. *Note;* (1.) Those whom God, in his cause, evidently honours with his blessing, we must support against all opposers. (2.) When kings act madly against the laws of God, and tyrannically against the lives and liberties of the people, such resistance as tends to reduce them to their duty, without injuring their persons, or lessening their lawful authority; is, no doubt, true patriotism, and consistent with true piety.

5. The season of pursuit being lost by altercation, and God reserving the Philistines for a further scourge, those who escaped from the battle got into places of safety, and Saul returned to Gibeah. Thus dissensions between the generals have often lost the advantages of victory.

2dly, Saul’s family are taken notice of. His house was now established, like his kingdom, great and prosperous. But how fading are all sublunary things! In a few years his house becomes ruined, and his kingdom removed. Let

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noam, the daughter of Ahimaaz: and the name of the captain of his host *was* Abner, the son of Ner, Saul's uncle.

51 And Kish *was* the father of Saul; and Ner the father of Abner *was* the son of Abiek.

52 And there was fore war against the Philistines all the days of Saul: and when Saul saw any strong man, or any valiant man, he took him unto him.

### C H A P. XV.

*Samuel, by God's command, orders Saul to destroy the Amalekites; Saul spares Agag, and the best of the spoil: Samuel blames Saul severely, and informs him that the kingdom of Israel shall be given to another; after which he puts Agag to death.*

[Before Christ 1064.]

**S**AMUEL also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee *to be* king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD.

2 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember *that* which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt.

3 Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.

4 And Saul gathered the people together, and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah.

5 And Saul came to a city of Amalek, and laid wait in the valley.

6 ¶ And Saul said unto the Kenites, Go, depart, get you down from among the Ama-

lekites, lest I destroy you with them: for ye shewed kindness to all the children of Israel, when they came up out of Egypt. So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites.

7 ¶ And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah *until* thou comest to Shur, that *is* over against Egypt.

8 And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword.

9 But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all *that was* good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing *that was* vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly.

10 ¶ Then came the word of the LORD unto Samuel, saying,

11 It repenteth me that I have set up Saul *to be* king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night.

12 ¶ And when Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning, it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel, and, behold, he set him up a place, and is gone about, and passed on, and gone down to Gilgal.

13 And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed *be* thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD.

14 And Samuel said, What *meaneth* then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?

15 And Saul said, They have brought them

us never place confidence then in any thing beneath the sun. The fashion of this world passeth away.

### C H A P. XV.

*Ver. 2. I remember*] Literally, *I visit*, or *have my eyes upon*; God hereby signifying, that he observed with attentive eyes what Israel had suffered by means of the Amalekites. Houb. See Exod. xvii. 14. Deut. xxv. 19. and the Reflections at the end of the 20th chapter of Deuteronomy.

*Ver. 12. Behold, he set him up a place*] Where he erected a monument or trophy of victory to himself. That the word *יָיָד* *iad*, signifies a monument, we learn from 2 Sam. xviii. 18. where Absalom is said to have *erected a pillar*,

and to have called it *יָיָד אֲבִשָׁלֹם* *iad Absalom*, the monument of Absalom: by which is signified either the space or area where the monument was erected, or the thing itself which was erected; as *מַצֵּבָה* *matzab*, a pillar, which name, in the above-quoted place, is synonymous with *יָיָד* *iad*. Houbigant. St. Jerome says, that Saul erected a triumphal arch.

*Ver. 14. What meaneth then this bleating, &c.*] There can be no excuse for swerving from the precise rule which God has prescribed to us: *to obey, is better than sacrifice; and to hearken, than the fat of rams*: ver. 22. nor must we compound a religion out of the good purposes and intentions of piety and devotion for our convenience, whilst, for the present, we decline a fundamental point of our religion,

from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed.

16 Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the LORD hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on.

17 And Samuel said, When thou *wast* little in thine own sight, *wast* thou not *made* the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel?

18 And the LORD sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the finners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed.

19 Wherefore then didst thou not obey the

voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD?

20 And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.

21 But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal.

22 And Samuel said, Hath the LORD *as great* delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey *is* better than sacrifice, *and* to hearken than the fat of rams.

religion, obedience to what he has enjoined. It will be no answer to God, that we have ransomed our lives and estates with good resolutions to employ both in his service; that we hope to be useful to our country or the church of Christ, and that we resolve charitably to assist with our fortune others who are in danger of starving. We are not judges, independent of his Providence, what is to be preserved, or which is the way of preserving. It may be, that God thinks it fit that our estates, our liberties, and lives, should be sacrificed to his truth, and for the defence of it; and then the redeeming, either by our artifices and compliances is no less than sacrilege; defrauding him of his due, and presuming to think ourselves wiser than his all-seeing Providence. What he has determined shall be destroyed, or utterly lost to us, must not be kept for sacrifices; and what he has appointed for sacrifice to him must not be preserved for ourselves. What inconveniences may probably flow from our punctual and severe prosecution of our duty, and the resolute observation of the dictates of our conscience; or what advantage and benefit may result to God's service, from our temporary receding from that which is abstractedly just, are considerations of too sublime a nature for our cognizance. It is well for us that we are not trusted with a latitude for these decisions.

*Ver. 22—26. And Samuel said, Hath the Lord, &c.]* The excision of the Amalekites, and the rejection of Saul for omitting to fulfil the commission given to him, have been objected to by free-thinkers. I. With respect to the first, there was God's express order for it: and what can we desire more than an order from heaven? As to God's dealings with nations in the way of vindictive justice, we are not competent judges of every case, because we have not the whole of the matter laid before us to form a judgment by; for we fall infinitely short of that large comprehensive view of all circumstances which the great Governor of the universe has before him. But this we may presume to say, as to the case of the *Amalekites*, that, considering how they had all along been inveterate adversaries towards the people of God (raised up to reform the world), and how they had very probably been wicked also in other respects, like the

*Canaanites*: it was a great instance of God's long-suffering that he bore with them so long, and that he waited four hundred years for their repentance before he destroyed them; so far is it from being any imputation upon his goodness, that he at length did so. It may be noted of the *Amalekites*, that they were descendants of Esau (*Gen. xxxvi. 12.*), and therefore were by pedigree allied to the *Israelites* of the stock of Abraham. They seem to have broken off very early from the other Edomites, joining with the old Horites, idolaters of mount Seir, so that the Amalekites soon apostatised from the religion of Abraham. These apostates were the first that drew the sword against the *Israelites*, their brethren in blood; and they did it unprovoked, barbarously taking advantage of them at a time when they were feeble, faint, and weary; which was great inhumanity. *Deut. xxv. 18, 19.* Besides, their impiety is particularly taken notice of in Scripture, that *they feared not God*, (*Deut. xxv. 19.*) but that their hand was lifted up against the throne of the Lord; (so I understand the text *Exod. xvii. 16.*) against the throne of the God of Abraham their father; which was an aggravating circumstance. Seeing, therefore, that there was such a complication of ill-nature, inhumanity, treachery, and flagrant impiety, in what the Amalekites did, it pleased God to set a brand of the highest infamy upon them, and take the most exemplary vengeance of them, to create the utmost abhorrence of such practices in the minds of all men. Their descendants seem to have inherited the like temper and principles with their fathers, the same rancour against Israel, and the same opposition to God's great and glorious designs by Israel. It does not follow from God's assigning one reason only for destroying the Amalekites, that that was the sole reason; but that was sufficient to be mentioned to the *Israelites*, as they had concern in no more: the rest he might reserve to himself among the *arcana imperii*, (the secrets of his government,) which he was not obliged to divulge, either to Israel his own people, or to any other creature whatever. II. No prince who has not such a divine command as Saul had, can make any just pretence, from this instance, for so invading, or so extirpating a

23 For rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the

LORD, he hath also rejected thee from *being* king.

24 ¶ And Saul said unto Samuel, I have

nation: but vain or wicked pretences may be always made, either from any thing, or for any thing. The historian says, *Saul spared Agag, and all the best of the sheep, &c.* Saul would, indeed, have ungenerously thrown the blame upon the people, and pretended religion as an excuse for it, ver. 21. But the history is express, that it was *Saul and the people*: the people, by Saul's order, or by mutual consent, spared Agag and all the best of the prey; and, indeed, the thing speaks for itself: for the disposal of the prisoners and of the prey could be in no one's power but the king's; and the sparing every thing which was good, shews that he was actuated by a very different spirit from that of piety. The sin, therefore, of which Saul was guilty, was a capital offence: the sparing an enemy and the prey of an enemy, which the God and king of Israel had commanded him to extirpate; and Samuel expressly calls it *rebellion and stubbornness*, and therefore the sentence pronounced on him was just: *because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king*; i. e. he will not establish thy throne, nor make it hereditary in thy family. Let me add, that Saul, notwithstanding his prevarication, his shifting of the blame from himself to his people, and excusing himself by the pretence of devotion, at last acknowledges his crime, *I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words*, (ver. 24. 30.) and thereby owns his punishment to be just. See Waterland's Vindication, p. 92. and Chandler's Review, p. 58.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Though Saul had been threatened, he had not yet been utterly rejected; but now the critical moment comes when his fate is to be determined.

1. Samuel is sent from God, to remind him by whose favour he reigned, and to exhort him to dutiful obedience, particularly in the expedition for which he must now prepare. The Amalekites had behaved cruelly to God's Israel when they came from Egypt, and God had long threatened to blot out their remembrance from under heaven. And now God remembers their old iniquities, and Saul must be the executioner of divine justice, nor spare any thing which breathed, but utterly destroy man and beast. *Note*; (1.) God will certainly remember the injuries done to his people, especially the discouragements put in the way of young converts. (2.) The Almighty will not want executioners of justice when the measure of a nation's sins is full.

2. Saul instantly proceeds, and is followed by a numerous army of two hundred thousand men, besides ten thousand of Judah, whose small proportion some ascribe to envy, others to the necessity of guarding their borders, as most exposed during the absence of the army. When he arrived in the enemies' country, he sent a friendly message to the Kenites, who for the convenience of pasturage had gone thither, to come up, lest they should fall in the promiscuous ruin; which they immediately did: and the reason of this kindness he gives in the friendship they had

shown to Israel when they came from Egypt. *Note*; (1.) Kindnesses done to God's people shall often be recompensed in this world, but certainly in the resurrection of the just. (2.) They are in danger of sharing with sinners in their plagues, who by choice take up their residence among them. (3.) We cannot make too much haste to separate ourselves from the communion of the ungodly.

3. No sooner are the Kenites in safety, than the Amalekites begin to feel the sword. The ambush in the valley succeeds, their army is routed, the capital taken, the country ravaged from end to end, and the king himself a prisoner. But Saul, through covetousness, and perhaps false piety, spared him from death, with the best of the cattle, and utterly destroyed the rest, though some, it seems, with their effects, escaped by flight, and for a little while longer preserved the dying name of Amalek. *Note*; (1.) Partial obedience detests the hypocrite. (2.) Covetousness is often its own punishment. He made a bad bargain, who, to secure the cattle of Amalek, lost the kingdom of Israel.

2dly, We have the interview between Samuel and Saul returning from his victory, which made his bright day close with darkness.

1. God informs Samuel of Saul's disobedience, his repentance that he had made him king, and the removal of the crown from his family determined thereupon. *Note*; Repentance, when spoken of God, signifies, not a change of mind, but of his methods of dealing with men.

2. Samuel is bitterly afflicted herewith, and spends the night in prayers and tears, to gain the reversion of the sentence, but in vain. *Note*; The ruin of sinners is the bitter grief of God's faithful ministers.

3. According to appointment, he goes to Carmel to meet Saul; and not finding him there, where he had stayed no longer than to erect a trophy of his victory, he follows him to Gilgal.

4. Saul comes to meet him, with great confidence boasting his obedience, and blesses Samuel for the prosperous undertaking on which he had sent him. *Note*; They who are trumpeters of their own good works, will soon discover the vanity of their pretences.

5. Samuel's ears are more attentive to the bleating of the sheep, than the boasting of the king; and he upbraids him for the falseness and folly of his conduct, of which his spoils afforded such incontestable evidence.

6. Saul seeks to excuse the fact which he cannot deny, by laying the fault on the people, pretending to design God's glory in the sacrifice of the cattle, and the honour of Israel in shewing them the captive king; but his plea was as false as frivolous: none would have dared to act without his orders, and his own profit and glory was at the bottom of his pretended piety. *Note*; (1.) In vain do we vaunt our expensive sacrifices, and keep up the outward pomp and form of religion, if pride, lust, and covetousness, are in possession of the heart; our very boasted services are an abomination. (2.) They who seek to exculpate

finned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.

25 Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD.

26 And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel.

27 And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent.

28 And Samuel said unto him, The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, *that is* better than thou.

29 And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he *is* not a man, that he should repent.

30 Then he said, I have sinned: yet honour

me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD thy God.

31 So Samuel turned again after Saul; and Saul worshipped the LORD.

32 ¶ Then said Samuel, Bring ye hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites. And Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past.

33 And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal.

34 ¶ Then Samuel went to Ramah; and Saul went up to his house to Gibeah of Saul.

35 And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul: and the LORD repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.

culpate themselves by accusing others who were partners or tempters in their guilt, shew themselves utterly unhumiliated under it.

7. His plea is rejected, and his excuses confuted. Samuel, as commanded of God, delivers his message, and, having his authority, claims an audience. He reminds him of the exaltation to which, from his low estate, God had brought him, and which should, in gratitude, have kept him obedient: the orders he received, on the present occasion, were plain and express, so that the offence must be wilful and deliberate; wherefore he expostulates with him on the inexcusableness of his conduct, and the greatness of his sin. *Note;* (1.) Though it be a terrible message that God gives us against the sinner, we must not fear to deliver it plainly and faithfully. (2.) The more God's mercy has been shewn to us, the more ungrateful are our ill returns.

8. Saul interrupts the prophet in his message, with repeated assertions of his obedience, though his own acknowledgments give the lie to his professions. *Note;* They who are hardened in sin and formality, will not be beaten out of their vain confidence by the plainest refutation.

Lastly, Samuel silences him with an appeal to his own conscience: the most costly services bear no proportion to dutiful obedience; rebellion against God's express command was as criminal as witchcraft, and stubbornness in maintaining his innocence an aggravation of his iniquity like unto idolatry itself. Therefore, as the just reward of such transgression, he denounces his doom, God has rejected him from being king, and cut off the entail of the government from his family. *Note;* (1.) Obedience to God is the most acceptable sacrifice we can offer; a heart submissive to his holy will is better than a hecatomb.

(2.) All disobedience is spiritual idolatry, as it sets up the will of the creature above the will of God.

*Ver. 29. And also the Strength of Israel]* According to the original, and the Margin of our Bibles, it is, *he who gives victory*, and disposes of kingdoms, or, *the triumphant king of Israel*. Houbigant renders it, *he who is the leader of, or who presides over, Israel*.

*Ver. 32, 33. And Agag came unto him delicately, &c.]* Houbigant renders this, *Agag came to him from his bonds, and said, How bitter is death!* for his justification of which version we refer to his note. It is uncertain whether Samuel himself put Agag to death, or commanded it to be done by the public executioner. See Judg. viii. 20. Samuel, however, is very justifiable in the affair; for Agag was a cruel prince, whose sword had made havock among the people, and whose barbarity called for public justice. He, therefore, ordered him to be slain before the Lord; that is, before the altar of the Lord, which was at Gilgal: thus shewing that he destroyed him by the express authority and command of God. See 1 Kings, xviii. 40. and Chandler as above, p. 29. Some writers, willing to lay hold of the least shadow of objection against the Scriptures, have inferred from this passage and some others, that human sacrifices were offered to God: but they have been clearly and fully refuted by Dr. Sykes, in his Examination into the Connection of Natural and Revealed Religion, vol. ii. p. 109.

*Note;* 1. Death is bitter to the sinner; but to the believer in Jesus, sin being removed from his conscience, the bitterness of death is past. 2. Many promise themselves life and peace, who do not see the dart of death, like this sword of Samuel, ready to pierce them to the heart.



## C H A P. XVI.

*Samuel anoints David to be king: the Spirit of the Lord comes upon David, and departs from Saul, who is troubled with an evil spirit: David comes to Saul, and while he plays upon the harp, the evil spirit departs from Saul.*

[Before Christ 1063.]

**A**ND the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Beth-lehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons.

2 And Samuel said, How can I go? if Saul hear it, he will kill me. And the LORD said, Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the LORD.

3 And call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will shew thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto me *him* whom I name unto thee.

4 And Samuel did that which the LORD spake, and came to Beth-lehem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, Comest thou peaceably?

5 And he said, Peaceably: I am come to sacrifice unto the LORD: sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.

6 ¶ And it came to pass, when they were

come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the LORD's anointed is before him.

7 But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

8 Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, Neither hath the LORD chosen this.

9 Then Jesse made Shainmah to pass by. And he said, Neither hath the LORD chosen this.

10 Again, Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, The LORD hath not chosen these.

11 ¶ And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all *thy* children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither.

12 And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he.

13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren:

## C H A P. XVI.

*Ver. 2. And Samuel said, How can I go, &c.]* Though the principal design of Samuel's journey to Bethlehem was, to anoint the son of Jesse; yet was there no falsehood in saying, according to the instruction given him by the Lord, that he came to sacrifice. God, who is truth itself, can never enjoin a lie. As to Samuel's pretending a sacrifice, says Dr. Waterland, it was a just pretence, and a true one: for he did offer sacrifice, as God had commanded him (ver. 5.). And what if he had a farther intention? was he bound to declare all he knew, or to disclose to every man the whole of his errand? Secrecy is of great use in all important business; and the concealing one design by going upon another, to prevent giving offence, or other worse mischief, is as righteous and as laudable a practice, as the drawing a curtain to keep off spies. The making one good design the cover for a better is doing two good things at once, and both in a proper way; and though men have been blamed, and very justly, for using acts of religion as a cloak for iniquity, yet I have never heard, that there could be any thing amiss in performing one act of obedience towards God, in order to

facilitate the performance of another. See Scrip. Vind. P. 95.

*Ver. 10. Again, Jesse made seven of his sons] Thus Jesse made, &c.* Waterland.

*Ver. 12. Now he was ruddy, and withal, &c.] His hair was yellow, his face beautiful, and his form elegant.* Houb.

*Ver. 13. In the midst of his brethren] Secretly from his brethren.* Wat. This translation of Dr. Waterland's seems just; as Samuel was afraid to have the purpose of his commission known, and as it plainly appears from Eliab's treatment of David, ch. xvii. 28. that he did not know him to be the king elect of God's people. Houbigant is for our reading. He thinks the anointing was made publicly, but that Samuel did not declare the purpose of his anointing.

REFLECTIONS.—The king being to be chosen out of the sons of Jesse, we have them here passing in review before Samuel.

1. The eldest came, and being a goodly personage, tall, and majestic, Samuel was ready to conclude that this was God's elect; so much does a noble presence possess us in a man's favour; but God let him know that he was mistaken.

and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.

14 ¶ But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him.

15 And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee.

16 Let our lord now command thy servants, *which are* before thee, to seek out a man, *who is* a cunning player on an harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well.

17 And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring *him* to me.

18 Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I, have seen a son of Jesse the Beth-lehemite, *that is* cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the LORD *is* with him.

19 Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, *which is* with the sheep.

20 And Jesse took an ass *laden* with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent *them* by David his son unto Saul.

taken. God judgeth not, as man, by outward qualifications, but by the heart, the dispositions of which he regards, and with the inmost thoughts of which he is acquainted. Six more of Jesse's sons appear, yet none of these does God choose. Hereupon,

2. Samuel asks Jesse if he has no other children, and receives for answer, that the youngest, the little one, was with the sheep. Instantly he is sent for; his presence was the most needful of any at the feast: he appears in his shepherd's dress; the bloom of youth was on his ruddy cheek; his countenance, or, as the word may signify, *his eyes* beautiful and sparkling; and his aspect and manner bespoke the more pleasing dispositions of his mind: this is he. God commands, and Samuel obeys; the horn of oil is poured upon him, in token of the divine designation; and in, or rather from, the midst of his brethren he is anointed, as chosen out of them, or in private from them, as it was a secret which required concealment. *Note;* (1.) Youth and beauty are pleasing recommendations; and when the mind is fraught with divine grace and natural sweetness, it spreads a new lustre on the external gifts of nature, and makes the possessor doubly amiable. (2.) Diligence in an inferior station is the way to rise to greater honour. (3.) This shepherd-king is the type of that anointed Jesus, his son and successor, who was to feed his flock like a shepherd.

3. He is no sooner anointed, than the Lord pours out upon him an extraordinary measure of his spirit, fitting him for the great designs he has in view; not only increasing his spiritual gifts and graces, but filling him with courage, and probably bestowing an extraordinary skill in music and poetry.

4. Samuel now retires to Ramah, where he lives and dies in peace, and is but once more mentioned in this history. He had finished his work, and God brings him shortly to his reward.

*Ver. 14. The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul]* Or, as the word might have been rendered, *had departed from Saul.* But what spirit? Not the prophetic spirit which he received according to Samuel's prediction, which ceased

instantly when his prophesying was ended: not the spirit to render him incapable of transgressing; for that he never had, and therefore could never lose it. No: God was no longer with him, to prosper and guide him; but left him, as the effect of his disobedience, to that evil, melancholy, jealous, envious, malicious, murderous spirit, which afterwards possessed him, and seems never wholly to have left him. And this *evil spirit* of jealousy, hatred, and cruelty, will in the nature of things banish the spirit of a sound mind, moderation, equity, and every princely virtue, introduce an almost perpetual gloom, and dispose those who are under the unhappy influence of it, to the most unwarrantable and criminal excesses.

*Ver. 15. Saul's servants said, &c.]* The remainder of this chapter is undoubtedly an anticipation, but introduced by the sacred historian very properly and very naturally; for, having related at large how God had rejected Saul, and anointed David, he goes on (as it was a matter of the utmost moment in a religious history,) to inform us of the effects both of one and the other; though we are not to suppose them the instantaneous effects. The effects of Saul's rejection were, he tells us, the departure of God's spirit from him, and his being troubled with an evil spirit. This leads him naturally to speak of the effects of David's election, namely, his being endowed with many divine graces. So that the true chronology of this part of David's life stands thus: He is anointed by Samuel; he carries provisions to his brethren; he fights, and overcomes Goliath; is received in the king's court; contracts a friendship with Jonathan; incurs Saul's jealousy; retires home to his father; is after some time sent for to soothe Saul's melancholy with his harp; proves successful, and is made his armour-bearer, and again excites Saul's jealousy, who endeavours to smite him with his javelin. This anticipation between the 14th and 23d verses of this chapter, comes in, in the order of time, between verses 9, and 10. of chap. xviii. Div. Leg. vol. iii. p. 356.

*Ver. 19. Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, &c.]* The explanation of the chronology of this book given in the foregoing note, renders every difficulty clear and easy. David

had

21 And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his armour-bearer.

22 And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me; for he hath found favour in my sight.

23 And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.

## C H A P. XVII.

*Goliath the Philistine, a giant, challenges the bravest of Israel to single combat; David, sent by his father to visit his brethren, accepts the challenge, and kills Goliath.*

[Before Christ 1063.]

**N**OW the Philistines gathered together their armies to battle, and were gathered together at Shochoh, which *belongeth* to Judah, and pitched between Shochoh and Azekah, in Ephesdammin.

had vanquished the Philistine, was become a favourite of the people, and on that account the object of Saul's jealousy; to avoid the ill effects of which, he prudently retired. During his recess, Saul was seized with his disorder. His servants supposed that it might be alleviated by music; Saul consents to the remedy, and orders an artist to be sought for. They were acquainted with David's skill on the harp, and likewise with Saul's ill disposition towards him. It was a delicate point, which required address; and therefore they recommend him in that artful manner, ver. 16. which signifies, "As you must have one constantly in attendance both at court and in your military expeditions, to be always at hand on occasion, the son of Jesse will become both stations well: he will strengthen your camp, and adorn your court; for he is a tried soldier, and of a graceful presence. You have nothing to fear from his ambition; for you saw with what prudence he went into voluntary banishment, when his popularity had incurred your displeasure." Accordingly Saul is prevailed on; David is sent for, and succeeds with his music. This dissipates all former umbrage; and as one that was to be ever in attendance, he is made his *armour-bearer*. This sunshine continued till David's great success awakened Saul's jealousy, and then the lifted *javelin* was to strike off all obligations. Thus we see how these difficulties are cleared up, and what light is thrown upon the whole history by the supposition of an anticipation in the latter part of this chapter; an anticipation the most natural, proper, and necessary, for the purpose of the historian. Div. Leg. vol. iii. p. 359. in the notes.

*Ver. 21. His armour-bearer*] The literal rendering of the original word נשא כלים *nosé kelim* is, *bearer of the instruments or weapons*. Of these there were three different sorts; the shield, the spear, and the sword. Of these bearers of arms, princes and generals had many: Joab had ten, Saul seems to have had two thousand, chap. xiii. 2. And David's being made *armour-bearer* to Saul, implies no more than that he was constituted one of his *guards*; to bear what instrument, is not particularly said. Chandler's Review, &c. p. 95.

REFLECTIONS.—Behold,

1. Saul a miserable spectacle, forsaken of God, deprived of his wonted wisdom and courage, and haunted by an evil spirit; terrified with the gnawings of remorse; gloomy, timorous, cruel, raving; distracted with suspi-

cion and envy, and mad with despair. *Note*; How like a devil may man become in this world, when the restraints of God's spirit are taken from him, and he is given up to an evil conscience and the power of Satan!

2. His servants, perhaps his physicians, beholding his strange disease, knew that medicine was vain; they tell him their apprehension of his case, and prescribe a palliative, to soothe the ruffled passions of his mind, and lull his troubled bosom to repose. Music has magic powers, and melody might harmonize the jarring discord of his soul; a cunning player on the harp would be his best physician. Saul resolves to try the prescription, and commands such an one to be procured: one of his servants, hearing his order, recommends the son of Jesse, a man eminent for every endowment of mind and person, handsome, wife, valiant, and, for musical skill and execution, peerless. Him, therefore, Saul instantly sends for to court. *Note*; (1.) It is to be lamented, that so divine a science as music should ever, by lewd sonnets, be prostituted to inflame those passions which it was designed to calm and suppress. (2.) It is fatally dangerous for the soul to seek ease in sensual delights, instead of carrying a troubled conscience to a pardoning God. (3.) When God is pleased to distinguish a soul by his gifts and graces, obscurity cannot hide the lustre.

3. No sooner is he sent for, than he comes. His father, according to the custom of the times, sends a present by him to testify his dutiful subjection, and Saul is charmed with his behaviour, makes him his armour-bearer, and desires his father's leave to keep him continually about his person; for soon he experienced the efficacy of David's music. The evil spirit seizing him as usual, his melancholy reflections returned; then David took the harp, and in sounds melodious soothed his sorrows, and, as Josephus says, joined to his melting lyre a voice seraphic as the song: at this the ravings of the king subsided, the evil spirit leaves him, and he regains his usual serenity. *Note*; (1.) Music hath power over some souls, which only they who feel can describe. (2.) It once was found successful to drive the evil spirit from the soul: Satan perceived the good, and lifted music in his cause; and how has it served since to convey to the enchanted mind, with deeper poison, the sentiments of lust, revelling, and creature-idolatry, and to drive from the soul, not the evil spirit, but the good.

2 And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together, and pitched by the valley of Elah, and set the battle in array against the Philistines.

3 And the Philistines stood on a mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side: and *there was* a valley between them.

4 ¶ And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, whose height *was* six cubits and a span.

5 And *he had* an helmet of brags upon his head, and he *was* armed with a coat of mail; and the weight of the coat *was* five thousand shekels of brags.

6 And *he had* greaves of brags upon his legs, and a target of brags between his shoulders.

7 And the staff of his spear *was* like a weaver's beam; and his spear's head *weighed* six hundred shekels of iron: and one bearing a shield went before him.

8 And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel, and said unto them, Why are ye come out to set *your* battle in array? *am* not I a Philistine, and you servants to Saul? chuse you a man for you, and let him come down to me.

9 If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us.

10 And the Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together.

11 When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid.

12 ¶ Now David *was* the son of that Ephrathite of Beth-lehem-judah, whose name *was* Jesse; and he had eight sons: and the man went among men *for* an old man in the days of Saul.

13 And the three eldest sons of Jesse went and followed Saul to the battle: and the names of his three sons that went to the battle *were* Eliab the first-born, and next unto him Abinadab, and the third Shammah.

14 And David *was* the youngest: and the three eldest followed Saul.

15 But David went and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Beth-lehem.

16 And the Philistine drew near morning and evening, and presented himself forty days.

17 And Jesse said unto David his son,

C H A P. XVII.

Ver. 2. Valley of Elah] Valley of oaks, (Hiller. Heroph. p. 358.)

Ver. 4. Goliath, of Gath] When Joshua rooted the Anakims out of the land of Canaan, several of them fled to this city of Gath: See Josh. xi. 22, 23. We have undoubted evidence from the best writers, that there have been men of a gigantic size and make, in ancient times. See Gen. vi. 4. M. Le Cat's Memoir on the History of Giants, and a curious dissertation on the combat of David with Goliath in the 8th volume of the Critici Sacri.

Ver. 5. Five thousand shekels] Seventy-eight pounds and two ounces.

Ver. 7. The staff of his spear] The shaft, &c. (leg. 57 Hiller. 103.)

Six hundred shekels] Nine pounds and six ounces.

Ver. 8. And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel] Antiquity furnishes us with many examples of single combats like this proposed by Goliath. Thus Paris and Menelaus in Homer, and the Horatii and Curiatii in Livy, are said to fight at the head of the army, upon condition that the party of the vanquished should receive laws from the conqueror. And would to God that on many occasions princes would singly determine those quarrels, which, without interesting the public good, give room

for such horrible effusions of innocent blood! But it does not seem very likely to have been with a view to spare human blood, that Goliath proposed this duel with such an Israelite as should be chosen. It was entirely bravado and insolence in the Philistine: who, because he was monstrous, thought himself invincible. See Buddæus Jurisprud. Hist. Specim. sect. 21.

Ver. 12. Now David was the son, &c.] From this 12th verse to the end of the 31st, the Roman edition of the LXX has omitted the whole. But the observations which we have taken from Bishop Warburton in the notes on the preceding chapter, seem sufficient to remove any difficulties which may arise from this passage.

Ver. 15. David went, and returned from Saul, &c.] This being when the Israelites were encamped in Elah, and after the relation of his going to court to soothe Saul's troubled spirit with his music, seems to fix the date of his standing before Saul in quality of musician, in the order of time in which it is related. But the words, David went, and returned from Saul, seem not to be rightly understood. They do not mean that David left Saul's court where he had resided, but that he left Saul's camp to which he had been summoned. The case was this. A sudden invasion of the Philistines had penetrated to Shochoh. Now, upon such occasions, there always went out a general summons for all, able to bear arms, to meet at an appointed rendezvous; where,

G g

Take now for thy brethren an ephah of this parched *corn*, and these ten loaves, and run to the camp to thy brethren;

18 And carry these ten cheeses unto the captain of *their* thousand, and look how thy brethren fare, and take their pledge.

19 Now Saul, and they, and all the men of Israel, *were* in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines.

20 ¶ And David rose up early in the morning, and left the sheep with a keeper, and took, and went, as Jesse had commanded him; and he came to the trench as the host was going forth to the fight, and shouted for the battle.

21 For Israel and the Philistines had put the battle in array, army against army.

22 And David left his carriage in the hand of the keeper of the carriage, and ran into the army, and came and saluted his brethren.

23 And as he talked with them, behold, there came up the champion (the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name) out of the armies of the Philistines, and spake according to the same words: and David heard *them*.

24 And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him, and were fore afraid.

25 And the men of Israel said, Have ye seen this man that is come up? surely to defy Israel is he come up: and it shall be, *that* the man who killeth him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daugh-

where, a choice being made of those most fit for service, the rest were sent back again to their several homes. At such a rendezvous all the tribes at this time assembled. Among the men of Beth-lehem came Jesse and his eight sons: the three eldest were enrolled in the troops, and the rest sent home again. But of these David is particularly named, as the history related particularly to him. *Now David was the son of that Ephrathite—and he had three sons—and David was the youngest: and the three eldest followed Saul. But David went and returned from Saul, to feed his father's sheep at Beth-lehem: that is, he was dismissed by the captains of the host as too young for service. And in these sentiments we find they continued, when he returned with a message from his father to the camp. Div. leg. vol. iii. p. 358.*

*Ver. 18. Carry these ten cheeses]* In the Hebrew *הריני החלב* *charitsei hechalab, ten cheeses of milk;* upon which the author of the *Observations* remarks, that the word can hardly be imagined to signify *cheeses* directly, since *milk* is added in the original, and *cheeses of milk* is so odd an expression, all cheese being made of milk of some kind or other. Our translators were so struck with this, that they have suppressed the word *milk*, as perfectly superfluous. But as the word signifies a *rolling instrument* used for threshing, may we not suppose that what Jesse bade his son David carry to the officer of the army were *ten baskets*, somewhat of the shape of their threshing-instruments, in which there was *coagulated milk*? Baskets made of rushes, or the dwarf palm, are the *cheese-vats* of Barbary: into these they put the curds, and binding them up close *press* them. But the eastern cheeses are of so very soft a consistence after their being pressed, and even when they are brought to be eaten, that Sandys imagined they were not pressed at all; “a beastly kind of *unpressed* cheese, that lies in a lump,” being his description of this part of the eastern diet. Now, if the cheeses sent by Jesse were as soft and tender as those of which Sandys speaks, can we imagine any way more commodious for carrying them to the army, than in the rush-

baskets in which they were formed? Nor would such *baskets of coagulated milk* have been an improper present for an officer in the army of Saul, notwithstanding Sandys's opinion of it: for, by comparing some passages of Dr. Pococke together, it appears, that such sort of cheese is used in the east at this time at the more *elegant tables* of persons of distinction. Thus, describing the hospitality of the Arabs in *Ægypt*, he says, “the middling people—amongst them and the Coptis live much poorer. I have—often sat down with them only to bread, raw onions, and a seed pounded and put in oil, which they call—*serich*, produced from an herb called *simsim*, into which—“they dip their bread:” Yet, poor as these repasts are, the chief difference betwixt them and the collation prepared for the governor of *Faume*, with whom he travelled, and of whose way of living he speaks with honour, consisted chiefly, according to his own description, in the addition of *new cheese*; for he says, it was of bread, raw onions, and a sort of *salt pickled cheese*. Ten cheeses then of this sort, were by no means an improper present for Jesse to make on this occasion. See *Observations*, p. 155.

*And take their pledge]* By this, says Houbigant, I understand that which they gave for the purchase of this food. Therefore Jesse commands David to run, ver. 17. that he might the sooner receive the *pledge* or *price*. Thus *Kimchi*, whom Cappel follows, understands it; and much better than *Symmachus*; *thou shalt receive their hire, or thou shalt bring their wages to me*; for it does not appear that the foldiers of Israel at that time received wages from the king. Some understand it only to express, *thou shalt bring me word how they do*. The original word *ערב* *oreb*, signifies a *sponsor* or security, and agrees best with Houbigant's interpretation.

*Ver. 19. Now Saul, and they—were in the valley of Elah, fighting]* Or, *Now Saul, and they—were still by the valley of oaks, ready to fight*.

*Ver. 25. And make his father's house free in Israel]* This might be rendered, *will enoble his father's house*. The Chaldee paraphrase has it, *and will make his father's house free*

ter, and make his father's house free in Israel.

26 And David spake to the men that stood by him, saying, What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?

27 And the people answered him after this manner, saying, So shall it be done to the man that killeth him.

28 ¶ And Eliab his eldest brother heard what he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle.

29 And David said, What have I now done? *Is there* not a cause?

30 ¶ And he turned from him towards another, and spake after the same manner: and the people answered him again after the former manner.

31 And when the words were heard which David spake, they rehearsed *them* before Saul: and he sent for him.

32 ¶ And David said to Saul, Let no man's

heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine.

33 And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.

34 And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock:

35 And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered *it* out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught *him* by his beard, and smote him, and slew him.

36 Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.

37 David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee.

38 ¶ And Saul armed David with his armour, and he put an helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail.

39 And David girded his sword upon his armour, and he assayed to go; for he had not

*free princes in Israel; enfranchising them from all charges and imposts, which was a royal privilege. See Selden de Jure Nat. et Gent. lib. vi. cap. 14. Thus Caleb heretofore, and David afterwards, encouraged their people to great exploits; and we have many instances of this kind in prophane history.*

*Ver. 29. What have I now done? Is there not a cause? What have I done, I have only just spoken a word. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 34—37. Thy servant kept his father's sheep.] The young hero builds his confidence upon four arguments: 1. Upon the courage and success with which he heretofore combated a lion at one time, and a bear at another; enemies full as terrible as Goliath. 2. Upon Goliath's being uncircumcised, an enemy of the people and covenant of God. 3. Upon the full assurance that God will support any one who shall undertake to punish this monster for his insolent treatment of the Israelites as slaves. 4. Upon the experience he had already had of the succour and protection of Providence; an experience which firmly persuaded him, that the same God who delivered him from the fury of lions and bears, will not fail to give him victory over Goliath, however formidable and invincible he may appear. One knows not which to admire most in these re-*

*fections, and the manner of expressing them; whether the courage of David, or his piety and modesty.*

*Ver. 38. Saul armed David with his armour.] i. e. Not with his own armour, for Saul was of too great a size; but he ordered a helmet and coat of mail to be brought out of his armoury for him.*

*Ver. 39. And he assayed to go.] But David marched with difficulty, as not accustomed to these; therefore he said to Saul, I cannot go with these arms, for I am not accustomed to them: and David put them off. Houb.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, When David had succeeded as Saul's musician, and no relapse for some time made his stay longer necessary, he returned to his father's house at Bethlehem; probably not relishing the dissolute manners of a court, and infinitely happier in retirement and communion with God, whilst he kept his father's flock. Here he seems to have been almost, if not altogether, forgotten, till a new incident calls him once more into the presence and family of the king.

1. The Philistines recover from their late defeat, and, encouraged, no doubt, by the accounts they had received of Saul's quarrel with Samuel, and his distracted state of mind, again invade Israel. But Saul, now restored to

proved it. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them. And David put them off him. 40 And he took his staff in his hand, and

health, is enabled to make head against them, and with his army encamps on the hill opposite his enemies. *Note;* The enemies of God's people are always watching to take advantage, and especially to profit by their disputes and divisions.

2. A mighty champion went out of their camp, their boast and glory, and proudly defied the armies of Israel. Forth he marches, proud in his strength and stature, and, with a voice as loud as thunder, challenges the armies of the Israelites to send a man to fight with him, offers in bravado to have the fate of either kingdom decided by the issue of the combat, and vaunts his own condescension in thus submitting to accept a man out of their army who were no better than servants to Saul. *Note;* Pride will sooner or later have a fall.

3. The effect which this produced on Saul and the Israelites. They were quite dispirited, and ready to fly before a single Philistine. *Note;* When we have provoked God to depart from us, fear will terrify us on every approach of danger.

4dly, Forty days the armies lay encamped, and, morning and evening, the champion of Philistia renewed his challenge, and reproached the cowardice of his foes; when lo! an adversary appears, little thought of, and, to human view, very unequal to the combat. David, in obedience to his father's commands, and in love to his brethren, (though, if we may judge of their past by their present conduct, they little deserved it at his hands,) having left his sheep with a keeper, hastes to the camp, and enters it just as the host was marching forth to engage. As he could not then carry the provisions which his father had sent by him to his brethren, he left them with those who guarded the baggage, and ran to salute his brethren, and discharge his commission to them from his father. And whilst he talked with them, just then Goliath marches forth from the ranks of the Philistines, and renews his proud challenge; where we may observe,

1. The cowardice of the people. They fled from him; not a man dared to face him.

2. The great reward that Saul promised, to encourage any man who would venture to engage this mighty warrior; wealth and honour for himself and for his family, and freedom from all taxes, for ever.

3. David, hearing the blasphemy of the Philistine, felt his spirit kindling in his bosom. He could not bear that an uncircumcised Philistine should thus triumph in his proud boasting, or that the armies of the living God should be thus defied, and a reflection thereby cast on his honour. He therefore inquires concerning the reward, as if he wondered that none dared accept the challenge; and, by the earnestness and repetition of his question, intimated his own readiness to do it. *Note;* A soul filled with holy zeal cannot bear to see God or his cause blasphemed, without rising up in its vindication.

4. Eliab's anger rises against him. He could not hear his inquiries, and the daring spirit that he shewed, without feeling the workings of jealousy and envy against him. To quench, therefore, this rising spark of zeal, he abuses him

as a negligent youth, who had, through pride and curiosity, quitted his calling, and left the few sheep of his poor father, to come down to see the battle; insolently and censoriously pretending to know the pride and naughtiness of his heart, and seeking not only to discourage his own spirit, but to make him appear despicable, and cause his words to be disregarded by those to whom he addresses himself. *Note;* (1.) The enmity of an offended brother is most bitter and implacable. (2.) Envy can easily misrepresent the most upright and innocent intentions. (3.) Censoriousness will make men not only misinterpret our actions, but pretend to know those secrets of the heart which are open to God alone.

5. David, not provoked by such unjust and illiberal abuse, mildly confutes his misrepresentation. Was there not a cause for his coming? Was it not his father's order, and on a message of kindness to him? And was there not reason to express repentment at such an impious defiance? He therefore turns from him, and, undismayed, continues his inquiries, and intimates his readiness to undertake this boaster. *Note;* (1.) A soft answer turneth away wrath. (2.) We must not be discouraged in well doing, nor cease, because our good intentions are misrepresented or abused.

3dly, Such repeated inquiries, and apparent resolution, are quickly carried to the ears of Saul, and David is sent for to his tent.

1. He offers to engage in single combat with the Philistine, and, with the intrepidity of a hero, dares encourage the timorous hosts that fled before him. *Note;* The righteous is as bold as a lion.

2. Saul discourages him from the undertaking, by pleading his youth and inexperience; great as his courage might be, the contest was utterly unequal. *Note;* We must not judge by appearances. They who have God for them, have more with them than can be against them.

3. David modestly answers the objection of the king; he was not so unused to hazardous enterprises as he seemed to apprehend. As he fed his flock, a lion, fierce with hunger, came and seized a lamb. He pursued, seized him by the beard, and slew him, though unarmed. A bear too, who made the same attempt, shared a like fate: and, if God strengthened him thus against the lion and the bear, how much more would he deliver him from the hand of a Philistine, who, by his defiance of the armies of the living God, had provoked the God of Israel's armies to destroy him. *Note;* (1.) We need never be ashamed of an honest calling, though mean. (2.) David is the type of him, who, from the mouth of the roaring lion, has delivered the lambs of his flock. (3.) Past experience should be present encouragement.

*Ver. 40. Five smooth stones]* Bishop Patrick thinks that this should rather be rendered *five cleft or rough stones*; as he thinks such would have been most fit for his purpose. But *smooth stones* would have entered more easily into the forehead, would have less obstacles in passing through the air, and were much more proper to reach the mark, when thrown from a sling.

*Ver.*

chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling *was* in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine.

41 And the Philistine came on and drew near unto David; and the man that bare the shield *went* before him.

42 And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him: for he was *but* a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance.

43 And the Philistine said unto David, *Am* I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods.

44 And the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field.

45 Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.

46 This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcases of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.

47 And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle *is* the LORD's, and he will give you into our hands.

48 And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet David, that David hasted, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine.

49 And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang *it*, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth.

50 So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but *there was* no sword in the hand of David.

51 Therefore David ran, and stood upon the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith. And when the Philistines saw their champion was dead, they fled.

52 ¶ And the men of Israel and of Judah arose, and shouted, and pursued the Philistines, until thou come to the valley, and to the gates of Ekron. And the wounded of the Philistines fell down by the way to Shaaraim, even unto Gath, and unto Ekron.

53 And the children of Israel returned from chasing after the Philistines, and they spoiled their tents.

54 ¶ And David took the head of the Philistine, and brought it to Jerusalem; but he put his armour in his tent.

55 ¶ And when Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine, he said unto Abner, the

*Ver. 43. Am I a dog?* See Exod. xxii. 31. As nothing can be more insolent and impious than the words of Goliath, so nothing can afford us a fairer idea of firm faith and heroic confidence in God, than David's reply to him. We see the arm of God in this whole event. He it was who guided the hand; He it was who gave force to the arm of David; and who can resist the force of a stroke inflicted by this divine hand, though the hand of a David were not the instrument?

*With staves*] Or, *with a staff*.

*Ver. 54. And David took the head of the Philistine*] After having shewn the head to Saul, ver. 57. and exhibited it to all the people, chap. xviii. 6. he deposited it at Jerusalem, that it might be an object of terror, perhaps, to the Jebusites, who still possessed the strong fortrefs of Zion. 2 Sam. v. 7. Some suppose, that David carried the head of Goliath to Jerusalem, as being the nearest and most convenient town to the place of the combat. A tent, most

likely, was set up for David upon this occasion, where he placed the armour of Goliath. It was afterwards deposited in the tabernacle, as a trophy to the glory of that God who had given David the victory.

*Ver. 55—58. Whose son is this youth? &c.*] Saul probably knew David's person, but had forgotten the name of his father. He does not ask, therefore, who the youth is, but *whose son* he is; a question of the more consequence to him, as he had promised his daughter in marriage to the conqueror of Goliath. Besides, as David had been for some time absent from Saul, perhaps a year or two, what is there improbable, that the youth, who had been so little with Saul, should, after such an absence, not even be remembered by him in person at first view; especially as he was now in his shepherd's habit, and not in that of one of Saul's guards (see the note ch. xvi. 21.); and when Saul had himself been employed in a multiplicity of important affairs, seen such a variety of different persons since



captain of the host, Abner, whose son *is* this youth? And Abner said, *As* thy soul liveth, O king, I cannot tell.

56 And the king said, Enquire thou whose son the stripling *is*.

57 And as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner took him, and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand.

58 And Saul said to him, Whose son *art* thou, *thou* young man? And David answered, *I am* the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite.

### CHAP. XVIII.

*David is much beloved by Jonathan: Saul hates him, and seeks to kill him in his fury: he offers him his daughter for a suare.*

[Before Christ 1063.]

**A**ND it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the

soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.

2 And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house.

3 Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.

4 And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that *was* upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.

5 ¶ And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants.

6 ¶ And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to

since the first interview with David, and had been disordered by the melancholy of his own mind? But it is much less to be wondered at, that he should not remember his parentage, which is the only thing that the sacred historian affirms. See Grotius, and Chandler's Review, p. 96. Houbigant is of opinion, that Saul was at this time seized with that evil spirit which troubled him, and that Abner, courtier-like, would not answer him, lest his answer should prove to Saul the present unhappy and disturbed state of his mind. We learn from the whole of this pleasing chapter, how ready God is to help those who trust in him; for whose defence and protection he makes use of means, apparently the most weak, to humble the pride of the wicked, and to destroy the powers which seem most formidable.

REFLECTIONS.—1st. David having put off his armour, in his shepherd's dress, with his sling in his hand, marches down toward this proud Philistine, and chooses five smooth stones from the brook which ran in the valley, nor was at all terrified by the formidable appearance of his antagonist, since God was the strength of his hope.

1. Goliath, looking on such a puny foe, a youth, and so accoutred, treated with high disdain his insolence in daring to approach him, as if he were a dog, to be beaten with a shepherd's staff; and, cursing him by his gods, threatens, as easily as a lion tears the lamb, to give his flesh to the birds and beasts. *Note;* (1.) The curse which is causeless falls only on the head that utters it. (2.) The presumption of the proud destroys them.

2. David replies with confidence and dependence upon God, and hurls back this boaster's threatenings into his face. Having authority from the God of Israel, whom, in his people, Goliath had defied, dependent on the arm of

that omnipotent Lord of hosts, who alone giveth victory in the battle, he threatens that his carcase, and those of his countrymen, shall this day afford a nobler feast to the birds and beasts: the nations around shall then acknowledge the glory of Israel's God, and his church and people adore him for a salvation so great and wonderful.

2dly, We have the issue of this unequal match, and see that the battle is not always to the strong.

1. Like a Colossus, huge Goliath strides along, glittering in burnished armour; David, with nimbler step, hastes to meet him, and, having placed the stone in his sling, aimed at the broad mark of this Philistine's forehead. Swift flew the messenger of death, resistless pierced through his skull, and backward fell the mighty hero, extended breathless on the plain. With eagerness now David flies on his prey, draws forth the vanquished champion's sword, and severs his head from his body, as the trophy of his victory. *Note;* (1.) Vain is the arm of flesh against the power of God. (2.) Thus has Jesus conquered the powers of darkness, and spoiled them openly; and thus shall every believer conquer those giant-like corruptions which wage war against his soul.

2. A panic seizes the hosts of Philistia when they behold their boasted hero fallen; whilst Israel's armies, shouting for victory, pursue the dispirited fugitives even to the gates of their cities, and on their return spoil the camp. *Note;* They who rely on man will find their dependence but a broken reed.

### CHAP. XVIII.

*Ver. 1. The soul of Jonathan was knit]* We shall have occasion in the close of this history to speak particularly concerning this amiable and virtuous friendship. It is plain from the 2d verse, that David had gone back to his father's

meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of musick.

7 And the women answered *one another* as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.

8 And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeas'd him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed *but* thousands: and *what* can he have more but the kingdom?

9 And Saul eyed David from that day and forward.

10 ¶ And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand, as at other times: and *there was* a javelin in Saul's hand.

11 And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall *with it*. And David avoided out of his presence twice.

12 ¶ And Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, and was departed from Saul.

13 Therefore Saul removed him from him,

and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people.

14 And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the LORD *was* with him.

15 Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him.

16 But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them.

17 ¶ And Saul said to David, Behold my elder daughter Merab, her will I give thee to wife: only be thou valiant for me, and fight the LORD's battles. For Saul said, Let not mine hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him.

18 And David said unto Saul, Who *am* I? and what *is* my life, or my father's family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king?

19 But it came to pass at the time when Merab, Saul's daughter, should have been given to David, that she was given unto Adriel the Meholathite to wife.

20 ¶ And Michal, Saul's daughter, loved

father's house after his first introduction to Saul; which confirms the remarks made respecting this history in the former chapter.

*Ver. 3. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, &c.]* That is, entered into a treaty or agreement of perpetual friendship. See 2 Sam. i. 26.

*Ver. 4. And Jonathan stripped himself]* Princes do not only order castets to be given to those whom they would honour; they have sometimes presented such persons with *their own garments*. D'Herbelot informs us, that when sultan Selim, the son of Bajazet, had defeated Canlon Gauri, sultan of the Mamelukes of Ægypt, he assisted at prayers in a mosque at Aleppo upon his triumphant return to Constantinople; and that the imam of the mosque having added at the close of the prayer these words, "May God preserve Selim Khan, the servant and minister of the two sacred cities of Mecca and Medina!" the title was so very agreeable to the sultan, that he gave the robe which he had on to this imam, and from that time forward the Othoman emperors have always used it in their letters patent, as kings of Ægypt. Thus *Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David; and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.* See *Observations*, p. 182.

*Ver. 5. And David went out whithersoever, &c.]* Saul himself, highly pleas'd with David, intrusted him with the management of various affairs. Charged with divers expeditions, he signalis'd his prudence and his courage with such success, that *Saul set him over the men of war*, that is,

rais'd him to a very distinguished rank among the officers of his army, of which Abner continued general; and he always gain'd the esteem of those about him, except of some few who envied his preferment.

*Ver. 6—9. The women came out—singing and dancing]* See Exod. xv. 1. 20. Saul probably received his first suspicion that *David* was that *neighbour of his who was better than himself*, to whom the Lord, as Samuel had told him, had given the kingdom, ch. xv. 28. from these acclamations of the women; which, I suppose, brought this declaration of the prophet to his remembrance, without which he would have treated this exalted encomium with neglect. This appears probable from his saying, *And what can he have more but the kingdom?* ver. 8. and from what is further added, *Saul eyed David from that day.*

*Ver. 10. And he prophesied]* Houbigant renders this, *And he was out of his senses*; after the Chaldee, which has it, *And he was mad*: for it is not proper, says he, to render the original word, *prophesied*: *קִטְנַבֵּה* *kithnabbe*, in *Hithpael*, is different from *נָבֵא* *naba*, in *Kal*, to *prophecy*, at least in this place; because it is here used in a bad sense, whereas to *prophecy* is never used but in a good one. The Arabic version has it, "*he prophesied*, i. e. delivered the words of the Pytho, or evil spirit." We may observe in the next verse another instance of anticipation, where it is said, that *David avoided* (or *escaped*) *out of his presence twice*; referring to what happened chap. xix. 10.

*Ver. 13. Therefore Saul removed him from him]* Jealous of David, Saul could no longer bear him at his court; and therefore

David; and they told Saul, and the thing pleased him.

21 And Saul said, I will give him her, that she may be a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him. Wherefore Saul said to David, Thou shalt this day be my son-in-law in *the one of the twain*.

22 ¶ And Saul commanded his servants,

*saying*, Commune with David secretly, and say, Behold, the king hath delight in thee, and all his servants love thee: now therefore be the king's son-in-law.

23 And Saul's servants spake those words in the ears of David. And David said, Seemeth it to you *a light thing* to be a king's son-in-law, seeing that I *am* a poor man, and lightly esteemed?

therefore he gave him a command which employed him abroad, and subjected him to dangers, some of which he hoped might deliver him from a person grown so offensive to him.

*Ver. 21. And Saul said, &c.]* Houbigant renders this, *But Saul determined that he would propose to give her to him, that he might be ensnared by means of her, and fall into the hands of the Philistines.* It is not to be imagined that *Michal*, who loved David, would lay any snares for him: Saul prepared the snare by means of her; hoping, that when David should undertake to fight the Philistines for her sake, he would fall in battle. The latter clause of the verse he renders thus: *Thou shalt this day be my son-in-law, on another condition.* His first condition was, the conquest of Goliath; his second, *an hundred forekins of the Philistines.* Nothing can be more despicable than the shuffling, base, and insidious conduct of Saul, throughout this whole transaction. Ludolf, in his History of Ethiopia, b. i. ch. 16. informs us, that it is to this day the custom in Ethiopia to judge of the number of the dead in a battle, not by the heads, but by those signs of victory which Saul demanded from David.

*Ver. 23. David said, Seemeth it to you a light thing? &c.]* These words express the difficulty of obtaining a king's daughter for his wife in his circumstances, with an intent to find out the condition of the offer; for thus they run, according to the original: *“Do you think it an easy matter to be a king's son-in-law, since I am a poor man, and lightly esteemed? Can I easily obtain the king's daughter, who have no riches nor honours?”* And to this sense the answer of Saul's servants leads us: *“The king desireth no dowry, but an hundred forekins of the Philistines.”* That the word נקל *nekel*, rendered *light*, frequently signifies *easy*, appears from 2 Kings, iii. 18. *This is but a light thing in the sight of the Lord;* i. e. an easy thing for God to do; again, Prov. xiv. 6. *knowledge is easy to a man of understanding;* i. e. easy to be obtained. It has been objected, that the destruction of these Philistines impugns David's moral character, and represents him as inhuman and delighting in blood. But the objectors should consider, that the Hebrews and Philistines were in a perpetual state of war during the whole reign of Saul; chap. xiv. 52. David had a regiment of soldiers; and Saul, in hopes of getting rid of the man he hated, sends him upon an expedition to execute his vengeance upon his enemies; and tells him, that if he was so successful as to destroy a hundred of them, he should be his son-in-law. What does our young hero do? He accepts the offer, takes his men, attacks the enemy, obtains a much greater advantage over

them than Saul expected, and slays *two hundred* of them instead of *one*. Saul's asking David for a hundred forekins did not limit him to that number. It was not to be less. And if it was no argument of David's delight in blood that he killed a hundred of Saul's enemies because he required it of him, it could be no argument of his delight in blood to kill two hundred of them because he had no orders to the contrary, and knew that it would be agreeable to the will of his master. The only just reasons which could vindicate Saul in commanding, and David in executing his command to cut off a hundred Philistines, were either God's order, or their being at war with the Philistines, or the necessity of it to weaken their enemies, the safety of their country, the security of their liberty, or similar motives: and if these motives concurred to justify David in accepting the condition of becoming Saul's son-in-law by bringing the hundred forekins, his bringing more was yet a higher service to the public; and, so far from being any breach of the rules of religion and morality, was a proof of real patriotism and public spirit, which highly merited the thanks of the king and country, and rendered him worthy of the honour intended him. The men whom David destroyed were the enemies of his country, in a state of actual war with his prince and people, and therefore lawful prize wherever he could lay hold of them; and in every expedition wherein he was employed, it was his duty to harass and destroy them. See Joseph. Antiq. lib. vi. cap. 10. sect. 2.

REFLECTIONS.—1st. David is now fixed at court.

1. Saul resolves to keep him about his person, advances him to the command of a troop, and employs him often in his affairs of state; in all of which David approves himself a faithful and diligent servant. Thus he learnt to obey before he came to rule.

2. Jonathan, Saul's son, is charmed with those excellencies which appear in him, and from his behaviour conceives the warmest affection for him; probably their ages were nearly equal, their manners similar, and their souls, as generous spirits always are, susceptible of the tenderest feelings of friendship. To give him an immediate mark of his regard, Jonathan carries him to his tent, strips off his own clothes, even to his sword and his girdle; and, as David must appear at court, will have him dressed as a courtier, and suitable to his high deserts. There, to perpetuate the bands of friendship, a solemn covenant is made between them, to be faithful to each other till death. *Note;* (1.) A faithful friend is among the greatest of human blessings. (2.) True friendship is constant, and startles not

24 And the servants of Saul told him, saying, On this manner spake David.

25 And Saul said, Thus shall ye say to David, The king desireth not any dowry, but an hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to be avenged of the king's enemies. But Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines.

26 And when his servants told David these words, it pleased David well to be the king's son-in-law: and the days were not expired.

27 Wherefore David arose and went, he

and his men, and slew of the Philistines two hundred men; and David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full tale to the king, that he might be the king's son-in-law. And Saul gave him Michal his daughter to wife.

28 ¶ And Saul saw and knew that the LORD was with David, and *that* Michal Saul's daughter loved him.

29 And Saul was yet the more afraid of David; and Saul became David's enemy continually.

30 Then the princes of the Philistines went

not at assurances. (3.) They who are Christ's friends will bind themselves to be his for ever.

3. David's conduct procured him universal esteem; his valour made him loved abroad, and his humility kept him from being envied at court. *Note;* In high stations, it is a difficult part so to act as to acquire honour without provoking envy.

2dly, To allay the joy of his preferment, his troubles quickly follow.

1. Saul becomes jealous of his growing greatness; having made a triumphant progress through the cities of Israel after the victory, and being met by the women singing the praises of the conquerors, his soul is stung with envy to hear ten thousands slain ascribed to David, and to himself but thousands. From that day forward his look of complacency changed into the frown of displeasure, and dark suspicions troubled him, conscious that his kingdom was forfeited, and fearing that this was his rival who would dethrone him. *Note;* (1.) The praises of merit are, in the ears of envy, grating discord. (2.) An evil and malignant eye betrays the rancour of the heart.

2. He attempts to destroy him. Brooding all night over these dark thoughts, next day his former demoniacal phrenzy returns upon him. David, observing his unhappy case, ran to his harp, which before had soothed his rage; but Saul, mad with envy, hurls his javelin at him. *Note;* (1.) They who indulge the evil thoughts of their own hearts, invite the devil to take possession of them. (2.) Jealousy is cruel as the grave, and thirsts for the precious life.

3dly, What Saul cannot perpetrate by open violence, he seeks to accomplish by secret fraud.

1. His fears, the more increased by the evident blessing of God upon David, put him upon removing him from court. But this he seeks to do in such a way as, under pretence of preferment, to expose him to danger and death; he, therefore, sends him out to fight the Philistines, and to whet his ardour, the more to endanger his life, promises to bestow on him his eldest daughter to wife if he return victorious, and approve himself in deeds of valour. This, indeed, was what he before deserved, though he had not claimed her, and now modestly professes himself unworthy of such an honour; ready, however, to obey his sovereign, and zealous for Israel's glory, his exploits serve to spread

his fame, and ingratiate him with the army, while his prudent conduct engages the regard of all. *Note;* (1.) God can over-rule the most wicked designs of our enemies for our good, and to the confusion of their authors. (2.) Modest worth shines with double lustre.

2. The more David prospers, the more Saul fears; therefore, to exasperate him into some rash word or false step, he affronts him, by giving his daughter to another, perhaps on the very day fixed for the bridal feast.

3. Saul lays a new snare for him. Though he had robbed him of one daughter, he would entice him with the other, and sets his courtiers to encourage him to hope for the honour of being yet the king's son-in-law, pretending the pleasure that Saul took in him, and proposing the dowry which Saul expected, a hundred foreskins of the Philistines. He hoped that this expedition might prove fatal to him, as the Philistines would be exasperated at such an insult offered them, and he should thus get rid of his enemy.

4. David at first declined the hints of the courtiers, and behaved the more cautiously, as he saw them wait for his halting. He humbly urges the greatness of the honour, and his own unworthiness of it, whose fortune or condition was not, in anywise, answerable to such a match; but seeing, at last, that it was really the king's mind, he liked the proposal very well, and ere the time proposed was expired, he doubled the number of foreskins, that, since this was to be the dowry, he might not appear deficient: and now he has Michal's hand, as he before possessed her heart. *Note;* (1.) Kings never want wicked instruments to further their basest designs. (2.) True humility will make a man rather undervalue than over-rate his own importance. (3.) If it be such an honour to be a king's son-in-law, how much greater to become the sons and heirs of the eternal King, as every believer is who is joined to the Lord!

5. His marriage kept him not from the field. He distinguished himself again beyond all the servants of Saul against the princes of the Philistines, and gained a great name among the people, while Saul's envy increased in proportion with David's eminence. So will God confound the wife in their own craftiness, and in spite of every danger exalt the man whom he delighteth to honour.

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forth: and it came to pass, after they went forth, *that* David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul; so that his name was much set by.

## C H A P. XIX.

*Jonathan defends David before Saul, who endeavours to kill him: David flies to Samuel: Saul, going to seek for him, meets a company of prophets, and prophesies among them.*

[Before Christ 1063.]

**A**ND Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David.

2 But Jonathan Saul's son delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret *place*, and hide thyself.

3 And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where thou *art*, and I will commune with my father of thee; and what I see, that I will tell thee.

4 ¶ And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee; and because his works *have been* to thee-ward very good.

5 For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine; and the LORD wrought a

great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest *it*, and didst rejoice: wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?

6 And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan: and Saul sware, *As* the LORD liveth, he shall not be slain.

7 And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan shewed him all those things. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence, as in times past.

8 ¶ And there was war again: and David went out, and fought with the Philistines, and slew them with a great slaughter; and they fled from him.

9 And the evil spirit from the LORD was upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his javelin in his hand: and David played with *his* hand.

10 And Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with the javelin; but he slipped away out of Saul's presence, and he smote the javelin into the wall: and David fled, and escaped that night.

11 ¶ Saul also sent messengers unto David's house, to watch him, and to slay him in the morning: and Michal David's wife told him, saying, If thou save not thy life to-night, to-morrow thou shalt be slain.

12 ¶ So Michal let David down through a window: and he went, and fled, and escaped.

## C H A P. XIX.

*Ver. 1, 2. Saul spake to Jonathan]* Jonathan, when Saul ordered him to kill David, disobeyed the command, and, instead of murdering him, pleaded his innocence and merits as reasons for saving him. He also disclosed to David his father's design and fixed resolution to destroy him; and, in my judgment, neither was inconsistent with his duty and allegiance to his father and king. He who knows of a conspiracy against an innocent person's life, and does not discover it, or who kills such a one by another's instigation and command, is himself a murderer; and no duty to a father, nor allegiance to a prince, can oblige any one to shed innocent blood. Jonathan was, therefore, so far from acting contrary to his duty and allegiance, in refusing to become his father's instrument in murdering David, that he gave a noble instance of filial piety, affection, and duty, in his repeated endeavours to preserve him from so unnatural and atrocious a crime; and piety and virtue will ever applaud him for the generous concern that he expressed for the honour of his father, and the pre-

servation of his friend. The reader will observe, that Jonathan ever considers David as an innocent person, and pleads for him to his father, not as a rebel or notorious offender, to obtain his pardon, but as having never done any thing to forfeit Saul's favour, or his own life; and therefore Jonathan must be commended in disobeying his father's order, and doing all he can to prevent his purpose to kill him.

*Ver. 6. And Saul sware, As the Lord liveth, he shall not be slain]* To judge of Saul by his future conduct, we should be tempted to believe, that he swore only the better to deceive his son Jonathan. But when we consider well the character of this prince, weak, inconstant, passionate, we may suppose, without much difficulty, that the discourse of Jonathan affected him, and that he sincerely resolved no more to attack the life of David: a resolution, however, which David's increasing glory soon overthrew, *ver. 8.*

*Ver. 11. To slay him in the morning]* Calmet supposes that there was some superstition which prevented executions by night. He observes, that the Philistines acted the same with regard to Samson; *Judg. xvi. 2.* The

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13 And Michal took an image, and laid *it* in the bed, and put a pillow of goats' *hair* for his bolster, and covered *it* with a cloth.

14 And when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, He *is* sick.

15 And Saul sent the messengers *again* to see David, saying, Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may slay him.

16 And when the messengers were come in, behold, *there was* an image in the bed, with a pillow of goats' *hair* for his bolster.

17 And Saul said unto Michal, Why hast thou deceived me so, and sent away mine enemy, that he is escaped? And Michal answered Saul, He said unto me, Let me go; why should I kill thee?

18 ¶ So David fled, and escaped, and came to Samuel to Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and dwelt in Naioth.

19 And it was told Saul, saying, Behold, David *is* at Naioth in Ramah.

20 And Saul sent messengers to take David: and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing *as* appointed over them, the Spirit of God was upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied.

21 And when it was told Saul, he sent other messengers, and they prophesied likewise. And Saul sent messengers *again* the third time, and they prophesied also.

Mahometans also, to this very day, never do any thing of the kind at night.

*Ver. 13. Michal took an image*] In the Hebrew it is תרפים *teraphim*; which *teraphim*, it plainly follows from hence, must have been figures of the human form; for the design of Michal was manifestly to deceive the messengers of Saul, by showing them something in a bed so far resembling a man as to make them believe it was David himself. And as this was plainly her design, one would conceive that the next clause should express something demonstrative of sickness. What wonder is there that she put a pillow under the head? (though, by the way, our translation of a *pillow*, for a *bolster*, has no great meaning in it.) I should apprehend the passage might be rendered, *and she put a goat's skin to, or over, its head, and covered it with a garment*; for thus there would be an appearance of sickness, and the imposition would not be so easily detected. Several interpreters have supposed, that Michal put goat's hair round the head of the image: but the interpretation that we have given seems nearest the Hebrew, and best suited to the circumstances. The Vulgate renders it, *et pellem pilosam caprarum posuit ad caput ejus*. Abarbanel and Abendana say, that women in those times were accustomed to have figures made in the likeness of their husbands, that when they were absent from them they might have their image to look upon. If this was the case, Michal's image, most probably, was one of this kind.

*Ver. 17. Michal answered Saul, he said unto me, Let me go, &c.*] We have an account of an action of a woman, Polixena, the sister of the famous Dionysius, tyrant of Sicily, which is as noble and generous as this of Michal's. Her husband was accused of treason. He fled away by means of her contrivance: Dionysius, being informed of it, reproached her very severely, when she replied, "Can you imagine me so ungenerous, as to be acquainted with the danger that my husband was in, without doing myself the honour of partaking it with him?"

*Ver. 18. He and Samuel went, and dwelt in Naioth*] The Chaldee renders this as if it was an appellation, *the school of learning*. This was the famous school of the prophets. As many have been at a loss to ascertain the

specific nature of these schools, it will not be unseasonable to endeavour to remove their difficulties. We have in this book only a partial view of the prophets; i. e. a view of them while at their devotions only, and not at their studies: for Saul and his messengers coming when the society was *prophesying*, or at divine worship, the spirit of God fell upon them, and they *prophesied* also. And thus the Chaldee paraphrast understands *prophesying*; adoring God, and singing praises to him: for we may well suppose, that they began and ended all their daily studies with this holy exercise. The college of the prophets was dedicated to the study of the Jewish law only; and, as such, was naturally and properly a seminary of prophets: for those who were most knowing and zealous in the law were surely most fit to convey God's commands to his people. Samuel was *set over*, or was master of one of these schools. See Samuel Triplici Nomine Laudat.; by Dr. Barton.

*Ver. 20—23. Saul sent messengers to take David—and he went thither, &c.*] One intent of this prophesying of the messengers and Saul was to prevent them from seizing, and him from murdering, certainly David, and probably, in the same fit of rage, Samuel, and the company of the prophets who harboured them. And whether this prophesying consisted in predicting somewhat future, such as Saul's destruction, and David's advancement to the throne, or what is understood by preaching, yet it had certainly one good effect, worthy the Spirit of God to produce; the preservation of the life of one destined to sit on the throne of Israel. The change in the messengers of Saul was great; but that which was wrought in Saul himself was astonishing. He came to wreak his vengeance: but instead of a murderer he becomes a prophet, and puts himself naked entirely into the hands of Samuel, the prophets, and David, who might have made what advantage they pleased of an adventure so fortunate, even to have cut off Saul, and raised David to the throne. But they abhorred the thought; and as the Spirit of the Lord kept Saul in that condition till David was safe, so Saul was safe during the time that he was naked; i. e. destitute of his royal military robe. A noble evidence this of the innocence and loyalty of Samuel, the prophets, and David; while,

22 Then went he also to Ramah, and came to a great well that *is* in Sechu: and he asked and said, Where *are* Samuel and David? And *one* said, Behold, *they be* at Naioth in Ramah.

23 ¶ And he went thither to Naioth in Ramah: and the Spirit of God was upon him

also, and he went on, and prophesied, until he came to Naioth in Ramah.

24 And he stripped off his clothes also, and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Wherefore they say, *Is* Saul also among the prophets?

while, at the same time, it affords a pleasing instance to a generous, compassionate mind, of the care of Providence over persecuted virtue, and of the impotence of human malice towards those whom God is determined to preserve.

*Ver. 24. He stripped off his clothes—and lay down naked*] When Saul went down to Naioth he went like himself, with the military dress and distinguishing habit of a king; and when he prophesied, he put off his military habit or vestment, and thus appeared like the rest of the prophets, a plain, disarmed, and therefore *naked* man. The text says, he pulled off *בגדו* *begadav*, his exterior garment. This is the certain meaning of the word *בגד* *beged*, without any forced criticism. Joseph's mistress, Gen. xxxix. 12, 15. *caught him by his בגד garment,—and he left his garment,—and she laid up his garment.* This can mean nothing but his external habit, his coat or cloak, which she laid hold of, and he easily dropped when she pulled it. Other instances I can produce. In like manner Saul stripped himself of his outward dress, and is therefore said to *lie down naked*, or without the clothes which he had just pulled off; and the word in all languages answering to the English word *naked* is frequently used, not in the sense of *stark-naked*, but in that of being *ill-dressed*, stripped of an exterior garment, and being quite destitute of arms. In this sense Isaiah is ordered to put off his sackcloth, and *walk naked*; i. e. without his prophetic dress, Isai. xx. 2. and we read of *stripping the naked of their clothes*, Job, xxii. 6. xxiv. 7. Saul might be thus *naked*, without any circumstances of extravagance and indecency.

*Is Saul also among the prophets?*] This is mentioned as a proverb, by way of anticipation, ch. x. 11, 12.; but it is evident, that the original of the proverb was this second prophesying among the prophets: because, *first*, Saul was not at that time known to the people; and, *secondly*, because the original of the proverb is said to arise from this second prophesying in this very verse; therefore the account of the proverb in ch. x. is given by way of anticipation. This proverb was used to express a thing unlooked for, and unlikely. What this was, may be thus explained: Saul, with many great qualities, both of a public and a private man, and in no respect an unable chief, was yet so foolishly prejudiced in favour of the human policies of the neighbouring nations, as to become impiously cold and negligent in the support and advancement of the *law of God*, though raised to regal power from a low and obscure condition for this very purpose. He was, in a word, a mere politician, without the least zeal or love for the *divine constitution* of his country. This was his great, and no wonder it should prove his unpardonable crime; for his folly had reduced things to that extremity, that either he must fall, or the law. Now this pagan turn of mind was no secret to the people: when, there-

fore, they were told that he had sent frequent messengers to the supreme school of the prophets, where zeal for the law was so eminently professed, and had afterwards gone himself thither, and entered with divine emotion and extacy into their devotions, they received this extraordinary news with all the wonder and amazement that it deserved; and, in the height of their surprize, cried out, *Is Saul also among the prophets?* that is, "Is Saul, who, throughout his whole reign, has so much slighted and contemned the law, and would conduct all his actions by the mere rules of human policy; is he at length become studious of, and zealous for, the *law of God?*" And the miracle of such a change in a politician was brought into a proverb before the mistake was found out.

REFLECTIONS.—1st. Saul no longer seeks to cloke his bloody designs, but gives public orders to kill David as a traitor; and particularly commands Jonathan to dispatch the rival of his crown: but Jonathan's love was stronger than the ambition of a throne, and Saul's malice, by being undisguised, was the easier disappointed.

1. He warns David of his danger, and bids him hide himself till the morning in some secret place, because of the order which had been given; and by that time he hoped to procure some change in his cruel father, or, at least, to let David know how to proceed.

2. He takes the first opportunity the next morning to expostulate with his father, and to pacify his resentment. He urges the kindnesses that David had shewn him, the great obligations the whole land owed him; nay, Saul's own acknowledgments of it. How ungrateful and base then to murder so faithful a servant, and so valiant a subject! Had he committed aught worthy of death, indeed, this might cancel his past services; but Saul must be conscious of his innocence; and, therefore, to shed his blood would be as inhuman as unjust. *Note*; Such a friend as Jonathan, so disinterested, so faithful, is rare.

3. Saul having slept, his passion was cooled. Conviction accompanied Jonathan's arguments; he swears to save David harmless, revokes his bloody edict, and restores him to his place at court, with every apparent mark of regard and confidence. *Note*; (1.) The oath of a common swearer is bad security. (2.) Good advice, though from an inferior, deserves attention. (3.) Sudden changes of passionate men prognosticate no long continuance.

2dly, David is ever armed in Israel's cause; we find him again in the field, fighting the Lord's battles, and again victorious over the Philistines. But every fresh laurel on David's brow puts a sharp thorn in Saul's bosom: his melancholy returns; and, willing to relieve him, his son-in-law thinks it not beneath his dignity again to handle the harp: but while, in kind regard, he seeks to soothe the torments

## C H A P. XX.

*David complains to Jonathan of Saul's malevolence towards him: they renew their covenant: Jonathan, despairing of Saul, goes to David in the field, where he lay hid: their affectionate parting.*

[Before Christ 1062.]

**A**ND David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and came and said before Jonathan, What have I done? what *is* mine iniquity? and what *is* my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life?

2 And he said unto him, God forbid; thou shalt not die: behold, my father will do nothing either great or small, but that he will shew it me: and why should my father hide this thing from me? it *is* not *so*.

torments of Saul's heart, he little suspects the spear that stood ready to pierce his own. Swift and violent, Saul hurls the javelin to pierce him to the wall; but his agility avoids the blow, and, leaving his presence, where it was no longer safe to stay, he seeks, by flight, to save himself from the enraged monarch. *Note;* (1.) Something will always be found to allay the joys of our triumphs. (2.) No kindness can cure the ranklings of inveterate malice.

3dly, David was now in imminent danger; for Saul, supposing him fled to his own house, dispatches a party to watch him and kill him there: but through mercy he escapes.

1. Michal, by whom Saul hoped to ruin him, loves him too well to betray him: no sooner is she apprized of his danger, than she informs him; and in the night, through the window, lets him down, that he might not be perceived by those who had beset the house; and in the morning, to give him more leisure to escape, feigns that he is sick, puts an image in his bed, and thus deceives the messengers of Saul. *Note;* (1.) Wives must love their husbands, and cleave to them even beyond their own parents. (2.) A woman's wits are often sharper than her husband's; and it is no disparagement for a man to follow his wife's advice.

2. Saul's rage will not put up with excuse; he will have David brought in his bed, that he may have the satisfaction of murdering him by his own hand. *Note;* Wicked men grow worse and worse as they resist their convictions, and provoke God to give them up to their violent passions.

3. Michal, when the cheat was discovered, well knowing her father's mad rage, seeks to appease him; and as she stopped not at one lie to save her husband, she hesitates not at another to excuse herself, even at the expence of her husband's character. *Note;* One lie usually hardens the conscience for another.

4thly, We have,

1. David's flight to Samuel to consult him in his distress, and to have his faith supported, with regard to the kingdom, now severely shaken by these persecutions. *Note;* God's ministers, in our distresses, are the properest advisers.

2. Saul is no sooner informed of the place of his abode, than he sends messengers to Naioth in Ramah to seize him.

3 And David sware moreover, and said, Thy father certainly knoweth that I have found grace in thine eyes; and he saith, Let not Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved: but truly *as* the LORD liveth, and *as* thy soul liveth, *there is* but a step between me and death.

4 Then said Jonathan unto David, Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do *it* for thee.

5 And David said unto Jonathan, Behold, to-morrow *is* the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat: but let me go, that I may hide myself in the field unto the third *day* at even.

6 If thy father at all miss me, then say,

But God so over-ruled their spirits, that, instead of bringing David prisoner, they no sooner came into the congregation of the prophets, with Samuel at their head, than themselves were seized with the sacred enthusiasm, and prophesied among them: repeated messengers feel the same irresistible impulse; yet Saul, breathing out threatenings and slaughter, will not desist; and, conceiving his own heart to be secure from the impression, he will go in person, and, rather than not destroy David, will be himself his executioner. But how vain are man's impotent designs! He, too, again feels the strange influence. Before he approaches the gates of Ramah, his fury subsides; and, laying aside his military garb and weapons of war, he lies down at Samuel's feet a day and a night, to the admiration of the beholders. Meantime David had an opportunity given him to escape. *Note;* (1.) Many have come into the assembly of God's people with the most violent designs, who have fallen before the power of God, and been forced to hang down the arms designed to be lifted up in wrath. (2.) God can turn persecutors into preachers, and make those who breathed out threatenings sing his praises. (3.) It is no strange thing to see wicked men prophecy in his name, and do wonderful works; but all these, without they are accompanied by a change of heart, only aggravate their final reprobacy and eternal ruin.—Goldsmith, speaking of the effects produced by the prevailing piety of his country. Clergyman, says:

Truth from his lips prevailed with double sway,  
And fools who came to scoff remain'd to pray.

DESERTED VILLAGE.

## C H A P. XX.

*Ver. 5. To-morrow is the new moon*] Every new moon they offered sacrifices, which were accompanied with a solemn feast. Numb. x. 10. xxviii. 11. David being one of the king's family, by marrying his daughter, used to eat with him at these festival times. He thought that, notwithstanding what had passed, Saul possibly might be conciliated towards him by the Spirit of God coming upon him at Naioth, and that this might be a favourable opportunity



David earnestly asked *leave* of me that he might run to Beth-lehem his city: for *there is* a yearly sacrifice there for all the family.

7 If he say thus, *It is well*; thy servant shall have peace: but if he be very wroth, *then* be sure that evil is determined by him.

8 Therefore thou shalt deal kindly with thy servant; for thou hast brought thy servant into a covenant of the LORD with thee: notwithstanding, if there be in me iniquity, slay me thyself; for why shouldest thou bring me to thy father?

9 And Jonathan said, Far be it from thee: for if I knew certainly that evil were determined by my father to come upon thee, then would not I tell it thee?

10 Then said David to Jonathan, Who shall tell me? or what *if* thy father answer thee roughly?

11 ¶ And Jonathan said unto David, Come, and let us go out into the field. And they went out both of them into the field.

12 And Jonathan said unto David, O LORD God of Israel, when I have sounded my father about to-morrow any time, *or the third day*, and, behold, *if there be* good toward David, and I then send not unto thee, and shew it thee;

13 The LORD do so and much more to Jonathan: but if it please my father *to do* thee evil, then I will shew it thee, and send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace: and the

LORD be with thee, as he hath been with my father.

14 And thou shalt not only while yet I live shew me the kindness of the LORD, that I die not:

15 But *also* thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when the LORD hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth.

16 So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, *saying*, Let the LORD even require *it* at the hand of David's enemies.

17 And Jonathan caused David to swear again; because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul.

18 ¶ Then Jonathan said to David, To-morrow *is* the new moon: and thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty.

19 And *when* thou hast stayed three days, *then* thou shalt go down quickly, and come to the place where thou didst hide thyself when the business was *in hand*, and shalt remain by the stone Ezel.

20 And I will shoot three arrows on the side *thereof*, as though I shot at a mark.

21 And, behold, I will send a lad, *saying*, Go, find out the arrows. If I expressly say unto the lad, Behold, the arrows *are* on this side of thee, take them; then come thou: for *there is* peace to thee, and no hurt; *as* the LORD liveth.

of discovering his disposition. "Instead therefore (says "he to Jonathan) of imprudently exposing myself to new dangers, I will absent myself till the third day at even, and so give you an opportunity of observing Saul's mind."

Ver. 12, 13. Jonathan said unto David, O Lord God, &c.] Houbigant, after the Syriac, renders these verses thus: Then Jonathan said unto David, The Lord God of Israel is witness, that I will sound my father to-morrow, and until the evening of the third day; and that if there be good towards David, I will send unto thee, and inform thee; ver. 13. So may the Lord be gracious to Jonathan! If my father is determined that thou shouldst perish, I will shew that to thee, &c. It is plain, from the last words of the 13th verse, that Jonathan was no stranger to the rejection of Saul, and to the divine appointment of David to the crown. See ch. xxiii. 17.

Ver. 14. And thou shalt not only while yet I live] "But thou, if I shall then survive, [i. e. when the Lord is with thee, and thou art made king,] shalt perform towards me the same kindness—which the Lord hath shewn thee; ver. 15. "But if I die, thou shalt not withdraw thy kindness from my

"house for ever: no, not when, &c." Houbigant:—who observes, that the plain meaning of the passage is, "If I live when thou art king, thou shalt spare me; if I die, thou shalt spare my family." Thus making with David, not a personal covenant only, but one which reached to their posterity.

Ver. 16, 17. Jonathan made a covenant, &c.] Jonathan, therefore, made a covenant with the house of David, and said, May the Lord grant that the enemies of David may not go unpunished! ver. 17. Moreover, Jonathan required an oath from David, for his great love to him, because he loved him as his own soul. Houb.

Ver. 19. And when thou hast stayed three days, &c.] But on the third day thou shalt come quickly to that place, in which thou shalt hide thyself on the feast day; and thou shalt sit by the stone Ezel: Houbigant. Ezel is supposed to have been a stone erected to shew men the road, for the word signifies going or travelling. The Syriac and Greck render it, by this stone.

Ver. 21. And behold, I will send a lad, &c.] Moreover, I will send a lad, commanding him to go, and find out the arrows. If, therefore, I shall say to the lad, Behold, the arrows are on this

22 But if I say thus unto the young man, Behold, the arrows *are* beyond thee; go thy way: for the LORD hath sent thee away.

23 And *as touching* the matter which thou and I have spoken of, behold, the LORD *be* between thee and me for ever.

24 ¶ So David hid himself in the field: and when the new-moon was come, the king sat him down to eat meat.

25 And the king sat upon his seat, as at other times, *even* upon a seat by the wall: and Jonathan arose, and Abner sat by Saul's side, and David's place was empty.

26 Nevertheless Saul spake not any thing that day: for he thought, Something hath befallen him, he *is* not clean; surely he *is* not clean.

27 And it came to pass on the morrow, *which was* the second day of the month, that David's place was empty: and Saul said unto Jonathan his son, Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat, neither yesterday, nor to day?

28 And Jonathan answered Saul, David earnestly asked *leave* of me to go to Beth-lehem:

29 And he said, Let me go, I pray thee; for our family hath a sacrifice in the city; and my brother, he hath commanded me to be *there*: and now, if I have found favour in thine eyes, let me get away, I pray thee, and

see my brethren. Therefore he cometh not unto the king's table.

30 Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse rebellious *woman*, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother's nakedness?

31 For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die.

32 And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said unto him, Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done?

33 And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite him: whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David.

34 So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no meat the second day of the month: for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame.

35 ¶ And it came to pass in the morning, that Jonathan went out into the field at the time appointed with David, and a little lad with him.

36 And he said unto his lad, Run, find out now the arrows which I shoot. *And* as the lad ran, he shot an arrow beyond him.

37 And when the lad was come to the place of the arrow which Jonathan had shot,

*this side of thee; take thou them, and come; for there is peace to thee, &c.* Houb.

*Ver. 25. And the king sat upon his seat*] The Hebrews, as well as the Egyptians, the ancient Greeks, and the first people of Italy, sat at table. See Gen. xxxvii. 25. xliii. 33. Prov. xxiii. 1. It appears however, that, after Saul's time, they began to eat seated upon beds at low tables. Since that epocha, we find divers examples of it in Scripture: though other instances give room to think that the women often continued to be seated upon seats. Saul sat against the wall, which was the place of honour, at a table made in the form of a C, which was to be placed so that the convexity of the circle was next to the wall, and the concavity opposite to the door for the convenience of serving. *And Jonathan arose*: Houbigant reads, after the Syriac, *And Jonathan arose and sat down; but Abner sat by the king's side*; observing, that it is extraordinary to find Jonathan, the king's son, standing, and Abner, his general, sitting.

*Ver. 26. He is not clean; surely he is not clean*] See Levit. xv. 16. Houbigant renders this; *because, possibly, being un-*

*clean, he hath not purified himself*: following the LXX. The other versions vary greatly.

*Ver. 31. As long as the son of Jesse liveth, &c.*] But how did Saul know, that, as long as the son of Jesse lived, Jonathan *should not be established, nor his kingdom*? If it was all jealousy and surmise, his ordering him to be brought to be put to death was unreasonable and wicked, and can be justified upon no principles of justice and humanity. If Saul knew that as himself was rejected, David was really anointed to succeed him by Samuel, at God's command, his ordering him to be put to death was both impertinent and wicked: for he knew that David had then as good a right to succeed him, in preference to Jonathan, as he himself had of obtaining the throne in preference to every other man of Israel; and, therefore, that he ought not to destroy the man whom God had appointed to succeed him, and with all his endeavours would not be able to do it if God had determined to make him captain over Israel. So that in whatever view we consider this reply of Saul, *fetch him,—for he shall surely die*, it will appear to be absolutely improper, and that it could proceed from nothing but the incurable

Jonathan cried after the lad, and said, *Is not the arrow beyond thee?*

38 And Jonathan cried after the lad, Make speed, haste, stay not. And Jonathan's lad gathered up the arrows, and came to his master.

39 But the lad knew not any thing: only Jonathan and David knew the matter.

40 And Jonathan gave his artillery unto his lad, and said unto him, Go, carry *them* to the city.

41 ¶ And as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of a *place* toward the south, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times: and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded.

42 And Jonathan said to David, Go, in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the LORD, saying, The LORD be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city.

### C H A P. XXI.

*David flies to Ahimelech the priest; from whom he receives for food some of the shew-bread, and, taking the sword of Goliath, he flies to Achish, king of Gath, and there feigns himself mad.*

[Before Christ 1062.]

**T**HEN came David to Nob to Ahimelech the priest: and Ahimelech was afraid at

the meeting of David, and said unto him, Why *art* thou alone, and no man with thee?

2 And David said unto Ahimelech the priest, The king hath commanded me a business, and hath said unto me, Let no man know any thing of the business whereabout I send thee, and what I have commanded thee: and I have appointed *my* servants to such and such a place.

3 Now therefore what is under thine hand? give *me* five loaves of bread in mine hand, or what there is present.

4 And the priest answered David, and said, *There is* no common bread under mine hand, but there is hallowed bread; if the young men have kept themselves at least from women.

5 And David answered the priest, and said unto him, Of a truth women *have been* kept from us about these three days, since I came out, and the vessels of the young men are holy, and *the bread is* in a manner common, yea, though it were sanctified this day in the vessel.

6 So the priest gave him hallowed *bread*: for there was no bread there but the shew-bread, that was taken from before the LORD, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away.

7 Now a certain man of the servants of Saul *was* there that day, detained before the LORD; and his name *was* Doeg, an Edomite, the chiefest of the herdmen that *belonged* to Saul.

### C H A P. XXI.

incurable inveteracy of a disordered mind, agitated by ambition, jealousy, and an implacable desire of revenge. *He shall surely die*, is, in the Hebrew בן מוֹת *ben muvet hu*, *he is the son of death*; a Hebrew form of speaking, which denotes either a man worthy of death, or devoted to death.

*Ver. 41. David arose out of a place, &c.] David, coming from the south, fell on his face.* Houbigant. From the south of the stone Ezel. David fell on his face, in reverence to his friend, as the king's son. *They kiss'd one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded.* So that there *was great lamentation.* Houbigant. Their separation could not be made without many tears on both sides. David must have been affected in an especial manner. He lost all: friend, wife, parents, country; and, that which to a heart like his was the severest stroke, he was banished from the altar and service of his God. See ch. xxvi. 19. There cannot be any thing more pathetic and tender, than this simple and unaffected relation of the parting of these friends.

*Ver. 1. Then came David to Nob]* *Nob* was in the tribe of Benjamin, about twelve miles from Gibeath, not far from Anathoth, Nehem. xi. 32. and Jerusalem, Isai. x. 32. It appears from the 19th verse of the next chapter, that it was one of the sacerdotal cities; and it is probable that Saul had removed the tabernacle from Shiloh thither. It should be observed, that *Ahimelech* is no where called the *high-priest*, but simply *the priest*. From the whole of this affair it is manifest, that Ahimelech knew nothing of the circumstances of David. He knew nothing of Saul's displeasure against him, or of his determined purpose to destroy him; and therefore, as he was the king's son-in-law, he is surprised to see him without any attendants, and asks him the reason of his being alone. David, concealing the reason, pretends a hasty and secret message from the king, and that he had ordered his attendants to wait for him. This is made use of as a pretence for asking a supply of bread,

8 ¶ And David said unto Ahimelech, And is there not here under thine hand spear or sword? for I have neither brought my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's business required haste.

9 And the priest said, The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom thou slewest in the valley of Elah, behold, it is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod: if thou wilt take that, take it: for there is no other save that here. And David said, There is none like that; give it me.

10 ¶ And David arose, and fled that day

for fear of Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath.

11 And the servants of Achish said unto him, Is not this David the king of the land? did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?

12 And David laid up these words in his heart, and was fore afraid of Achish the king of Gath.

13 And he changed his behaviour before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands,

bread, and after receiving it David requests a supply of arms; still keeping the priest entirely ignorant of the true reason of his being alone and unarmed: a demonstration this, if any thing can be so, that Ahimelech was not in David's secret, and was ignorant that he fled from Saul to escape his indignation.

*Ver. 4. The priest answered—There is no common bread, &c.]* Cases of necessity, as the Jews themselves allow, often superseded the observation of the ritual laws; and this compliance of Ahimelech's is urged with great force by our Saviour, in vindication of a similar case, Mark, ii. 25. to which place we shall refer for more upon the subject, and for a solution of the difficulties arising from the different names.

*Ver. 5. And the vessels of the young men]* i. e. their bodies; see 1 Thess. iv. 4. Houbigant renders this verse, *David answered the priest, We have indeed been absent from our wives these three days, since I came out; and the vessels of the young men are holy. But if any uncleanness had happened by the way, on this very day their vessels are clean;* rightly observing, that the word *כלי* *kelai*, rendered *vessels*, cannot with any propriety be understood of the *bodies* of the young men in one place, and of the *vessel* containing the shew-bread in another.

*Ver. 7. Detained before the Lord]* That is, not by force, but either on account of some vow, or for the making of some necessary expiation.

*Ver. 9. The sword of Goliath]* It was the custom among the pagans to consecrate in their temples the spoils of their enemies; but it does not appear from the face of the history, that this sword of Goliath's had been consecrated as a religious trophy; and it might be left with Ahimelech to be forthcoming upon occasion: and that it was so, seems probable; for if it had been dedicated as a trophy, it would have been placed, trophy-like, in some conspicuous point of view; whereas this sword was wrapped up in a cloth, and put behind the ephod; i. e. among the sacerdotal vestments; of which the ephod being the chief, it is here mentioned for all the rest. See Doughty's *Analect.* Exerc. 83.

REFLECTIONS.—I. David, being thus distressed, and little expecting relief if he told the truth, is tempted to give a lying answer; the consequences of which he lived to lament, as the occasion of the murder of many innocent persons; so dangerous is every deviation from the truth.

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He pretends to be on a business of importance which required secrecy; says, that he has appointed his servants to meet him, and desires Ahimelech to give him a supply of provisions for himself and them. *Note:* Let no man be too secure, or self-confident; he knows not what temptations are before him, or how little able he is to resist.

2. He wanted a sword as well as bread, pretending the haste of the king's business, but, in truth, it was his own danger which hurried him away unarmed; he therefore desires Ahimelech to furnish him with one. But in a priest's house no such was found: only he tells him the sword of Goliath, wrapped up behind the ephod, was there. In David's eye, there is none like it; it appeared happily ominous to be possessed of that, and a confirmation of his faith, that all his enemies should be made, like Goliath, to fall before him: thus armed, therefore, he departs. *Note:* God often comforts his people in their distresses with such providential incidents as are suited to support their faith.

*Ver. 10. And David—went to Achish, the king of Gath]* David, being proscribed, but without reason, and being everywhere in danger in his own country, fled, as a man in perpetual hazard of his life, to the nearest place: but he fled to the inveterate enemies of his nation. The city he fled to was that of Goliath, whom he had slain, and whose sword he had now with him. Some of the most famous commanders of other nations have been forced to a similar conduct: witness Themistocles, Coriolanus, and others, who retreated to hostile nations, in order to escape the rage and fury of their own princes and countrymen. But in one thing he certainly appears to peculiar advantage, even above those great commanders; which is, that he went into exile without any hostile disposition or spirit of revenge towards his own country, which he affectionately loved, and substantially served, during his banishment from it.

*Ver. 11. The king of the land]* The generality of interpreters suppose, either that the Philistines knew that David should succeed Saul in the kingdom, or that by the word *king* is meant *chief* or *general*. See Deut. xxxiii. 5.

*Ver. 13. And he changed his behaviour before them]* There are some writers who suppose that David's was a real disorder; and that, from the consternation and sorrow he was in, he was seized with epileptic fits: an opinion, to which the version of the LXX seems to give some countenance;

f i

for

and scabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard.

14 Then said Achish unto his servants, Lo, ye see the man is mad: wherefore *then* have ye brought him to me?

15 Have I need of madmen, that ye have brought this *fellow* to play the madman in my presence? shall this *fellow* come into my house?

### CHAP. XXII.

*David flies to the cave Adullam, and afterwards to Moab; whence, by the advice of the prophet Gad, he returns to Judah: Saul puts to death Abimelech, with eighty-five more of the priests: Abiathar alone escapes, and flies to David.*

[Before Christ 1061.]

**D**AVID therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave Adullam: and when

his brethren and all his father's house heard *it*, they went down thither to him.

2 And every one *that was* in distress, and every one that *was* in debt, and every one *that was* discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men.

3 ¶ And David went thence to Mizpeh of Moab: and he said unto the king of Moab, Let my father and my mother, I pray thee, come forth, *and be* with you, till I know what God will do for me.

4 And he brought them before the king of Moab: and they dwelt with him all the while that David was in the hold.

5 ¶ And the prophet Gad said unto David,

for in the 14th verse it renders the words of Achish thus: *Behold you have brought an epileptick to me:—Do I want epilepticks? &c.* But it seems best to understand the passage according to the common interpretation: nor does there appear any thing, in this view of David's conduct, blameable or wrong. He had only in view self-preservation, and no design of injuring others; and the two psalms which he is thought to have composed upon this event shew, that he was by no means wanting in due reliance upon God. No one thinks of blaming Solon or Brutus for a similar conduct. Ortløb, in the first volume of the dissertations at the end of the *Critici Sacri*, has treated largely *De Delirio Davidis coram Achis*. Dr. Delaney upon this subject well observes, that it plainly appears from the 56th *Psal*, that the courtiers of Gath were bent upon David's destruction, and daily caballed against him: they soon perceived him to be a great genius; a character not always loved and honoured as it ought, even in a friend, but always dreaded, if not hated, in an enemy; and they resolved his ruin. To be sure of effecting it, they misconstrued and gave wrong turns to every thing he said or did: *Every day* (says he) *they wrest my words; all their thoughts are against me for evil; they gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps, when they lay wait for my soul.* *Psal.* lvi. 5, 6. What should he do? He had dealt with them in the integrity and simplicity of his heart; but his honesty was interpreted into guile. To labour to set himself right with them, were vain; for they designedly misinterpreted every thing: and to enter into any debate with them upon it, would be but to discover his distrust, and ensure his destruction. He was undone as a wise man; but had a chance to escape as a madman: he tried, and the experiment succeeded.

*Mad in their hands*] *In their presence.* Nold. 917.

### CHAP. XXII.

*Ver. 1. To the cave Adullam*] Which was in the tribe of Judah, and to the east of Eleutheropolis: a place for-

tified by nature, and so fitted for the security of persons in distress, that we are told it has frequently given a refuge from the Turks to Christians, who fled thither with their families, flocks, and herds. See the note on chap. xxiv. 3. *Ver. 2. And every one that was in distress, &c.*] See 1 Chron. xii. 8. This has been represented as a gang of ruffians, a parcel of banditti, who united themselves to David with the worst designs. But the original words by no means convey any such meaning as this. The *אִישׁ מִצֹּרִק* *ish matzok*, is the man straitened or oppressed; the *אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר לוֹ נֶשֶׁה* *ish asher lo neshe*, is the man that hath a creditor, an exacting, cruel creditor; the Jews frequently using their debtors with great severity, Nehem. v. 5. taking away their lands and vineyards, and bringing into bondage their sons and daughters: and finally, the *אִישׁ מַר נַפְשׁוֹ* *ish mar nepshe*, is the man bitter of soul, one aggrieved in his mind, or uneasy and discontented; probably, with Saul's tyrannical government, and his implacable persecution of David, who, by this time, must have been well known to have been the intended successor of Saul. Thus all David's people were *men of bitter spirit*, extremely distressed and grieved for the loss of their wives and children, chap. xxx. 6; and their conduct shews them to have been of a very contrary character from desperadoes and banditti: for we read nothing of their plundering and murdering; on the contrary, we find them always kept in good discipline and order, frequently employed in services of a very beneficent nature, ready to do every friendly office, and often employed in defence of their country against the enemies of it. The judgment that Grotius passes upon David, when the company gathered to him at Adullam, deserves to be regarded. David (says he), who was very observant of the law, had about him at first four hundred armed persons, and afterwards a somewhat greater number. For what? To repel any force that might be offered him. But then this is to be remarked, that David did not do this till he found out by Jonathan's information, and many other most certain proofs, that Saul determined to have

Abide not in the hold; depart, and get thee into the land of Judah. Then David departed, and came into the forest of Hareth.

6 ¶ When Saul heard that David was dis-

covered, and the men that *were* with him, (now Saul abode in Gibeah under a tree in Ramah, having his spear in his hand, and all his servants *were* standing about him;)

his life. Besides, he invaded no cities, nor took any opportunities for fighting, but went into lurking holes, and inaccessible places, and to foreign nations, religiously abstaining from injuring his countrymen, and, let me add, from doing any hurt to Saul, or disturbing his government. See de Jure B. & P. lib. i. cap. 4. sect. 7. parag. 4.

Ver. 4. *They dwell with him all the while that David was in the hold*] David could not bear that his aged parents should be confined to a cold cave, exposed to all the hardships of a siege, to dearth, to damps, and dangers of various kinds; and therefore he commends them to the care of the king of Moab, under whose protection *they continued all the time that he was in the hold*, or, as some would have it, all the time he continued in a strong hold; during the whole time of his exile, while he was constrained to fly from one strong place to another, to avoid the fury of Saul.

Ver. 5. *The prophet Gad said unto David, Abide not in the hold*] It was natural to think that David would be more safe in his own tribe, and in a thick forest, than in the tribe of Saul, and a cave; and safety was all that he wanted, or God intended him before the death of Saul. But the principal reason of God's advising him to go into the land of Judah, was, I apprehend, because God intended to do him the honour of delivering one of the cities of Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, chap. xxiii. 3, &c.; and therefore sent him thither, that he might be near at hand, to protect it at the proper season from the invasion and plunder of their enemies: this he effected whilst he abode with his men in that part of the country; and it was a brave action: it was, as Grotius observes upon the place, an instance of his great love to his country; who, though proscribed as a rebel by the king, was so far from injuring his country, that he served it at the cost of his enemies.

REFLECTIONS.—Since innocence could be no longer his security, David seeks it by his sword. Having pitched on a fortress strong by nature, he resolves to maintain himself there.

1. Here his brethren came to him, having perhaps become obnoxious to Saul's displeasure by their relation to him; or willing to share his lot, in confidence of his future advancement. And as he wanted an armed force, not to act against his king, but to defend himself from the malice of his persecutor, he entertained all who resorted to him. Note; (1.) They who take part in the afflictions of the people of God, shall share with them in their kingdom of glory. (2.) The Lord Jesus refuses none; let the desperate sinner, who knows not where to flee; let the miserable debtor, obnoxious to the arrests of Divine Justice; let the discontented, who are weary of the dominion of sin and Satan, come to him; he will be a captain unto them, for he receiveth such.

2. Having a guard for his own person, David is soli-

citous to remove his parents to a place of safety, as Saul would now probably wreak his vengeance on them and theirs. With the permission of the king of Moab, he brings them to Mizpeh, in Moab, and leaves them there, till he should know what God would do with him; how long, or in what manner he would exercise his faith and patience, before he fulfilled his promises. Note; (1.) A good man cannot but be a dutiful child, and earnest to secure the repose of his aged parents. (2.) Whilst we have the fullest assurance of God's protection, we must be waiting upon him in the way of means, and patiently expect his salvation.

3. Gad the prophet, who had joined him in his exile, perhaps sent of Samuel to be with him to advise him, persuades him to go into the land of Judah; which being his own tribe, he might expect more friends; and by appearing publicly, would shew his own innocence, and confidence in God. David consents, and takes up his abode in the forest of Hareth.

Ver. 6. *(Now Saul abode in Gibeah, &c.)* Though mean people, travelling in the East, might make use of trees for shelter, we may perhaps think it almost incredible that kings should; imagining that either proper houses would be marked out for their reception, or, if that could not be conveniently done in some of their routes, that, at least, they would have tents carried along with them, as persons of more than ordinary rank and condition are supposed by Dr. Shaw to do. For these reasons, we may possibly have been extremely surpris'd at the present passage: *Now Saul abode in Gibeah, under a tree in Ramah*, (or, according to the Margins, *under a grove in an high place*;) *having his spear in his hand; and all his servants were standing about him*. Yet, strange as this may appear to us, it is natural enough according to the present customs of the East, where we know the solemnity and awfulness of superiority is kept up as high as ever. Thus, when Dr. Pococke was travelling in the company of the governor of Faïume, who was treated with great respect as he pass'd along, they spent one night, he tells us, (vol. i. p. 56.) *in a grove of palm trees*. The governor might, no doubt, had he pleas'd, have lodged in some village, but he rather chose a place which we think very odd for a person of figure. The position of Saul, which was *on an high place*, according to the Margin, reminds me of another passage in this author, (p. 127.) where he gives us an account of the going out of the caia or lieutenant of the governor of Meloui, on a sort of Arabic expedition, towards a place where there was an ancient temple, attended by many people with kettle-drums and other music: the bishop visited that temple, and upon his return from it he went to the caia, "whose carpet and cushions were laid *on an height* on which he sat, with "the *standard by him*, which is carried before him when "he goes out in this manner. I sat down by him, and "coffee was brought. The sardar [or governor] himself "came

7 Then Saul said unto his servants that stood about him, Hear now, ye Benjamites; will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, and make you all captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds;

8 That all of you have conspired against me, and *there is* none that sheweth me that my son hath made a league with the son of Jesse, and *there is* none of you that is sorry for me, or sheweth unto me that my son hath stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?

9 ¶ Then answered Doeg the Edomite, (which was set over the servants of Saul,) and said, I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub.

10 And he enquired of the LORD for him, and gave him victuals, and gave him the

sword of Goliath the Philistine.

11 ¶ Then the king sent to call Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father's house, the priests that *were* in Nob: and they came all of them to the king.

12 And Saul said, Hear now, thou son of Ahitub. And he answered, Here I *am*, my lord.

13 And Saul said unto him, Why have ye conspired against me, thou and the son of Jesse, in that thou hast given him bread, and a sword, and hast inquired of God for him, that he should rise against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?

14 Then Ahimelech answered the king, and said, And who *is so* faithful among all thy servants as David, which is the king's son-in-law, and goeth at thy bidding, and is honourable in thine house?

“came after, as incognito.” Saul seems, by the description given of him, as well as by the following part of the history, to have been pursuing after David, and, stopping, to have placed himself, according to the present oriental mode, in the posture of chief. Whether the *spear in his hand*, or, *at his hand*, (see Noldius,) was the same thing to Saul's people that the *standard* was to those of the caia, I know not: if it was, there are three things in this text illustrated by the doctor's account; the stopping under a tree, or grove; the stopping on an high place; and the sacred historian's remarks, that he had his *spear* by him. It is certain, that when a *long pike* is carried before a company of Arabs, it is a mark that an Arab *sheich*, or *prince*, is there; which pike is carried before him, and when he alights, and the horses are fastened, the *pike is fixed*, as appears from Norden, part ii. p. 181. and p. 71. See *Observations*, p. 293. Bishop Patrick well observes, that Justin, speaking of the first times of the Romans, (about the reign of Saul,) says, “In those days kings had *spears* as signs of royal authority, which the Greeks call *sceptres*. From time immemorial the ancients worshipped *spears* for immortal gods, in memory of which religion, *spears* are still added to the images of the gods.” Justin, lib. iii. c. 43.

Ver. 7, 8. Then Saul said unto his servants] If this complaint was true, Saul must have been an exceedingly bad master, to be so entirely deserted and unpitied by his own servants, even when he had estates and preferments to give them. But what was the complaint? that *all of them had conspired against him*. How did this appear? why, *because none of them shewed him that his son had made a league with the son of Jesse*. And why should they shew him this, when he himself well knew it already, and needed not to be informed of it by them: for he had told his son before, that *he had chosen the son of Jesse, to the confusion of his mother's nakedness*? He adds, as a farther matter of complaint, *none of you is sorry for me*; and, if they thought that Jona-

than's league with David was a thing right in itself, and a very happy circumstance for the kingdom in general, there was no cause why they should for this be *sorry for him*: and to charge them with conspiring against him for not telling him what he knew before, and for their not being grieved, on his account, for what they thought neither he nor they had any reason to be sorry for, is the most evident symptom of a disordered mind. But what shall we say to the last part of this pathetic complaint, *there is none of you that sheweth unto me, that my son hath stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait as it is this day*? Why, that they could not discover what was not true in itself, and what they knew nothing of. Besides, Saul himself confesses, that it had no other foundation than his own surmise and jealousy, and that he had received no manner of proof of it. *None of you*, says Saul, *shews unto me*, &c.; he had, therefore, no proof from any of his servants of this wickedness of his son: Jonathan was innocent, and his father's complaint groundless and unjust.

Ver. 9. Then answered Doeg—(which was set over the servants of Saul)] *Who happened then to be with the servants of Saul*. Houbigant. See the foregoing chapter, ver. 7. It does not appear from the preceding chapter, nor is it likely, that Ahimelech, or the priests, knew any thing of Saul's displeasure against David; and therefore, as he was the king's son-in-law, and Ahimelech thought he was sent on some hasty errand to the king, the giving him bread and a sword was what he owed in duty to Saul, instead of its being an act of treason. Nor could Ahimelech's *inquiring of God for him*, ver. 10. supposing the fact true, be liable to such a charge; for if he did enquire of God for him, Ahimelech declares, that this was not the first time he had done it on the king's affairs; and that therefore it could be no more criminal in him to do it now, upon a like occasion, than in former times.

Ver. 14. And goeth at thy bidding] *Who is a prince under thy command*. LXX, and Houbigant. See ch. xxi. 1, 2.

Ahime-

15 Did I then begin to inquire of God for him? be it far from me: let not the king impute *any* thing unto his servant, *nor* to all the house of my father: for thy servant knew nothing of all this, less or more.

16 And the king said, Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech, thou, and all thy father's house.

17 ¶ And the king said unto the footmen that stood about him, Turn, and slay the priests

of the LORD; because their hand also *is* with David, and because they knew when he fled, and did not shew it to me. But the servants of the king would not put forth their hand to fall upon the priests of the LORD.

18 And the king said to Doeg, Turn thou, and fall upon the priests. And Doeg the Edomite turned, and he fell upon the priests, and slew on that day fourscore and five persons that did wear a linen ephod.

Ahimelech's apology sufficiently shews his innocence. Saul's charge was, that he had conspired with David against him. What proof does he alledge? That *he had given him bread and a sword, and had enquired of God for him.*

What was his vindication? *And who amongst all thy servants is like David; faithful—and the king's son-in-law, &c.?* He owns that he gave him bread and a sword, because he believed him to be the most faithful of all the king's servants; because he thought him employed in an affair of consequence for him; knew him diligent in executing his orders; and that he was of the highest esteem in his family: upon which accounts it was impossible that he could ever be justly thought to enter into conspiracy with him against his sovereign; and even Saul himself would have deeply repented it, had he refused thus to supply him upon any other occasion. As to the other part of the charge, his enquiring of God for him, Ahimelech replies, *Did I then begin to enquire of God for him? be it far from me:* or, "It is only what I have often done before, and that without any suspicion or blame," as some, and particularly Josephus, understand the words. Ant. Jud. l. vi. c. 12. sect. 5. But it should be observed, that the sacred historian makes no mention at all of Ahimelech's consulting God for David. It was, indeed, what *Doeg* charged him with; but, I think, falsely and maliciously, only to heighten the king's resentment against the priests; and therefore the words may be very naturally so interpreted as to imply an absolute denial of the charge. "Did I then begin to enquire of God for him? I never did it before, nor did I begin to do it now." The verb *החלתי* *hachillothi* which we render *begin*, is frequently used almost as an *expletive*; not to denote the first beginning of an action, but the action itself as begun and finished. See Judg. xx. 31. Numb. xxv. 1. This vindication was honest and sufficient; but what was the effect of it? a resolution worthy of the tyrant that made it.

Ver. 18, 19. *Doeg—slew on that day fourscore and five persons*] Josephus says, that Doeg, taking to his assistance some men as wicked as himself, slew, in all, *three hundred and eighty-five* persons. The LXX says *three hundred and five*. A robe of linen was the common dress of the priests, and it is what the historian means by a *linen ephod*; very different from that of the high-priest. See chap. ii. 18. But why should all the priests have been involved in this barbarous massacre? Doeg mentions only Ahimelech as being applied to by David; and, in like manner, Saul himself, in the charge he brings against Ahimelech, accused

him and David: *why have ye conspired against me, thou and the son of Jesse?* without a syllable of any other priests. As to the priests not acquainting Saul with David's flight, why should they do it, if they were not informed of it, but believed, as David had pretended, that he was in haste upon the king's business? And if they had known the reason of it, it was not in their power to have acquainted Saul with it time enough for him to have apprehended David; for the sacred writer informs us, ch. xxi. 10. that *David arose and fled that very day, for fear of Saul.* It appears further, that Saul's guards thought Ahimelech and the priests wholly innocent; because, when he bid them put them all to the sword, ver. 17. they unanimously refused to obey his command; and one ruffian only was found, a foreigner, and by nation an enemy to the Jews, capable of imbruing his hands in the blood of so many respectable and innocent persons. It is further evident, from Saul's charge against Ahimelech, that his suspicion of the priests being in David's interest arose merely from the information of Doeg, and not from any thing they had done before this, contrary to their duty. For Saul confines himself to the facts which Doeg alleged against him, and never intimates that they had done any thing formerly to offend. Even Saul himself afterwards exculpates them, when he declares David to be *more righteous than himself*, chap. xxiv. 17. which David could not be, if really guilty of rebellion against him; and if he was totally free from this charge, the priests could not be concerned in any such rebellion with him. The massacre of them, therefore, was so outrageous, so bloody, and so horrible, that it paints the character of Saul in the blackest colours; and exposes him as a warning, not only to tyrannical monarchs, but likewise to private persons who give a loose to the instigations of jealous suspicion and intemperate wrath. Dr. Deianey observes, that Saul attained two ends by this massacre: *First*, He weakened the power of the priests, whom he had made his enemies, by slaying such a number of them and stripping the order of their possessions; and *secondly*, He strengthened the hands of his own family, and confirmed the faith of his tribe, then doubtful, by conferring those possessions upon them. It is observed by almost all the commentators, how remarkable an instance this massacre of the priests supplies of God's turning the worst devices of the wicked to the purposes of his Providence. Eli had grievously offended God, *because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not:* for this reason God denounced his vengeance against his race, and declared that they should



19 And Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep, with the edge of the sword.

20 ¶ And one of the sons of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped, and fled after David.

21 And Abiathar shewed David that Saul had slain the LORD's priests.

22 And David said unto Abiathar, I knew it that day, when Doeg the Edomite *was* there, that he would surely tell Saul: I have occasioned *the death* of all the persons of thy father's house.

23 Abide thou with me, fear not: for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life: but with me thou shalt be in safeguard.

### C H A P. XXIII.

*David, consulting the Lord, overcomes the Philistines, and delivers Keilah from the siege. He flies from Keilah into the desert of Ziph, where he is pursued by Saul; who, leaving him, goes to fight against the Philistines.*

[Before Christ 1060.]

**T**HEN they told David, saying, Behold, the Philistines fight against Keilah, and they rob the threshing-floors.

2 Therefore David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go and smite these Philistines? And the LORD said unto David, Go and smite the Philistines, and save Keilah.

3 And David's men said unto him, Behold, we be afraid here in Judah: how much more then if we come to Keilah against the armies

of the Philistines?

4 Then David inquired of the LORD yet again. And the LORD answered him and said, Arise, go down to Keilah; for I will deliver the Philistines into thine hand.

5 So David and his men went to Keilah, and fought with the Philistines, and brought away their cattle, and smote them with a great slaughter. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah.

6 And it came to pass, when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David to Keilah, *that* he came down *with* an ephod in his hand.

7 ¶ And it was told Saul that David was come to Keilah. And Saul said, God hath delivered him into mine hand; for he is shut in, by entering into a town that hath gates and bars.

8 And Saul called all the people together to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men.

9 ¶ And David knew that Saul secretly practised mischief against him; and he said to Abiathar the priest, Bring hither the ephod.

10 Then said David, O LORD God of Israel, thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah, to destroy the city for my sake.

11 Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand? will Saul come down, as thy servant hath heard? O LORD God of Israel, I beseech thee, tell thy servant. And the LORD said, He will come down.

should be cut off by a sudden and surprising destruction in one day. See how terribly this denunciation was fulfilled by Saul's unparalleled cruelty!

### C H A P. XXIII.

*Ver. 1. Then they told David] Or, Now they had told.*

*Ver. 2. David enquired of the Lord, &c.]* This was one of the noblest adventures of David's life, and perhaps the most extraordinary of any recorded in history. The Philistines, probably encouraged by David's disgrace and Saul's distraction, invaded Judah, and besieged Keilah, wasting the country all around it. Another man in David's place would have rejoiced at this invasion, and perhaps encouraged it; and this both from self-preservation and policy: *First*, Because he had nothing to fear for himself,

while Saul had such an enemy upon his hands; and *secondly*, Because the distress of his country was the likeliest means to bring Saul to reason, and force him to recal, and be reconciled to, his best companion. But David was governed by other than these narrow views: neither safety nor honour were desirable to him, if to be purchased by the distress of his country and his friends; his bosom beat with an earnest desire to relieve Keilah: but it was not an adventure to be unadvisedly undertaken; and therefore we are assured, that he *enquired of God, saying, Shall I go, and smite these Philistines?* This is to me one of those passages of Scripture which give evidence of their own truth. None but a hero could put the question, and none but GOD could resolve it. *And the Lord said unto David, Go, and smite the Philistines, and save Keilah.*

*Ver.*

12 Then said David, Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul? And the LORD said, They will deliver thee up.

13 ¶ Then David and his men, which were about six hundred, arose and departed out of Keilah, and went whithersoever they could go. And it was told Saul that David was escaped from Keilah; and he forbore to go forth.

14 And David abode in the wilderness in strong holds, and remained in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God delivered him not into his hand.

15 And David saw that Saul was come out to seek his life: and David was in the wilderness of Ziph in a wood.

16 And Jonathan Saul's son arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God.

17 And he said unto him, Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth.

18 And they two made a covenant before the LORD: And David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house.

19 ¶ Then came up the Ziphites to Saul

*Ver. 12. And the Lord said, They will deliver thee up]* One would imagine, that this extraordinary success, in the deliverance of so great a city, might have secured David a safe retreat among the men of Keilah; but it was not so: such is the nature of man; present dangers quickly obliterate past obligations. Gratitude is without question a most lovely virtue, but too seldom lives in the extremes either of adversity or success. It is like those fine colours which storms and sun-shine equally deface. This is an event which, methinks, will easily solve that hard question about the consistency of the divine prescience with human free-will. A good politician, who was let into the course of Saul's secret practices with the men of Keilah, and had fair opportunities of sifting their dispositions upon the point, might fairly pronounce upon the event: how much more than that all-seeing GOD, who *searcheth the secrets of the heart, and seeth the thoughts afar off*; seeth them in all their secret workings, tendencies, and temptations, and through all their mazes and masks. The treachery of the men of Keilah to David has given frequent occasion to observe how much more honourable was the conduct of the Athenians to their guardians, their orators, whom no threats could oblige them to give up to the resentment of Alexander.

*Ver. 14. In the wilderness of Ziph]* This mountainous wilderness was within the precincts of the tribe of Judah, (for there, as it was natural, David thought himself most in safety,) and upon the confines of Edom; Josh. xv. 24. It is supposed to have had its name from the Hebrew word זִפְתִּים *zepheth, pitch*, with which it is said to have abounded. This is the more probable, if it was situate, as some place it, on the borders of the Asphaltick lake. It was not far from Maon and Carmel, ver. 25. chap. xxv. 5.

*Ver. 17, 18. And I shall be next unto, &c.]* i. e. "The next person to thee in thy kingdom." *And they too made a covenant before the Lord*; that is, solemnly renewed the covenant which they had formerly made. Jonathan's conduct in this remarkable transaction appears truly disinterested, generous, and great. He could not now be ignorant of David's destination to the throne of Israel by the

will of God, and knew that nothing could prevent his succession to it, as God had appointed it. In such a situation how does he act? He scorns by fraud and violence to attempt the life of the man whom God had fixed on to be king, even in preference to himself; but seeks him out in the wilderness, where his father was hunting him to destruction, and *strengthens his hand in God*: not by promising to assist him in dispossessing his father of the kingdom, or disturbing and distressing his government; not by entering into any conspiracy or plot with him against his father's interest and honour; but by comforting him under his cruel persecution, and assuring him of God's protection from the hand or power of his father, his future advancement to the crown, and his own confidence in David's friendship, that he should be advanced to the highest honours in his court. He lets him know also, that Saul his father very well knew that David should be his successor; and that Jonathan said the truth in this, is evident from what Saul himself said to David but a little while after, chap. xxiv. 20. In this whole affair, therefore, between Jonathan and David, nothing passed but what was perfectly consistent with the allegiance and duty of these two eminent friends to their common sovereign and father: there was no treason talked of; no event spoken of, but what was known to Saul equally as to Jonathan: not any treasonable measures concerted to precipitate and hasten the event before the proper season appointed by Providence; nor any covenant entered into by Jonathan to engage with David in any common cause against his own father. David's succession to the crown after Saul, as we have said above, was well known both to Saul and Jonathan: and the only circumstance in which Jonathan's conduct differed from his father's was, that, with respect to an event which both of them foresaw would come to pass, Jonathan was for quietly submitting to it, as an appointment of God; while Saul was for practising every expedient to prevent it, if possible.

*Note;* (1.) The words of a pious friend are a reviving cordial to a fainting heart. (2.) Where true love is, even kingdoms are not too great to part with. (3.) Renewed engage-

to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself with us in strong holds in the wood, in the hill of Hachilah, which *is* on the south of Jeshimon?

20 Now therefore, O king, come down according to all the desire of thy soul to come down; and our part *shall be* to deliver him into the king's hand.

21 And Saul said, Blessed *be* ye of the LORD; for ye have compassion on me.

22 Go, I pray you, prepare yet, and know and see his place where his haunt is, *and* who hath seen him there: for it is told me *that* he dealeth very subtilly.

23 See therefore, and take knowledge of all the lurking-places where he hideth himself, and come ye again to me with the certainty, and I will go with you: and it shall come to pass, if he be in the land, that I will search him out throughout all the thousands of Judah.

24 And they arose, and went to Ziph before Saul: but David and his men *were* in the wilderness of Maon, in the plain on the south of Jeshimon.

25 Saul also and his men went to seek *him*. And they told David: wherefore he came down into a rock, and abode in the wilderness of Maon. And when Saul heard *that*, he pur-

sued after David in the wilderness of Maon.

26 And Saul went on this side of the mountain, and David and his men on that side of the mountain: and David made haste to get away for fear of Saul; for Saul and his men compassed David and his men round about to take them.

27 ¶ But there came a messenger unto Saul, saying, Haste thee, and comé; for the Philistines have invaded the land.

28 Wherefore Saul returned from pursuing after David, and went against the Philistines: therefore they called that place Sela-hammahlekoth.

29 ¶ And David went up from thence, and dwelt in strong holds at En-gedi.

## C H A P. XXIV.

*David, in a cave at En-gedi, having cut off the skirt of Saul's robe, spareth his life: Saul confesses David to be more righteous than he: David swears that he will spare Saul's posterity when he is king.*

[Before Christ 1059.]

**A**ND it came to pass when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold, David *is* in the wilderness of En-gedi.

2 Then Saul took three thousand chosen

engagements are a strengthening to the bands of friendship; and the friend of Jesus is glad of every opportunity to repeat his vows of fidelity to him.

*Ver. 25, 26. Saul also and his men went*] Saul, informed of the place where David was, went in person to invest it; and, humanly speaking, David could not possibly escape: but God heard the prayers which this holy man made to him in this extremity, and which he has so finely expressed in the 54th Psalm; all the parts whereof are applicable to the present occasion. The prayers of great men in distress, and their thanksgivings after great deliverances, have always been matter of uncommon delight to curiosity, and to persons of serious and religious spirits; nor does the glory of any great man shine out in their eyes with half the lustre, as when they behold him on his knees, lifting up his eyes, or stretching out his hands to Heaven, or, what is yet greater, prostrating himself before it, in humiliation and acknowledgment.

*Ver. 27, 28. There came a messenger unto Saul*] Thus, by the timely interposition of Providence, David was delivered from one of the most immediate dangers of his life: and from this time *they called the place סלע המחלקות Selang hammahlekoth; i. e. the rock of divisions: the rock where*

Saul was obliged to divide himself from David, and go after the Philistines. Osiander thinks that David gave it this name in gratitude for his deliverance, as a memorial that there God had, by little less than a miracle, divided his enemy from him. Possibly this was a rock of one of those mountains which Solomon calls the *mountains of Bethel*, (Cantic. ii. 17.) in the Margin of our Bible interpreted *division*.

*Note;* (1.) God has various ways of delivering his people; even the Philistines shall sometimes be made instruments of his mercy to them. (2.) They who have fled to the mountain of refuge Jesus Christ, shall find such a strong rock of division between them and danger, that none shall be able to hurt them.

## C H A P. XXIV.

*Ver. 1. In the wilderness of En-gedi*] The word עין נדי *En-gedi* signifies in the Hebrew, *the kid's fountain*; from whence the neighbouring region took its name, probably because there they watered their flocks. Eusebius places it on the confines of the Dead Sea, to the west. With him, it is famous for excellent *balm*, and with Solomon, in his song, for *vineyards*. Cant. i. 4. It is now called *An-guedi*: see Thevenot's Travels, part i. chap. 47.

*Ver.*

men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats.

3 And he came to the sheep-cotes by the way, where *was* a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave.

4 And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily.

5 And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt.

6 And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he *is* the anointed of the LORD.

7 So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on *his* way.

8 ¶ David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself.

9 And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt?

10 Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee to-day into mine hand in the cave: and *some* bade me kill thee: but *mine eye* spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he *is* the LORD's anointed.

11 Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that *there is* neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it.

12 The LORD judge between me and thee, and the LORD avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee.

*Ver. 3. Saul went in to cover his feet*] See Judg. iii. 24. and Ruth, iii. 4. Several commentators suppose, that this expression imports one of the necessities of nature; but one can hardly believe that in this case there would have been sufficient time either for the conversation between David and his men, or for the cutting off the robe. We are told by Dr. Pococke, that some of the caves in Palestine are exceedingly large; and that he himself visited one in which David and his men might have been hid, and not be seen by Saul; and hence he conjectures, that this is one of the strong-holds of En-gedi, and possibly the same with that mentioned by the sacred writer. See his Description of the East, vol. ii. part 1. and Psal. cxlii.

*Ver. 5. David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt*] The reasons which restrained David from killing Saul, were worthy a brave and generous man, a man of piety and virtue. He durst not stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed. Under this sacred character he forgot that Saul was his implacable enemy, and instantly sacrificed his resentment to his conscience and duty; hereby acting with a goodness and greatness of mind, which Saul thought no man in the world could have done besides him.

*Ver. 11. There is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand*] Instead of taking away Saul's life, David only privately cut off the skirt of his robe. His protestation of his innocence, and having no intention to deprive Saul of his crown and life, was founded in truth, and verified by the most authentic facts. Nor was his being in arms a contradiction to it; unless a man's being in arms to pre-

serve his life, and not to oppose his friend, argues him guilty of rebellion; or unless when a tyrant tells a man he will have his life, such a person is bound to hold out his throat to the Lord's anointed, and humbly bid him cut it at his pleasure. David did not seem to be of this opinion; and therefore kept himself in arms, and upon his defence, because he had no other possible means of safety.

*Ver. 12. The Lord judge, &c.*] These words, spoken by David to Saul, when it was in his power to have taken his life, most men will admit, did not imply that David wished or desired that God would *revenge* him upon Saul, but was a declaration, from the spirit of prophecy, that GOD would do it. But these expressions are so frequent in Scripture, and with such circumstances and aggravations, that many do believe that they are literally intended; and though it has been otherwise enjoined under the Gospel, under the law it was not only the custom and practice of pious men to pray for the conversion, but also for the confusion of wicked and impenitent persons, whose prosperity confirmed men in their unrighteousness, and was a dishonour to God. David, conscious of his innocence, refers his cause to God, the just judge; willing to leave it wholly to his righteous award, and determined not to judge for himself, or execute his vengeance upon his enemy, when he had that enemy in his power: and certainly, whoever will compare the 12th and 15th verses together, will see that the latter is explanatory of the former. The *avenging* in the one, is the *pleading his cause*; and *delivering him out of Saul's hand*, in the other.

13 As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked: but mine hand shall not be upon thee.

14 After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea.

15 The LORD therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand.

16 ¶ And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, *Is* this thy voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice, and wept.

17 And he said to David, Thou *art* more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil.

18 And thou hast shewed this day how that thou hast dealt well with me: forasmuch as

*Ver. 13. Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked*] i. e. "Guilt is the consequence and fruit of guilt. If I had been guilty of conspiring against thee, I should have crowned my guilt by killing thee when it was in my power."

*Ver. 14. After a dead dog? after a flea?]* A dog was an object of the greatest contempt. The reason why this secondary idea was always associated with the name of this animal in the mind of a Jew, may be deduced from the Mosaic law, which was intended not only to preserve the idea of the unity of the Deity, but as an invincible barrier to keep the Israelites separate from other nations, by opposing, as well as imitating, under certain corrections, their ritual ceremonies. The *dog* being the hieroglyphick of the chief deity among the Egyptians, the treating this symbol with contempt, and propagating the term with such an associated idea to the latest posterity, was, in the course of nature, the most efficacious means to preserve the Israelites from adopting that species of idolatry; and when we recollect that Egyptian superstition was peculiarly affected by the Israelites, we cannot sufficiently admire the depth of the riches of the divine mercy and wisdom. The sense of this passage then is, "Dost thou pursue one of the weakest and meanest of thy subjects, and of no more signification and strength, in comparison of the king at the head of his chosen troops, than a dead dog, or a single flea?" And this was justly said; for Saul had now three thousand chosen men with him, and all the forces of Israel at his command; and David had at most but six hundred.

REFLECTIONS.—Saul, in the heat of the day, fatigued probably with the toil of mounting the craggy steeps, retires into the cave to cover his feet, wrapping himself up in his garments, for a little repose. When his nap is over, unsuspecting of what has passed, he arises and departs; David quickly follows him, and ere he was gone far, cries after him with the most honorable title, My lord the king; and bows before him with the deepest respect. Greatly surprised at the voice, no doubt, he turns; and is more surprised at the person, but most at the discourse which was addressed to him by his pious son and loyal subject.

1. He wisely and politely lays the blame of Saul's conduct on his courtiers rather than himself; and many such as Doeg, no doubt, there were, who envied David's preferment. The courts of princes abound with sycophants: it is difficult for them to see with their own eyes; and the

best friends of their country, represented through this medium, are often made to appear, and are treated, as her sworn enemies.

2. He produces the strongest evidence of his innocence in that day's occurrence: so far from seeking Saul's life, when urged to slay him while lying at his mercy, the skirt he held up proclaimed how tender he was of his life; he revered him as God's anointed, he respected him as his king; and he adds the endearing name of father, both as a reason for rejecting so wicked a proposal, and to awaken the tenderness of a father's bowels towards a son so dutiful, and a servant so faithful. *Note*; No provocation can justify regicide.

3. He solemnly protests, that it never was his intention, and never would be his desire, to avenge himself: he referred the matter wholly to God; and observes, according to an ancient proverb, *Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked*; as a man's heart is, so are his actions: had he harboured any ill design, it must then have undoubtedly appeared; therefore Saul might be assured of his innocence and loyalty. *Note*; (1.) *As the saying is*, conveys many a good admonition; the words of the wife deserve to be long remembered, and often quoted. (2.) The only safe conclusion of a man's temper is certainly from his actions: an evil tree beareth not good fruit.

4. He expostulates with him, not only how unbecoming it was in a good man to pursue the innocent, but how unbecoming of a great king to persecute one so much his inferior, an exile, leaping as a flea from hill to hill for safety; and as worthless and unable to make resistance as a dead dog. *Note*, Yielding pacifies wrath: to humble ourselves before others, is the best way to keep them from trampling upon us, if they have any nobleness of spirit remaining.

Lastly, he rests his cause in the hands of the great Judge and avenger, and trusts that he will plead for him now, and stand by him, if the king still refuses to be convinced by such undeniable evidence of his innocence. *Note*, It is the comfort of the oppressed, that they have a tribunal to appeal to, where justice shall be done them. The last day at least will be our vindication from every malignant accusation.

*Ver. 16. Saul lifted up his voice, and wept]* Saul himself, with all his malice, could not withstand this instance of David's generosity. He melted, and sunk under it; and instead of defaming it, or lessening the merit of it with an

when the LORD had delivered me into thine hand, thou killedst me not.

19 For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? wherefore the LORD reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day.

20 And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of

Israel shall be established in thine hand.

21 Swear now therefore unto me by the LORD, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house.

22 And David sware unto Saul. And Saul went home; but David and his men gat them up unto the hold.

an unrelenting heart, *he lift up his voice and wept*, and with tears acknowledged David's innocence and his own guilt, and even prayed God to reward him, whom, but the moment before, he was pursuing to destruction.

*Ver. 19. For if a man find his enemy] For if a man, finding his enemy, lets him go well away, the Lord will reward him: wherefore the Lord reward thee for that which thou hast done unto me this day. Houb.*

*Ver. 20—22. I know well that thou shalt surely be king]* He knew this, says St. Chrysostom, from David's manners, from his kingly virtues, as well as his uncommon success; but, above all, he knew his divine designation to the throne. Saul, says Dr. Trapp, being melted by those coals of kindness which David had heaped upon his head, poureth out himself in a flood of passions, and, for the present, spake as he thought. But good thoughts make a thoroughfare only of wicked hearts: they stay not there, as those that like not their lodging: their purposes, for want of performance, are but as clouds without rain, or as Hercules's club in the tragedy, of a great bulk, but stuffed with moss and rubbish. David complied with Saul's request, and sware to him; for Saul, foreseeing that his family would be in David's power, and conscious to himself how cruelly and treacherously he himself had treated him, exacts an oath from David, not to cut off his seed when he came to the throne, nor to destroy his name out of his father's house; an oath which David generously took, and honourably and religiously performed. He would not, however, trust himself to Saul; he knew too well his inconstancy, perfidy, and phrenzy. *Never trust thine enemy*, says the son of Sirach, *though he humble himself; take good heed, and beware of him*, Ecclus. xii. 10, &c. Two remarks naturally arise upon this pathetic speech of Saul's, and David's behaviour to him. The first is, that his sense of David's generosity must be very strong, when he beseeches God to reward it. Indeed Saul had no equivalent to give David for the kindness shewn him; and therefore he refers him to GOD for retribution. For if, after this, he should even save David's life, yet still he could only save the life of his best benefactor; whereas David both spared and saved the life of his most mortal enemy. The second is, that David, by sparing his enemy, found himself possessed of one of the highest satisfactions in the world; to see his enraged prince his petitioner! to see his foe his suppliant! conscious, and confessing his own guilt and David's superiority! and begging that mercy to his issue which he himself had just experienced, and had not deserved! Who would not save an enemy, for the joy of so glorious a triumph!

*Reflections on the foregoing chapter.*

We can never so reasonably promise ourselves an extraordinary protection and deliverance from whatever calamities or dangers most nearly threaten or press us, by some wonderful act of God's own immediate power and vigilance, as when we have, out of mere piety or conscience, or out of the obligations of Christian charity and compassion, forborne the doing of an ill act, which was in our power to do, and the doing whereof, according to all human reason, would, for the present, have freed us from that oppression which is most grievous to us; for by that we declare, that we will have no other refuge than what is agreeable to His good will and pleasure. Whereas, they who are ready to lay hold of any advantage that is offered to do their enemy mischief, and, in the taking it, prescribe no other rules to themselves than what their enemies would observe if they had the same opportunity, make it manifest, that they depend on another security than the shadow of God's wings for the passing over of their calamities. If our enemies have traduced us with false and unworthy imputations, and we come to have credit enough by as scandalous reports to take away their good name, and for truth and justice sake we forbear to do it, we may be confident that their tongues, how sharp and venomous soever, shall not be able to hurt us; but that God, by some way or other, will make our innocence and uprightness appear, through all the clouds of prejudice and calumny which their malice has raised about us. If we are unjustly persecuted by a great and powerful enemy, who, in his rage and fury, would take our life, and whilst he is using all his skill to entrap us, and get us into his power, himself falls into our hands, and it is in our power to revenge the wrong he has done to us, and, by taking his life, prevent any act of future violence upon us; and we do, out of piety and duty, if he be our prince, or a person to whom we owe obedience, or out of humanity or generosity, if he be our equal, refuse to take that advantage, and spare that blood which we might shed, and wait God's leisure for a deliverance, without any guilt of our own; we may humbly presume, that he will interpose his protection in our behalf, and frustrate all attempts of violence upon us, if, notwithstanding this temper and obligation on our part, the malice and rancour of our enemies continue. *If a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away?* says Saul, (ver. 19.) when he was convinced of the integrity of David's heart, by his not taking advantage of him in the cave where he might have securely destroyed him: and when some of his friends would have persuaded

## C H A P. XXV.

*The death of Samuel. David, provoked by Nabal's churlishness, resolves to destroy him; but is restrained by the wisdom of Abigail. Nabal, hearing thereof, dies. David marries Abigail.*

[Before Christ 1057.]

**A**ND Samuel died; and all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah. And David arose, and went down to the wilderness of Paran.

2 ¶ And *there was* a man in Maon, whose possessions *were* in Carmel; and the man *was* very great, and he had three thousand sheep,

and a thousand goats: and he was shearing his sheep in Carmel.

3 Now the name of the man *was* Nabal; and the name of his wife, Abigail: and *she was* a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance: but the man *was* churlish and evil in his doings; and he *was* of the house of Caleb.

4 ¶ And David heard in the wilderness that Nabal did shear his sheep.

5 And David sent out ten young men, and David said unto the young men, Get ye up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name:

him, that God had delivered his enemy into his hand, and that he might do as seemed good to him. (ver. 5.) Saul was never so confounded with the shame of his own jealousy and malice, as by this act of piety and magnanimity in David; and though he had long known that he was anointed, and appointed by God to reign as king after him, yet he did not so thoroughly believe it till this great instance of the temper of his mind, and of his relying upon God's purpose so entirely, that he would not, by an act of his own, endeavour to bring that honour and security upon himself sooner than His wisdom intended it to him. Now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thy hand. We can never receive a greater earnest that God will himself wonderfully help us, than when he gives us grace not to help ourselves by any ill means which are offered to us.

## C H A P. XXV.

*Ver. 1. And Samuel died*] This great prophet was in the ninety-seventh or ninety-eighth year of his age: he had ruled sixteen, or, as others think, twenty years before the reign of Saul, and judged the Israelites, that is, was their principal judge, for about forty years after. No wonder that so righteous a ruler, and so just a judge, should be universally lamented, especially when the wisdom and equity of his government, compared with Saul's tyranny and extravagancies, made his memory more dear, and his loss more regretted. He was buried in his house at Ramah; for the Jews had no places of public sepulture. Each family had its private sepulchres; which appears to have been the case from Abraham to the time of Joseph of Arimathea. They were, indeed, for the most part, in fields and rocks; and Samuel is the first that we read of who was buried in, or at his own house; probably in his garden: see ch. xxviii. 3. though we are afterwards told that Joab was buried in the same manner, 1 Kings, ii. 34. and the practice, for aught we know, might have been frequent among them; as we are told it was enjoined the Thebans, "before they built a house, to build a sepulchre in the place." Samuel was now attended by all Israel to his grave; and his remains were removed, many centuries after, with incredible pomp, and almost one

continued train of attendants, from Ramah to Constantinople, by the emperor Arcadius, Ann. Dom. 401.

REFLECTIONS.—The best of men are dying worms. Samuel departs in peace: he had lived highly respected, and dies universally lamented. His last days he had spent far from a busy world, in the pleasing enjoyment of residing in the school of the prophets at Nainoth, where he was at leisure to look forward to that rest to which he was going, and wait his joyful dismissal. He was buried in Ramah, in his own house or garden, and all Israel mourned his loss; a loss the more sensibly felt in the present distracted condition of their country under Saul's outrageous government. David hereupon retires to Paran, that he might be more out of the way of Saul. *Note;* (1.) In age it becomes us particularly to look forward, and as we get nearer our journey's end, to prepare for our great change. (2.) The death of a great and faithful minister will draw forth tears of real grief from all who know the invaluable blessing they have lost, and who sensibly feel the want of his admonitions, preaching, and prayers.

*Wilderness of Paran*] Which was to the south of Judea, and on the confines of Arabia, nay, the Mahometans make it a part of Arabia Deserta; and David himself is generally thought to own it such in that dolorous complaint of the 120th Psalm, where he laments his so long continuance in the tents of Kedar: but that by no means follows; for he might, upon Saul's pursuit, have passed from Paran to Arabia, and so sojourned there a considerable time; but as it was the place of Ishmael's residence, it cannot, I think, well be doubted to have been part of Arabia. There seems no doubt, from the whole of this history, that Paran, Maon, and Carmel, were contiguous. See note on chap. xxiii. 14.

*Ver. 3. Nabal—was of the house of Caleb*] כלבי *kalibi*, in the Hebrew, and he was a Calebite. As כלב *caleb* signifies a dog, some of the ancient interpreters understand the word as expressive of his bad disposition; whence the Syriac, Arabic, and LXX translate it, *a man of a churlish, snarling, or dog-like disposition*, ἀνθρωπος Κυνικός. See Le Clerc and Calmet.

*Ver. 5—9. And David sent out, &c.*] In this message of David to Nabal, which is a fine picture of ancient and true politeness, there are three things well worth our

6 And thus shall ye say to him that liveth in prosperity, Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast.

7 And now I have heard that thou hast shearers: now thy shepherds which were with us, we hurt them not, neither was there ought missing unto them, all the while they were in Carmel.

8 Ask thy young men, and they will shew thee. Wherefore let the young men find favour in thine eyes: for we come in a good day: give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to

thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David.

9 And when David's young men came, they spake to Nabal according to all those words in the name of David, and ceased.

10 ¶ And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants now-a-days that break away every man from his master.

11 Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men whom I know not whence they be?

notice. First, the direction: *To him that liveth*, ver. 6. (*in prosperity* is not in the Hebrew); and secondly, the salutation: *Peace be to thee, and peace to thine house, &c.* In the Scripture, *living* and *being happy*, are synonymous: David's own benevolent spirit suggested to him, that, being happy ourselves, we should delight in making others share in our happiness. God does so; and the man after God's own heart does so too: at the same time David well knew that Nabal was obliged to assist him from God's own express command; Deut. xv. 7. In the next place, the great beauty and propriety of that ancient eastern salutation, *Peace be to thee, &c.* is very emphatical, inasmuch as the best blessings of life, and all the social affections attend upon peace; and in the last place, the modesty of this message is very remarkable: for though David had much real merit towards Nabal, yet he puts his request only upon having no demerit towards him; (well knowing that some martial men are wont to deem this merit enough towards the tame inhabitants of the country; and they too think it so;) but at the same time referring him to his own servants for fuller information. The LXX translate the 7th verse thus: *Behold, I have heard that thy shepherds are now shearing for thee. They were with us in the wilderness, and we have not hindered them, nor have we commanded them any thing all the days of their being in Carmel.* Upon which the author of the *Observations* remarks, that this is translating like people perfectly well acquainted with the managements of the violent and rapacious Arab Emirs, whose manners David, though he lived in the wilderness as they did, did not adopt. One of them, at the head of six hundred men, would have commanded from time to time some provisions or present from Nabal's servants for permitting them to feed in quiet, and would have driven them away from the watering place upon any dislike. He had not done either. Nor is this a misrepresentation of the LXX. The Hebrew word הכלמנום *heklannum*, which we translate *hurt*, the Margin tells us signifies *shamed*; and it is used, Jer. xiv. 3. to express a returning from a watering place without water: and the word נפקד *niphkad*, translated *missing*, is the passive of the verb פקד *pakad*, which signifies to *visit*, and perhaps comes to signify *missing*, or *wanting*, from some things being usually wanting where an Arab emir had visited. Some late authors have

represented this address of David to Nabal as a very strange one, and made it one topic of defamation; as if he had the assurance to press Nabal for a supply of his wants, on the plea of his not having robbed or hurt his servants, for which he could have no pretence; and on the old man's declining it, resolves to cut him off, with those of his household. It would be an over-officious zeal to attempt to justify this design of David, since he himself condemned it, as he certainly did when he *blessed God* for preventing him, by his Providence, from avenging himself with his own hand, ver. 33. But it is right to place every action in its true light as far as possible; and David might certainly with a very good grace remind Nabal, that though he was unjustly driven out from the inhabited parts of Judea, and forced to live very much like the Arabs of the desert, and reduced to necessities equal to theirs, he did not imitate their rapaciousness, nor extort the least thing from his servants when they were absolutely in his power, as the Arabs of the wilderness often did. When therefore, in return to all this, Nabal treated him with reproaches, it is *the less* to be wondered at, that he was wrought up to a rage, which prompted him to think of imitating these Arabs, among whom he was now forced to dwell, and who thought themselves authorized to take from others what they wanted, and even to *kill* those who resisted, *which is what they do to this day.* But the law of God hath hitherto restrained him from any thing of this kind, made him acknowledge to be wrong the thought which anger had inspired, and engaged him to lay aside the bloody purpose. *Observations*, p. 65.

Ver. 10, 11. *Nabal answered David's servants*] Nabal's answer was agreeable to his character, rude and fullen, a strong image of ungoverned brutality, and very natural to that insolence which wealth is too apt to infuse into undisciplined spirits. He had thoroughly learned Saul's contemptuous stile; *Who is the son of Jesse?* Nor could any reproach more atrocious be thrown upon a well-born, well-bred, and innocent man, than that in these words; *there be many servants, &c.* as it implies those crimes on account of which bad servants become fugitives from their masters.

REFLECTIONS.—We have here an account of Nabal, his family, and circumstances. He was sprung from a noble stock,



12 So David's young men turned their way, and went again, and came and told him all those sayings.

13 And David said unto his men, Gird ye on every man his sword. And they girded on every man his sword; and David also girded on his sword: and there went up after David about four hundred men; and two hundred abode by the stuff.

14 ¶ But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he raild on them.

15 But the men *were* very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we any thing, as long as we were conversant with them, when we were in the fields:

16 They were a wall unto us both by night and day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep.

17 Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do; for evil is determined against our master, and against all his household: for he *is such* a son of Belial, that *a man* cannot speak to him.

18 ¶ Then Abigail made haste, and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched *corn*, and an hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid *them* on asses.

19 And she said unto her servants, Go on before me; behold, I come after you. But she told not her husband Nabal.

20 And it was *so*, as she rode on the ass, that she came down by the covert of the hill, and, behold, David and his men came down against her; and she met them.

21 (Now David had said, Surely in vain have I kept all that this *fellow* hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that *pertain*ed unto him: and he hath requited me evil for good.

22 So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that *pertain* to him by the morning light any that *pisseth* against the wall.)

23 And when Abigail saw David, she hasted, and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground,

flock, the distinguished Caleb; but, like many others, became the reproach of his ancestors: a man, indeed, of vast wealth, which made him great in the eyes of men; but of a mean and little spirit; and, as mean spirits usually are, insolent, churlish, and overbearing. His wife was of a character the reverse of his; her name Abigail, *her father's joy*: a woman of excellent understanding, generous in her temper, and not more adorned by the accomplishments of her person, than by the beauties of her mind. *Note*: (1.) The greatest gifts of this world are often possessed by those who have neither wisdom nor grace to improve them. (2.) Many a wife, like Abigail, is doomed, by inhuman parents, for a great estate, to bear the yoke of such a Nabal. But how little happiness can be expected from such an union!

*Ver. 14.* And he raild on them] The Hebrew word *וַיִּרְאֹתָם* *wairaut*, is never used to signify railing, but denotes, *he flew at them*, like a ravenous bird on its prey: an expression used in almost all languages to denote a violent attack or assault upon any person to abuse and injure him; and it is probable, by David's resentment, that Nabal employed some of his servants to attack them. The same verb is used to denote the sudden, furious, hostile invasion of the prey; ch. xxv. 14. and is there rendered by the LXX, "*Hast* rushed upon the spoil," viz. in order to seize it. The substantive *וַיִּרְאֹתָם* signifies a *bird of prey*; so we read, Jer. xii. 9. *The bird with talons*; as that place should be rendered.

*Ver. 22.* So and more also do God unto the enemies of David] If we put all circumstances together, though David's passion, and oath to destroy Nabal and servants, are not to be vindicated; though the resolution was cruel, and the oath a rash and wicked one, yet it must be allowed, that the provocation given him was very great. The last clause of this verse is rendered by the French, *I will leave to Nabal nothing that belongs to him, from man even to dog.*

*Ver. 23—31.* When Abigail saw David, &c.] Abigail was a woman of distinguished merit. She had the advantage of a beautiful person, set off by an excellent understanding, a graceful address, and uncommon prudence; these are finely discovered in her speech to David, which is full of such humble, pathetic, natural, and for that reason powerful eloquence, as is not, I verily think, to be paralleled in antiquity. She begins by begging that the blame of this misconduct might rather light on her than on her husband; see 2 Sam. xiv. 9. but begs at the same time, that David would please to hear what she has to say in her own excuse. As for Nabal, he was below David's notice; a man, as his name implied, נָבָל *nabal*, (which signifies *folly* in the Hebrew,) of very mean understanding; and she excuses herself by assuring him, that she heard not a word of his message till his servants were sent away. She then insinuates the goodness of God to him, in withholding him from revenge and from blood; and in the very same sentence interweaves a most solemn adjuration to obtain from both, ver. 26. Abigail, after this, beseeches David that

24 And fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, *upon me let this iniquity be*: and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid.

25 Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, *even Nabal*: for as his name *is*, so *is* he; Nabal *is* his name, and folly *is* with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send.

26 Now therefore, my lord, *as* the LORD liveth, and *as* thy soul liveth, seeing the LORD hath withholden thee from coming to *shed* blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine enemies, and they that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal.

27 And now this blessing which thine handmaid hath brought unto my lord, let it even be given unto the young men that follow my lord.

28 I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid: for the LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the LORD, and evil hath not been found in thee *all* thy days.

29 Yet a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul: but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the LORD thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, *as out* of the middle of a sling.

30 And it shall come to pass, when the LORD shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel;

31 That this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself: but when the LORD shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid.

32 ¶ And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me:

33 And blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to *shed* blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand.

34 For in very deed, *as* the LORD God of Israel liveth, which hath kept me back from hurting thee, except thou hadst hastened and come to meet me, surely there had not been left unto Nabal by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall.

35 So David received of her hand *that* which she had brought him, and said unto her, Go up in peace to thine house; see, I have hearkened to thy voice, and have accepted thy person.

36 ¶ And Abigail came to Nabal; and, behold, he held a feast in his house, like the feast of a king; and Nabal's heart *was* merry

that he would suffer *his servants* to accept her presents (they were too mean for *his* acceptance): repeating her petition for forgiveness, and adding, that God would certainly preserve him from his enemies, whom she wishes to be all *as Nabal*, as truly despicable, as incapable to harm him, and as much humbled before him; that God, whose battles he had fought (finely insinuating that such only were worthy his prowess), and whose laws he had hitherto kept inviolable, would certainly preserve, and in the end establish him in the throne: and that then it would be matter of no remorse or disquiet to him, that he had abstained from self-vengeance, and the shedding of blood; concluding with an earnest request, that, when God had established him, he would remember her. The words in the 29th verse, *But the soul of my Lord shall be bound in the bundle of LIFE, &c.* Calmet would render, *But the soul of my lord shall be like a living stone with the Lord.* It is certain, that by this translation the opposition is finely marked between the two clauses of the verse: but we do not know of either versions or manuscripts which favour

this translation of our learned Benedicline. Houbigant translates as we do, and observes, that the similitude is drawn from little bundles in which things of value are collected, that they may not be scattered about and thrown away; and at the same time a comparison is made between these *bundles*, and a *sling* in which a stone is put, not to be preserved, but to be thrown away. See Schmidt's Dissertations.

Ver. 32—34. *David said to Abigail, Blessed be the Lord God]* The finest spirits are soonest kindled into a flame; and to see them quickly cooled and calmed again upon the first shew of submission, by the first gleam of conviction, and raging wrath changed in one instant into flowing humanity and benignity, is the surest test of generosity and true magnanimity. David, convinced by Abigail's prudence of the rashness of his resolution, *blesse the Lord God of Israel for sending her, blesse her advice, and blesse her, who kept him from shedding blood, and avenging himself.* Can there be a finer picture of a generous mind? See Waterland's Script. Vindicated, p. 100.

Ver.

within him, for he *was* very drunken: wherefore she told him nothing, less or more, until the morning light.

37 But it came to pass in the morning, when the wine was gone out of Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became *as* a stone.

38 And it came to pass about ten days *after*, that the LORD smote Nabal, that he died.

39 ¶ And when David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, Blessed *be* the LORD, that hath pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and hath kept his servant from evil: for the LORD hath returned the wickedness of Nabal upon his own head. And

David sent and communed with Abigail, to take her to him to wife.

40 And when the servants of David were come to Abigail to Carmel, they spake unto her, saying, David sent us unto thee, to take thee to him to wife.

41 And she arose, and bowed herself on *her* face to the earth, and said, Behold, *let* thine handmaid *be* a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord.

42 And Abigail hastened, and arose, and rode upon an ass, with five damsels of hers that went after her; and she went after the messengers of David, and became his wife.

43 David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel;

*Ver. 37. His heart died within him]* The baseness of Nabal's own heart made him believe David incapable of forgiving him; and therefore, upon Abigail's representing the case to him, which, no doubt, she did in lively colours, his terror became irremediable. This extremity of terror we commonly express by the term *thunderstruck*; which is finely and feelingly described by Ovid. *Trist. lib. i. eleg. 3.*

So was I flunn'd, as one that's thunder-struck,  
Who lives, but lives unconscious of his life.

*Ver. 39. When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, &c.]* David, hearing of the death of Nabal, adores the divine justice so remarkably displayed in the punishment of this wicked man; and is full of thankfulness, that his cause was thus remarkably pleaded, without any intervention of his own. How fine a lesson is this to mankind, to remit injuries; to refer themselves and their concerns to the providence of God; to quell the spirit of revenge in the haughty heart, and to recede from rash and wicked resolutions, even though backed by solemn oaths!

*Ver. 40. When the servants of David were come to Abigail]* We would just remark, that in this, as in their historical details in general, the sacred writers are very concise. There can be no doubt, but that a decent time passed before David's proposals were made to Abigail, and that his servants omitted nothing to convince her of the respectful and tender sentiments wherewith her virtue and beauty had inspired the heart of David.

*Ver. 43. David also took Ahinoam]* Ahinoam is always mentioned as first of the wives of David. See chap. xvii. 3. xxx. 5, &c. And, therefore, it is supposed, that he was married to her before he took Abigail. Polygamy was a practice too prevalent in those ages, even under the dark Jewish dispensation; and David, probably, hoped to strengthen his interest in his own tribe by this double alliance, especially when he apprehended that it must be considerably weakened in that of Benjamin, by Michal's being taken away from him, ver. 44. *For Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Phalti the son of Laish, a Benjamite;* which Saul did to take away all his pretensions to the crown from that alliance.

#### *Remarks on the Character of Samuel.*

How singular was the character and piety of Samuel! Devoted to God from the womb, and worthy to be so! Early dedicated to the Divinity, and hallowed by his influence! Descended from prophets, himself a greater prophet. The peculiar service of God constituted the early business of his life; nor was it ever interrupted by any thing but the service of his country.

The Scriptures are certainly the solace of life; but the pleasure of perusing them is always heightened when they demonstrate their own veracity. No man, guided by nature only, in the vigour of life, and in the age of ambition and avarice, forced by no danger, urged by no guilt, and pressed by no infirmity of mind or body, ever yet, voluntarily, and of his own choice, resigned the supreme power, secluded his sons from the succession, and elected two strangers to it, in succession, neither of whom he had ever seen before. Samuel did all this; and therefore, when the Scriptures assure us that he did it by the divine command, we cannot help believing them: the narration carries with it its own irresistible evidence.

Happy Samuel! Exalted to supreme power without ambition; exerting it without oppression or avarice; and resigning it without reluctance, when his God commanded! Retiring (rare felicity!) with undiminished dignity, or, to speak more justly, with added honour, from the concurrent and universal testimony of his country to his equity and incorruption! Oh, that all princes would so use their power, or so resign it! Illustrious in the splendor of authority, and yet more so in the shade of a cell; so far from envying his successor to the supreme power, he pitied and prayed for him! He had raised him by the divine favour, but could not restore him.

It would be hard to decide which was happiest, his life, or his death. He lived to the noblest of purposes, the glory of God, and the good of his country; he died full of years and honours, universally lamented and desired. Such was Samuel! Such always were, and always will be, those, whose duty is their delight, and whose God is their glory!

and they were also both of them his wives.

44 ¶ But Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Phalti the son of Laish, which was of Gallim.

CHAP. XXVI.

*David, in the desert of Ziph, takes away Saul's spear, and prevents Abishai from killing him, while he is asleep: he expostulates with Saul; who confesses his sin.*

[Before Christ 1057.]

AND the Ziphites came unto Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon?

2 Then Saul arose, and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph.

3 And Saul pitched in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon, by the way. But

David abode in the wilderness, and he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness.

4 David therefore sent out spies, and understood that Saul was come in very deed.

5 ¶ And David arose, and came to the place where Saul had pitched: and David beheld the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of Ner, the captain of his host: and Saul lay in the trench, and the people pitched round about him.

6 Then answered David and said to Ahimelech the Hittite, and to Abishai the son of Zeruiah, brother to Joab, saying, Who will go down with me to Saul to the camp? And Abishai said, I will go down with thee.

7 So David and Abishai came to the people by night: and, behold, Saul lay sleeping within the trench, and his spear stuck in the ground at his bolster: but Abner and the people lay round about him.

CHAP. XXVI.

*Ver. 5. And Saul lay in the trench] Within the trench, Houbigant; which appears to be the true meaning of the original word. The Chaldee renders it the same. This entrenchment is generally thought to have consisted of chariots joined together; and therefore Le Clerc renders it, not improperly, intra ambitum plaustrorum. The LXX with no great propriety read, in his chariot. The author of the Observations is of a different opinion from Houbigant. "One can hardly imagine," says he, "that the Hebrew word מַגַּל mangal, signifies a ditch and bank thrown up; as one would suppose our translators apprehended, from their using the word trench; for it appears from the history, that no precautions were taken against David. Nor does it seem to mean a ring of carriages, as it is supposed in the Margins of our Bibles, and as Buxtorf interprets the word; for, most probably, the passing of carriages was impracticable in that mountainous country. It seems then simply to mean the round which the troops formed, in the midst of whom, as in the place of honour, Saul slept. The view which D'Arvieux gives us of a modern Arab camp, agrees perfectly well with this account of Saul; only supposing that, for the sake of expedition, they carried no tents with them: for he tells us, that, when the disposition of the ground will permit, an Arab camp is always round, the prince being in the middle, and the Arabs about him, but so as to leave a respectful distance between them. Add to this, that their lances are fixed near them in the ground, all the day long, ready for action. When David is represented as sometimes secreting himself in the night, when he was with his armies, 2 Sam. xvii. 8, 9. it is to be supposed to refer to his not lodging in the middle of the camp, which was a proper place for a*  
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"king, the better to avoid any surprize from enemies." *Observations*, p. 347. See Hom. Iliad. ix. ver. 47. and Sil. Ital. lib. vii. ver. 291.

REFLECTIONS.—Good impressions are quickly worn out, where the heart is not truly turned to God.

1. Saul returns to the pursuit of David, still retaining the old rancour, and perhaps instigated by the Ziphites, who, from their former ill behaviour to David, might be apprehensive of suffering for it, should he ever come to the throne. *Note;* (1.) One sin usually involves the soul in another, so connected is the chain of evil. (2.) A little instigation will revive an old grudge, where the reconciliation is not sincere.

2. David gets information of Saul's motions, and, as before, trusts not to his sword, but to concealment, for his safety. So unwilling was he, under every provocation, to appear in arms against his sovereign.

*Ver. 7—12. So David and Abishai came to the people, &c.]* This was a bold and hazardous undertaking, which would have been certain death to David had he been discovered. But David was bold and intrepid; and his and Abishai's gallantry in this affair deserves certainly to be no less celebrated than that of Ulysses and Diomed, when they went as spies to the Trojan camp. But there is more in David to be commended than his gallantry. Who can help admiring his magnanimity and piety? What man, but David, with a crown so near in view, would have resisted the fair and inviting temptation? David rejects it with abhorrence, from the principles of religion and duty. Glorious moderation and fortitude of mind! Was ever resolution more generous and loyal? One stroke would have fixed his enemy dead on the spot, put an end to his fears, and mounted him on a throne: and yet, he starts back at the proposal of it: the prospect of a throne will

8 Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not *smite* him the second time.

9 And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD's anointed, and be guiltless?

10 David said furthermore, *As* the LORD liveth, the LORD shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle, and perish.

11 The LORD forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the LORD's anointed: but, I pray thee, take thou now the spear that *is* at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go.

12 So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul's bolster; and they gat them away, and no man saw *it*, nor knew *it*, neither awaked: for they *were* all asleep; because a deep sleep from the LORD was fallen upon them.

13 ¶ Then David went over to the other side, and stood on the top of an hill afar off (a great space *being* between them):

14 And David cried to the people, and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, Answerest thou not, Abner? Then Abner answered and said, Who *art* thou *that* criest to the king?

15 And David said to Abner, *Art* not thou a *valiant* man? and who *is* like to thee in Israel? wherefore then hast thou not kept thy lord the king? for there came one of the people in to destroy the king thy lord.

16 This thing *is* not good that thou hast done. *As* the LORD liveth, ye *are* worthy to die, because ye have not kept your master, the LORD's anointed. And now see where the king's spear *is*, and the cruse of water that *was* at his bolster.

17 And Saul knew David's voice, and said, *Is* this thy voice, my son David? And David said, *It is* my voice, my lord, O king.

18 And he said, Wherefore doth my lord thus pursue after his servant? for what have I done? or what evil *is* in mine hand?

19 Now therefore, I pray thee, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If the LORD have stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering: but if *they be* the children of men, cursed *be* they before the LORD; for

will not tempt him to a base, disloyal, and cruel action. Houbigant observes, that the sleep of Adam in Paradise is expressed in the same words as the present; whence he concludes *that*, as well as *this*, to have been supernatural. Some imagine, that the *cruse* mentioned in this 12th verse was a *clepsydra*, or one of those water watch measures used by the ancients in their camps; others, that it was only a vessel of water kept for washing, in case of legal pollutions; and others, that it was placed there for drink, in case of thirst; which the heat of the season might well cause, as it was about the time of sheepshearing.

REFLECTIONS.—David, having observed the camp, resolves on a dangerous enterprize; though, it is to be presumed, he had some divine admonition for this step, which would otherwise appear rash and unwarrantable.

1. He goes down to Saul's camp in the night with Abishai, who offered to be his companion. A deep sleep from God had seized the host: Saul lay in the midst of the camp, and his army asleep around him, to the very sentinels. So soon can God disarm the mighty, and leave them a prey to the feeble.

2. Abishai, eager to improve the advantage which so remarkable a providence gave them, concludes that God designed Saul's destruction, and offers, at a stroke, to dispatch him.

3. David refuses the offer, and slays his hand. He

uses the same arguments as before, viz. the sacred office with which Saul was invested, and the allegiance therefore due to him. He doubted not but God would avenge his quarrel by some sudden judgment; Saul would fall in battle, or die a natural death; and he is content to wait the Lord's leisure, rather choosing to suffer in the flesh for a while, than by such a blow to bring guilt on his conscience. *Note*; They who know the evil of sin, will think a crown too dearly purchased by the least transgression.

4. Though he will not hurt him, he takes away with him the evidences of his power to have done so, his spear and cruse; and thus in safety they retire. *Note*; They are secure in the midst of danger, from whom God gives a charge to the angel of death to withhold his hand.

*Ver. 15. David said to Abner, Art not thou, &c.]* It may be asked, how could David make Abner and Saul hear, as it appears from the 13th verse that there was a great distance between them? The answer is easy. To ascend from one high hill to another, requires time; and in this sense, however adjacent, the two hills are remote. Time and pains are required to go from one to the other; but not so to make oneself heard.

*Ver. 19. If the Lord have stirred thee up against me, let him accept, &c.]* That is, says Delaney, "If God have excited you against me, on the score of any guilt for which

they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the LORD, saying, Go, serve other gods.

20 Now, therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth before the face of the LORD: for the king of Israel is come out to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains.

“ which I deserve to die; behold, here I am, ready to be sacrificed in atonement for it.” Others understand it as expressive of David’s readiness to offer up any sacrifice, if he had been guilty of such a crime as could justly merit this persecution of Saul against him. See Wittsius’s Miscel. Sacr. tom. i. p. 581. “ But,” continues David, “ if they are the children of men, they are cursed before the Lord, for they have driven me out, &c. saying, Go, serve other gods.”—“ The adoption of the local gods of any nation,” says Bishop Warburton, “ as well as their rites, was so general, that David makes his being unjustly driven into an idolatrous land, the same thing as being forced to serve idolatrous gods.” To the same principle Jeremiah likewise alludes, chap. xvi. 13.; by which is not meant, that they should be forced any otherwise than by the superstitious dread of divine vengeance for a slighted worship; for at this time civil restraint in matters of religion was very rare. It is very remarkable, that David here laments no present loss, or exclusion from just right, other than that of being shut out from the divine ordinances, and forced among the worshippers of idols.

Ver. 20. *A partridge*] The Hebrew word קָרָקֹר *kore*, a partridge, occurs only here and Jeremiah xvii. 11. and has its name, according to Parkhurst, from the note that it utters in calling its young or mate; which cannot be better expressed in articulate sounds, than by קָרָקֹר *querra*. Whoever reads with tolerable attention the Hierozoicon of Bochart, or even the 19th chapter of the first book, *De Nominibus Anim. ab Adamo impositis*, cannot doubt that the Hebrew names given by Adam to the animals, were intended to express some remarkable and eminent quality in each. See Parkhurst on the word, and Scheuchzer’s *Physique Sacrée*, tom. v. The account that Dr. Shaw gives us of the manner in which the Arabs hunt partridges, is a lively comment on the place. “ The Arabs have another and more laborious method of catching these birds; for, observing that they become languid and fatigued after they have been hastily put up twice or thrice, they immediately run in upon them, and knock them down with their zerwattys, or bludgeons, as we should call them.” It was precisely in this manner that Saul hunted David, coming hastily upon him, and putting him up from time to time, in hopes that he should at length, by frequent repetitions of it, be able to destroy him. *Observations*, p. 172.

Ver. 21. *Then said Saul, I have sinned*] Bayle has endeavoured to prove that this event, and that related in chap. xxiv. are but one and the same. To destroy this seeming identity, it will not be unseasonable to attend to the following circumstances, which prove the events

21 ¶ Then said Saul, I have sinned: return, my son David: for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly.

22 And David answered and said, Behold the king’s spear! and let one of the young men come over and fetch it.

to be different. In the first, David was in the wilderness of *En-gedi*; in the second, he was in the wilderness of *Ziph*. In the first, Saul went to seek David on the rocks of the goats; in the second, Saul pitched his camp in Hachilah. In the former, Saul was alone; in the latter, he was encamped with his soldiers. In the first, he was in a cave to cover his feet; in the second, he lay asleep in his camp. In the former, David was in the same cave with Saul, though unseen, and his men were with him in the cave; in the latter, Saul was in the hill of Hachilah, but David with his men abode in the wilderness, and when he went to Saul he was accompanied only by Abishai. In the former, David’s men instigate him to kill Saul; in the latter, Abishai exhorts him to destroy him. In the former, David cuts off the skirt of Saul’s robe, and when he came out of the cave, he cries after Saul, and tells him that he found him in a cave; in the latter, David takes the spear and cruse of water from Saul’s bolster, cries to the people, and to Abner, and tells him that there came one of the people into the camp to destroy the king. In the former event, David only shewed Saul the skirt of his robe; but in the latter, he shews the king’s spear, and desires him to send one of his attendants to fetch it. Who ever saw any one thing in the world look more like two things, or rather two separate, distinct, and different transactions?

REFLECTIONS.—We have here,

1. Saul melted down under David’s remonstrance. He sees now how precious his life was in David’s sight, and therefore how sinful it was against God to persecute the innocent, as well as foolish to drive so faithful a servant from him. He owns the aggravation of his sin, and that he has erred exceedingly; invites him to return to court, and solemnly promises never more to attempt his harm. *Note*; Sin is the greatest folly, and will appear so at last.

2. David enforces the conviction of his innocence; desires the king to send for his spear and cruse; prays to God to deal with him according to his uprightness before him; assures Saul that his hand would never be against him, as that day’s experience would testify; the anointing oil would be his sacred guard; and he refers himself to God for the same protection, preservation, and deliverance, as that day he had shewn to Saul. *Note*; (1.) God is a righteous judge, and all his dispensations prove him to be so. (2.) They who shew mercy, may hope to find mercy.

3. Saul is quite overcome, blesses his son, acknowledges, before his army, his righteous dealing, and predicts his

23. The LORD render to every man his righteousness and his faithfulness: for the LORD delivered thee into *my* hand to-day, but I would not stretch forth mine hand against the LORD's anointed.

24. And, behold, as thy life was much set by this day in mine eyes, so let my life be much set by in the eyes of the LORD, and let him deliver me out of all tribulation.

25. Then Saul said to David, Blessed be thou, my son David: thou shalt both do great things, and also shalt still prevail. So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place.

### C H A P. XXVII.

*David, flying to Gath, dwells with his men at Ziklag; whence he makes incursions upon the neighbouring people.*

[Before Christ 1056.]

**A**ND David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: *there is* nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the

Philistines; and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any coast of Israel: so shall I escape out of his hand.

2. And David arose, and he passed over with the six hundred men that *were* with him unto Achish, the son of Maach, king of Gath.

3. And David dwelt with Achish at Gath, he and his men, every man with his household, *even* David with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabal's wife.

4. And it was told Saul that David was fled to Gath: and he sought no more again for him.

5. ¶ And David said unto Achish, If I have now found grace in thine eyes, let them give me a place in some town in the country, that I may dwell there: for why should thy servant dwell in the royal city with thee?

6. Then Achish gave him Ziklag that day: wherefore Ziklag pertaineth unto the kings of Judah unto this day.

7. And the time that David dwelt in the

greatness and prevalence over all his enemies. *Note;* God will at last make his enemies bow at the feet of his persecuted people, and know that he hath loved them. Rev. iii. 9.

4. Saul and David part to meet no more: Saul returns to Gibeath, David to his fastnesses, unwilling to trust to promises which had been so often broken. *Note;* It is folly to trust a second time those who have once deceived us.

### C H A P. XXVII.

*Ver. 1. And David said in his heart, I shall now perish*] David, tired of wandering, weary of struggling with Saul's implacable spirit, sensible of the unequal conflict between too dangerous generosity, and too relentless malice, and unwilling longer to subsist by the spoils of his enemies or the bounty of his friends, resolves at last to quit his country, and throw himself once more under the protection of its enemies. This resolution has been generally censured, on account of his neglecting to consult God, either by his priest, or by his prophet, before he fixed upon it. God had before commanded him to go into the land of Judah, 1 Sam. xxii. 5. and surely he should not have left that place to go into a heathen country, without a like divine command, or at least permission. Wherefore most writers ascribe this resolution to a deficiency in grace, and a want of proper confidence in the protection of that God who had so often and so signally delivered him in the greatest exigencies.

*Ver. 2. Achish, the son of Maach*] Most writers agree, that this *Achish*, to whom David now fled, was not

the Achish by whom he was so inhospitably received, and from whom he so narrowly escaped, when he was before at Gath. His being called here *Achish, the son of Maach*, sufficiently indicates that he was another person; for those words can, in the nature of the thing, have no other use, than to distinguish this Achish from another of the same name. And, indeed, this Achish seems as well distinguished from the other by the rest of his character, as by being called the *son of Maach*. But here, by the way, is a fair proof that this book was written at the time when it is said to have been written; inasmuch as this distinction was information enough to the people of that age, but could neither be given nor received as such either by any writer or reader of a subsequent period.

*Ver. 6. Ziklag*] *Ziklag* was situated on the southern frontiers of Judah, not far from Hormah. See Josh. xv. 30, 31. Le Clerc conjectures from this *verie*, that the present book was written after the separation of the ten tribes; but it is easy to suppose, that this passage was added to the sacred text by some later hand, Jeremiah, or Esdras, or some other inspired writer. For the rest, it is certain, that before the separation of the ten tribes, Judah and Israel were distinguished from each other. Psal. lxxvi. 1.

REFLECTIONS.—Though there was now an apparent reconciliation wrought between them, David knew Saul's temper too well, to believe that it would be of long continuance. We have here,

1. His fearfulness and unbelief. God's promises, and his own past experience, cannot prevent melancholy apprehensions

country of the Philistines was a full year and four months.

8: ¶ And David and his men went up, and invaded the Geshurites, and the Gezrites, and the Amalekites: for those *nations were* of old the inhabitants of the land, as thou goest to Shur, even unto the land of Egypt.

9 And David smote the land, and left neither man nor woman alive, and took away

the sheep, and the oxen, and the asses, and the camels, and the apparel, and returned, and came to Achish.

10 And Achish said, Whither have ye made a road to-day? And David said, Against the south of Judah, and against the south of the Jerahmeelites, and against the south of the Kenites.

11 And David saved neither man nor woman alive, to bring *tidings* to Gath, saying,

ensions of his danger; he is, therefore, ready to despair after all his deliverances, and fears that he shall yet fall by the hand of Saul. *Note:* Many a poor trembling heart is exercised like David, and, from the sense of its numerous corruptions, is ready to give up all hope, and dishonour God's faithfulness.

2. His resolution, hereupon, to fly into the land of the Philistines, hoping that Saul would then desist from any further pursuit. He accordingly fled to Achish, from whom he met with a kind reception. Probably, David had first acquainted him with his distress, and obtained his protection; and he can sooner rely on the word of a Philistine, than on the oath of Saul. His six hundred men accompanied him, with their households, and dwelt at first with Achish at Gath; but, finding many inconveniences there, he desires, and Achish consents to give him Ziklag for his abode. His abode in the royal city exposed him to envy, and the courtiers of Achish probably disliked the friendship that their king shewed him. Besides, there the public exercise of his religion was more offensive, and his men in greater danger of being corrupted. On every account, therefore, the motion was prudent, and the issue proved it so; for hither his friends could more easily resort to him; and by the present grant, the city became ever after annexed to the crown of Judah, as it had been in their lot before, though not occupied by that tribe. Here he abode, not *a year and four months*, but *days, even four months*, Saul being within that time slain, and David succeeding to the throne. *Note:* (1.) It is our duty to withdraw from temptation. (2.) We shall never lose by what we give up for the sake of God and our souls.

3: Saul now desisted from any further pursuit, which, it seems, he again intended, if David had not been gone out of his reach. *Note:* It is not by the want of will, but power, that the evil of many a wicked man is kept within bounds.

*Ver. 8. David—invaded the Geshurites, &c.]* This action has been condemned by minute critics, as a piece of ingratitude, and a breach of the principles of hospitality: but as the charge is founded upon a supposition that the nations invaded were Philistines, and the confederates of Achish, it will be found to be groundless if we attend to what follows: "It may be observed, that these clans were not confederates with Achish, but in a state of hostility against him; particularly the Amalekites, whom we find soon after making great depredations upon the Philistine territories, chap. xxx. 16. and, therefore, David did not act in the least dishonourably

" by him, but in reality for his service, in the attack he made on them. Besides that the Amalekites were many ages before doomed to destruction; and the Geshurites and Gezrites, the old inhabitants of the land, and the Canaanites, as appears from Josh. xiii. were by God himself commanded to be extirpated, for such reasons as render such a command worthy of his character. It is further to be remarked, that as those people were on the south of Judah, they made frequent incursions into the land, and were the avowed enemies of the Hebrews: this is certain, at least, of the Amalekites, of whom frequent mention is made in the books of the Old Testament, as being engaged in many expeditions to plunder the country, and destroy the inhabitants. David, therefore, had a right to cut off those nations; as deserving the character of a man after God's own heart, he was called upon to do it; and in doing it, he served his country, without injuring his protector and friend." See Chandler.

*Ver. 10. Against the south, &c.]* The answer was true, but ambiguous; for all those people actually dwelt on the south of Judah. But Achish understood the answer as meaning that the incursion was made on Judah, on the Jerahmeelites and the Kenites themselves, though David asserted no such thing. David, therefore, did not utter a falsity, as some writers suppose, and labour to palliate or to condemn. If he was to blame, it was for giving an ambiguous answer to a question which he was not obliged to give a direct reply to. Achish well knew that David had made an incursion upon some of the neighbouring tribes, and in this David did not deceive him; but he thought he was no ways obliged to tell him who they were; and therefore said only, in general, that they were such as dwelt on the south of Judah. Dr. Delaney observes upon this deception which David appears to have passed upon Achish, "I will not stand up in a strict defence of this conduct. It was indeed, a deception; but if it injured nobody, as I apprehend it did not, I must own that I am utterly at a loss what degree of guilt to charge upon it. This must be allowed, that all habits of deception have a natural tendency to bias the mind, and warp it from truth, and therefore ought carefully to be avoided, even where the deception is innocent," or (I should rather have said,) harmless.

*Note:* Let the sins of great and good men be looked upon, not as an exculpation for our imitation of them, but as an admonition to avoid them.



Left they should tell on us, saying, So did David, and so *will be* his manner all the while he dwelleth in the country of the Philistines.

12 And Achish believed David, saying, He hath made his people Israel utterly to abhor him; therefore he shall be my servant for ever.

### C H A P. XXVIII.

*The Philistines preparing to fight against Israel, Saul, unable to obtain any answer from the Lord, applies to a woman with a familiar spirit, whom he entreats to bring up Samuel. Samuel appears, reproaches the king, and denounces his and his sons' death on the morrow.*

[Before Christ 1055.]

**A**ND it came to pass in those days, that the Philistines gathered their armies

together for warfare, to fight with Israel. And Achish said unto David, Know thou assuredly, that thou shalt go out with me to battle, thou and thy men.

2 And David said to Achish, Surely thou shalt know what thy servant can do. And Achish said to David, Therefore will I make thee keeper of mine head for ever.

3 ¶ Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him, and buried him in Ramah, even in his own city. And Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land.

4 ¶ And the Philistines gathered themselves together, and came and pitched in Shunem: and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they pitched in Gilboa.

5 And when Saul saw the host of the Phi-

### C H A P. XXVIII.

*Ver. 1, 2. It came to pass in these days]* The Philistines, recruited about this time, as Sir Isaac Newton judges, by vast numbers of men driven out of Egypt by Amasis, resolv'd upon a new war with Israel; nor were Samuel's death, and David's disgrace, as we may well judge, inconsiderable motives to it. Achish, who appears to have been commander in chief of the combined army of the Philistines, knew David's merit, and had a thorough confidence in his fidelity; and therefore he resolv'd to take him with him to the war. Accordingly, he mov'd the matter to David, and David made him a doubtful answer. *Surely thou shalt know what thy servant can do:* upon which Achish replies, *therefore will I make thee keeper of mine head for ever:* that is, in the present military style, he promis'd to make him captain of his life-guard, and we find by the sequel that he did so; whence, it seems, that Achish understood his answer in the affirmative. But did David promise that he would join in battle against his own people? No such thing. David made no compliance or promise of this kind, but answer'd ambiguously.—He was undoubtedly in circumstances of great difficulty. But who reduced him to these difficulties? Who forc'd him to seek refuge among the Philistines? It was Saul, by his causeless, cruel, and unrelenting persecutions; Saul, therefore, was in a great measure answerable for all the evil consequences of it. But must not David have fought against his king and country, or else have fallen off to the Israelites, and ungratefully employ'd his arms against the Philistines, and Achish his protector? I am not sure that he was reduced to the necessity of doing either. David knew himself destin'd by Providence to the throne of Israel, and therefore could never have join'd Achish to complete their destruction, which must have cut off every possible prospect of his succeeding to the crown. The particular favours that he had received from Achish, laid

him under no obligation whatsoever to assist the Philistines in general against his own countrymen. He might have shew'd his gratitude to Achish, by affording him protection in his turn, securing his person, and those of many of his people, had the Israelites been victorious over the combined armies. Being often under the divine impulse, he might have made this reply in obedience to the divine inspiration; without being acquainted with that concatenation of events which was foreseen by the Deity, who foreknew that it would be a means of extricating him out of his present difficulties, without exposing him to any in future. As David was frequently inspir'd with a knowledge of futurity, he might possibly have foreseen that event which freed him from the dilemma into which this promise might, in its utmost latitude, have drawn him; and then it could not have been look'd upon by himself as an obligation to take up arms against his king and country, because he foreknew that he never should be put to that trial.

REFLECTIONS.—We have here,

1. The distress to which David is reduced in this war between the Philistines and Israel. Achish, as he justly might, insists on David's going with him to battle. David dared not refuse, though he, no doubt, resolv'd not to fight against God's people: he, therefore, gives an ambiguous answer, which Achish interprets of his fidelity and valour, and promises to make him captain of his guards for life if he should acquit himself well. Hereupon the Philistines march, and David with them, into the heart of Canaan, and encamp at Shunem, without opposition.

2. Saul, with his forces collect'd at Gilboa, appears greatly terrified at his danger; and now, no doubt, heartily wishes for David back again, whose presence in the opposite army gives such weight to his foes. The remembrance of his past guilt adds terrors to his present danger, while the sense of his present danger awakens his conscience

liftines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled.

6 And when Saul enquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.

7 ¶ Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, *there is* a woman that hath a familiar spirit at En-dor.

8 And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night: and he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me *him* up, whom I shall name unto thee.

9 And the woman said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he

hath cut off those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land: wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die?

10 And Saul sware to her by the LORD, saying, *As* the LORD liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing.

11 Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel.

12 And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou *art* Saul.

13 And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth.

to a deeper sensibility of his past wickedness. To accumulate his miseries, he receives no answer from God; he is vouchsafed no divine vision in a dream; has no Urim to consult, since the priest is fled with it to David; nor prophet to advise or direct him. At last, he is resolved to have recourse to the devil for advice; but his own former edicts against forcerers make it difficult to find one, as he had, in pretended zeal for God, or at Samuel's instigation, put to death all such abominable workers of iniquity throughout the land of Israel. *Note;* (1.) They who refuse to seek God while he may be found, will cry in vain when he refuses to answer. (2.) The troubles of the wicked are doubly aggravated by the terrors of an evil conscience. (3.) To the very sins against which men professed once to be most zealous, they will readily abandon themselves, when they have thrown off the cloke of religion.

*Ver. 7—12. Then said Saul—Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit*] Utterly forsaken of God, yet anxiously desirous of searching into futurity, Saul, who had prayed to God to no purpose, now resolved to apply himself to Samuel. To what will not fear and folly force us? In the days of his devotion, Saul had partly cut off, and partly frightened away, those wizards and forcerers, those execrable wretches, the pests of society and enemies of true religion, whom God commanded to be extirpated. See Lev. xx. 27. Deut. xviii. 10. However, some of them, he concluded, might have remained or returned. He enquired, and was informed [princes never want ministers of mischief] of a *Pythonefs*, who dwelt not far off, at *En-dor*, a little village of the tribe of Manasseh, in the valley of Jezreel, at the foot of mount Gilboa. He accordingly hastened that very night to *En-dor*, stripped off his regal apparel, disguising himself as well as he could, and attended only by two companions. When he arrived, he prayed the woman to divine by her familiar spirit, that is, to employ her art, in evoking from the dead the person

whom he should name; at the same time assuring her, by a solemn oath, that no evil should happen to her, on account of what she mentions in the 9th verse. The woman then demands whom he would have raised: he answers, *Samuel*. The woman, no doubt, was then about to proceed to her charms and incantations. But, contrary to all her expectation, the moment Saul had mentioned the name of Samuel, the woman saw an appearance, and in great terror cried out to Saul, *Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul*. Our translators have inserted the particle *when* in the 12th verse, which embarrasses the sense, and implies, that some space of time had passed between Saul's request, and the appearance of Samuel: whereas the original text stands thus, *When Saul said, bring me up Samuel, then immediately follows, and the woman saw Samuel, and cried, &c.* She saw an apparition that she did not expect; she knew the prophet; she knew the veneration that Saul had for him; and she knew that her art had never exhibited a person of that figure to her. Various have been the opinions concerning this apparition of Samuel. From the manner in which we have interpreted these verses, and which seems to be just, there appears no doubt that this was a real apparition of Samuel, sent by the immediate intervention of God: for one cannot suppose, either that it was a trick put upon Saul by this forcerers, or that it was a demon which thus assumed the form of Samuel.

*Ver. 13, 14. For what sawest thou?*] It should be rendered, *but what sawest thou?* The word translated *Gods*, is אֱלֹהִים *elohim*. The Chaldee renders it, *a messenger of the Lord*. Houbigant thinks that she speaks after the manner of idolators, who used to address in the plural the gods whom they worshipped; a custom which they transferred to their Genii, and even to the souls of the departed which they evoked. Saul, acquainted with this language, sufficiently understood that the woman saw only one ascending from the earth, though she spoke in the plural.

The

14 And he said unto her, What form *is* he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he *is* covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it *was* Samuel, and he stooped with *his* face to the ground, and bowed himself.

15 ¶ And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do.

16 Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy?

17 And the LORD hath done to him, as he

spake by me: for the LORD hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, *even* to David:

18 Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the LORD, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the LORD done this thing unto thee this day.

19 Moreover, the LORD will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and to-morrow shalt thou and thy sons *be* with me: the LORD also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines.

20 Then Saul fell straightway all along on the earth, and was sore afraid, because of the words of Samuel: and there was no strength in him; for he had eaten no bread all the day, nor all the night.

The woman thought that Samuel ascended out of the earth; and from the description which she gave, Saul knew it to be Samuel; (see chap. xv. 27.) though it is possible that *at the same moment Saul knew it was Samuel himself*; for the word *וַיִּרְאֵהוּ* *vaiiedang*, rendered *perceived*, may as well be rendered *knew*; and *his stooping to the ground* seems to prove this. Dr. Delaney observes, that when Samuel denounced God's judgments upon Saul, he was *clad in a mantle*, which Saul tore on that occasion. He now came to repeat and to ratify the sentence then denounced; and, to strike him with fuller conviction, he appears in the same dress, the same mantle in which he denounced that sentence; and since he now again denounced a division of the kingdom from Saul, why may we not presume that the mantle shewed now the same rent which was the emblem of that division? Is it irrational to suppose, that when he spoke of this division, he held up the mantle, and pointed to the rent? It is well known, that the prophets were men of much action in their speaking, and often illustrated their predictions by emblems; and such actions as I now mention, I think, could hardly be avoided on this occasion.

*Ver. 15. Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me?* Houbigant observes very justly, that Samuel complains not of the woman, but of *Saul*, for disquieting him; whence it appears clear, that Samuel was not raised up by her magic arts, but by the will of God. Samuel's disquiet plainly arose from Saul's hardened impenitence in the way of religion. It was this that *grieved and provoked* him; and so it should be translated: *Why hast thou provoked me, to make me rise up?—Why dost thou ask of me, seeing the Lord is departed from thee?* But is it probable, say some, that God, who had refused to answer Saul by all the accustomed methods, would, to satisfy him, raise up Samuel to apprise him of his destiny? We answer, I. That Saul had not consulted God by Urim, or by prophets; for the *Urim* was with David; and there was probably no prophet then alive, to whom God communi-

cated himself either by vision, or by his prophet; and that in the methods which he had employed, he had conducted himself hypocritically, and without any right impression of religion. II. We answer, that Saul, in danger, and anxious about the event of it, applies to a Pythoness, to assist him by her incantations, and to call up the spirit of Samuel; but before she articulates one word of her spells or charms, the prophet interposes, frightens her, and pronounces Saul's doom; and she herself witnesses the truth of his appearance. God is not so tied down to his own institutions, that he cannot at any time depart from them. That God should manifest himself by his prophets, to encourage or countenance what he himself had forbidden, is indeed very unlikely, or, to speak more justly, very absurd to suppose. But that he should interpose to reprove that practice, is perfectly compatible with all our ideas of his perfections.

*Ver. 19. To-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me]* Samuel predicts two things. I. That Saul, and his three sons who were with him in the camp, should be *with him*; i. e. should, like him, be in another world, or should die. II. That they should die on the morrow, or rather, *very shortly*; for that is the signification of the word *מָחָר* *machar*, in many places of Scripture. See Exod. xiii. 14. and Josh. iv. 6. It is probable, however, that the word in this place may be taken in its literal sense of *to-morrow*. These predictions of Samuel evidently proved that he spoke by God's order; for he foretells, first, the victory of the Philistines; secondly, the death of Saul and his sons; and thirdly, the advantages which the Philistines should derive from their victory. See chap. xxxi. 7. And it is surprising, that after such plain predictions as these, which could come only from God, any person should imagine that this apparition of Samuel was either a human or a diabolical imposture.

*Ver. 20, 21. Then Saul fell straightway]* Immediately after having pronounced the dreadful words in the former verse, Samuel disappeared, leaving the unhappy king in the most

21 ¶ And the woman came unto Saul, and saw that he was fore troubled, and said unto him, Behold, thine handmaid hath obeyed thy voice, and I have put my life in my hand, and have hearkened unto thy words which thou spakest unto me.

22 Now therefore, I pray thee, hearken thou also unto the voice of thine handmaid, and let me set a morsel of bread before thee; and eat, that thou mayest have strength, when thou goest on thy way.

23 But he refused, and said, I will not eat. But his servants, together with the woman, compelled him; and he hearkened unto their voice. So he arose from the earth, and sat upon the bed.

24 And the woman had a fat calf in the

house; and she hastened, and killed it, and took flour, and kneaded it, and did bake unleavened bread thereof:

25 And she brought it before Saul, and before his servants; and they did eat. Then they rose up, and went away that night.

C H A P. XXIX.

*The princes of the Philistines request king Achish to dismiss David, lest he should prove an adversary in the battle: Achish dismisseth him with large commendations of his fidelity.*

[Before Christ 1055.]

**N**OW the Philistines gathered together all their armies to Aphek: and the Israelites pitched by a fountain which is in Jezreel.

2 And the lords of the Philistines passed on by hundreds, and by thousands: but David

most dreadful consternation. Saul, most probably, during the time of Samuel's appearance, had been left alone with him, the woman having retired. Continuing some time prostrate upon the earth, without power to move or speak, the woman at length returned to him, and with his servants persuaded him to take some refreshment. The sacred historian does not inform us of all that passed. There is no doubt but the Pythoness was well paid, and that the repast she offered was not at her own expence. Dr. Delaney makes two judicious observations on this event. The first is, that the son of Sirach, who seems to have had as much wisdom, penetration, and piety, as any critic who came after him, is clearly of opinion, with the sacred historian, that it was Samuel himself who foretold the fate of Saul and his house in this interview: and it is no ill presumption, that his judgment was also that of the Jewish church upon this head. The next is, that whereas it has been made a question, Whether the Jews had any belief in the immortality of the soul? this history is a full decision upon that point; and, perhaps, the establishment of that truth upon the foot of sensible evidence, was not the slightest purpose of Samuel's appearance upon this occasion. Indeed, the whole art of necromancy is founded entirely upon a belief of the immortality of the soul; for how could it be believed, that the souls of the dead could be evoked, if they died with the body? And, as this practice was so general among the heathens, it is plain that the immortality of the soul was generally received as a determined principle. See Le Clerc and Calmet.

*Note;* (1.) They who depart from God, leave their own mercies. A miserable life, and a more miserable death, is their wretched portion. (2.) When a man is given up to despair, he rushes on his own destruction, as *the horse rusheth into the battle*. (3.) Let every man who reads Saul's end, tremble at the thought of grieving the holy Spirit of God, lest he be thus forsaken, and left to the wickedness and despair of his own heart.

VOL. II.

C H A P. XXIX.

*Ver. 1. The Israelites pitched by a fountain which is in Jezreel*] As we are informed in the foregoing chapter, ver. 4. that the Philistines were come to Shunem, the verbs in this verse should be read in the past tense, *had gathered,—had pitched*:—David's departure from the army of the Philistines being prior to Saul's consulting the woman at Endor. The archbishop of Tyre tells us, that the Christian kings of Jerusalem used to assemble their forces at a fountain betwixt Nazareth and Sephoris, which was greatly celebrated on that account. This being looked upon to be nearly the centre of their kingdom, they could from thence consequently march to any place where their presence was wanted. He mentions also another fountain, near a town called Little Gerinum, which, he says, was the ancient Jezreel. Near this fountain Saladine pitched his camp for the benefit of its waters, while Baldwin king of Jerusalem had, as usual, assembled his army at the first mentioned place. This solicitude, in the princes of these sultry climes, to pitch near fountains; this mention of one by Jezreel, and this custom of assembling their armies in the centre of their kingdom, all serve to illustrate the present passage, which speaks of the encampment of Israel at a fountain, considerably distant from the proper country of the Philistines, just before the fatal battle which concluded the reign of Saul. If the Philistines had extended their territories at this time to mount Carmel; if they were wont to make their irruptions into the land of Israel that way, in that age; or if Saul had received intelligence of such a design at this time; these circumstances, or any of them, would farther explain the propriety of this pitching by the fountain of Jezreel: but what William of Tyre says about the managements of the Christian kings of Jerusalem of his days, and of their predecessors, is alone a more clear illustration of this passage than commentators have furnished us with. *Observations*, p. 335.

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and his men passed on in the rereward with Achish.

3 Then said the princes of the Philistines, What *do* these Hebrews *here*? And Achish said unto the princes of the Philistines, *Is* not this David, the servant of Saul the king of Israel, which hath been with me these days, or these years, and I have found no fault in him since he fell *unto me* unto this day?

4 And the princes of the Philistines were wroth with him; and the princes of the Philistines said unto him, Make this fellow return, that he may go again to his place which thou hast appointed him, and let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he be an adversary to us: for wherewith should he reconcile himself unto his master? *Should it not be* with the heads of these men?

*Ver. 3. These days, or these years]* Long enough, even two years. Houb.

*Ver. 4. Make this fellow return]* The lords of the Philistines were suspicious of David's purposes; and, instead of placing that confidence in him which Achish did, they insist upon his dismissal. His pleasure must certainly have been great, to find himself extricated out of so delicate a situation as he had been in, where there might have been a struggle between his gratitude to his friend, and his love to his country; and in which he did not possibly know what part he had to act, or was bound to act.

*Ver. 6. Surely, as the Lord liveth]* It is observable, that Achish on this occasion makes use of that form of swearing which obtained among the Jews, *as the Lord liveth*; from which some have concluded, that Achish had learned a part of David's religion; and others go into great extremes on the other side; for which, I own, I can see no grounds. David was a man of sufficient address; he well knew how to converse with kings; nor was Achish the first whose favour his accomplishments had acquired him. In all probability, he stipulated for the free exercise of his religion, before he threw himself into his service; and such a stipulation might naturally be attended with an apology in its favour. Nor will David's character suffer us to suppose him so cold and unconcerned in that point, as to omit any opportunity of recommending his religion to the best advantage; for surely no mortal ever had it more at heart; especially after that declaration, which he himself has made in the 119th Psalm, *sect. 6. (vau) I will speak of thy testimonies even before kings, and will not be ashamed.* What wonder then if David should have instructed, and Achish profited in this point from David's conversation? But after all, possibly, *Achish* might have sworn by *Jehovah* on this occasion, as that *Jew* did by *Jesus*, whom the old duke of Ormond, (so properly, and with so fine a satire upon that profaneness too common

5 *Is* not this David, of whom they sang one to another in dances, saying, Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands?

6 ¶ Then Achish called David, and said unto him, Surely, *as* the LORD liveth, thou hast been upright, and thy going out and thy coming in with me in the host *is* good in my sight: for I have not found evil in thee since the day of thy coming unto me unto this day: nevertheless the lords favour thee not.

7 Wherefore now return, and go in peace, that thou displease not the lords of the Philistines.

8 And David said unto Achish, But what have I done? and what hast thou found in thy servant, so long as I have been with thee unto this day, that I may not go fight against the enemies of my lord the king?

among Christians,) reprov'd for his assurance, in presuming to swear like a Christian.

*Ver. 8. And David said,—what have I done? &c.]* Dr. Chandler observes, that "this answer was prudent, and such as became the circumstances in which he then stood; but promised nothing, and was only in general, that he never had given Achish any reason to suspect his gratitude and fidelity. He says nothing about fighting against Saul and the Hebrew army, but *against the enemies of the king.* Against the king's enemies, undoubtedly, he would have fought, where he could have done it consistently with his honour and duty; where he could not, whatever sense Achish might put upon David's words, David would have refused to have fought against them. Upon the whole, it is certain, that there is not the least intimation, in any thing he said, that he would impiously turn his arms against his king and country, which neither his conscience, nor his interest, would permit him to do; and it is certain, that if he could maintain his fidelity to Achish, without lending his assistance to the destruction of his nation, he would have done it." Dr. Delaney observes, "We may easily apprehend to what straits David was reduced, upon Achish's insisting that he must go with him against Saul. He was now under a necessity of warring against his country, or betraying his benefactor. The alternative, indeed, was distressful; but it is easy to see how a man of honour must determine himself under it. His prince had banished and outlawed him, innocent as he was; and his people had joined in the sentence. Nevertheless, he continued, as long as he could, not to injure either, but even to be beneficent to both. David would have still been beneficent if he could, but the times would not let him; and therefore, when things were brought to such an extremity, that either he must fight against a people who had made him their enemy, or betray a prince who had protected

" him

9 And Achish answered and said to David, I know that thou *art* good in my sight, as an angel of God: notwithstanding the princes of the Philistines have said, He shall not go up with us to the battle.

10 Wherefore now rise up early in the morning with thy master's servants that are come with thee: and as soon as ye be up early in the morning, and have light, depart.

11 So David and his men rose up early to depart in the morning, to return into the land of the Philistines. And the Philistines went up to Jezreel.

## C H A P. XXX.

*The Amalekites, in David's absence, plunder and burn Ziklag: David, having consulted the Lord, pursues, overtakes them, and recovers the spoil.*

[Before Christ 1055.]

**A**ND it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag, on the

third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire;

2 And had taken the women captives that *were* therein: they slew not any, either great or small, but carried *them* away, and went on their way.

3 ¶ So David and his men came to the city, and behold, *it was* burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were taken captives.

4 Then David and the people that *were* with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep.

5 And David's two wives were taken captives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite.

6 And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but

“him in distress, he had no choice left. He owed Achish allegiance; for protection exacts allegiance: but he owed Saul none; and there is no question but he was determined to pay his debt; and therefore I cannot help thus far crediting the account that Josephus gives us of this matter, that he promised Achish his aid, and assured him that he would take this occasion to requite his kindness the best he could. That he promised him unwillingly, I have no doubt; and I can have none that he promised him faithfully. See Pf. vii. “The man that could save Saul, could not betray Achish.” But, whatever were his purposes, it pleased God, very providentially, to deliver him from this great dilemma.

## C H A P. XXX.

*Ver. 1, 2. The Amalekites had invaded the south*] These Amalekites appear to have been clans of straggling freebooters, who rambled from place to place, and were common enemies of mankind; like the Arabian *Hordes*, living upon rapine and plunder wherever they came. It may seem strange, David having killed all he could meet with, chap. xxvii. 9. that they should not have served his people in the same manner. But though they sought revenge, says Bishop Patrick, yet they desired booty much more. Being a poor and covetous people, they spared not the women and children out of compassion, but because they wanted slaves either for their own use, or to sell to others. But, be this as it may, one cannot help observing the gracious interposition of Providence in this event; for, doubtless, it is most extraordinary, that the captives should have been thus spared, to be recovered afterwards perfectly safe and unhurt out of the hands of a people so abandoned and execrable as the Amalekites.

REFLECTIONS.—Little thought David and his men, while they were marching in the camp of the Philistines, what ravages were committing at home by their enemies.

1. The Amalekites, in their absence, probably having intelligence of it, fall upon the defenceless city, plunder and burn it, reserving all the women and children alive; not out of pity, it is to be feared, but covetousness; and in truth withheld secretly by God. *Note*; God can make the sins of men subserve his designs of mercy.

2. Great was the distress and consternation of David and his men at this unexpected calamity. Three days they had spent in marching home, and when they hoped to rest their weary limbs, lo! their houses are burnt, and their families gone, uncertain whether captives or murdered, and David's wives among the rest. *Note*; (1.) We know not, when we go from home, what scenes of mourning may meet us on our return. (2.) The more we promise ourselves comfort in the creature, the bitterer will be our disappointment.

3. While tears would flow, they wept, and wearied themselves with sorrow; and when these fountains were dry, in distress and despair the men turned their complaints on David, and threatened to stone him, as the author of their calamity by leading them from their home. Thus was his faith severely exercised, and sorrow added to sorrow. *Note*; (1.) Suffering is apt to make us impatient; and, though we dare not fly in the face of God, we are ready to lay hands on those who have been, though innocently, instruments of bringing us into the trouble. (2.) Great saints become so by great sufferings. Grace, like the palm-tree, *crescit sub pondere*, grows under trials.

4. David, under all his afflictions, encouraged himself in God. Though he shared deeper than any man in the

David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.

7 And David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, I pray thee, bring me hither the ephod. And Abiathar brought thither the ephod to David.

8 And David inquired at the LORD, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them? And he answered him, Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake *them*, and without fail recover *all*.

9 ¶ So David went, he and the six hundred men that *were* with him, and came to the brook Besor, where those that were left behind stayed.

10 But David pursued, he and four hundred men: for two hundred abode behind, which were so faint that they could not go over the brook Besor.

11 And they found an Egyptian in the

field, and brought him to David, and gave him bread, and he did eat; and they made him drink water;

12 And they gave him a piece of a cake of figs, and two clusters of raisins: and when he had eaten, his spirit came again to him: for he had eaten no bread, nor drunk *any* water, three days and three nights.

13 And David said unto him, To whom *belongest* thou? and whence *art* thou? And he said, I *am* a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite; and my master left me, because three days ago I fell sick.

14 We made an invasion *upon* the south of the Cherethites, and upon *the coast* which *belongeth* to Judah, and upon the south of Caleb; and we burned Ziklag with fire.

15 And David said to him, Canst thou bring me down to this company? And he said,

general loss, and in this unreasonable anger of theirs bore a grief peculiarly his own, he yet thought upon God, his power, love, and faithfulness, and still hoped in his mercy. This was his support in the time of his trouble; nor was he disappointed of his hope; for no man ever trusted God, and was ashamed. *Note*; (1.) Our circumstances can never be so bad, nor our case so deplorable, but there is ground for faith in the promises of God. (2.) To encourage our souls in him, is the surest way to escape from our troubles.

*Ver. 8.]* We may just note here, what we have frequently observed, how much the insertion of particles in our version flattens the sense. Every reader of taste will discern it in the last clause of this verse.

*Ver. 9. Where those that were left behind, stayed]* The sense is clearer than the expression. Of the six hundred men who accompanied David, two hundred, worn out with fatigue, (the same as had care of the baggage, ver. 24.) continued by the brook *Besor*, while the other four hundred crossed the brook, and went in pursuit of the enemy.

*Ver. 11. And they found an Egyptian, &c.]* Surely the leaving such a slave, sick with fatigue in his master's service in an enemy's country, utterly destitute of all the necessaries of life in the midst of unpurchased plenty, is one of the strongest instances of inhumanity that was ever heard of! This is a true specimen of Amalekite mercy. But this inhumanity cost them dear; for by this means they lost their own lives.

*Ver. 12. And they gave him a piece of a cake of figs, &c.]* The eastern people are well known to carry with them in their journies several accommodations, and *provisions* in particular of various kinds, for, properly speaking, they have no inns. They did so anciently. Those who travel

on foot with expedition, content themselves with a very slight *viaticum*. The writer of the history of the piratical states of Barbary, speaking of the great expedition of the natives of the country about Ceuta in carrying messages, (some of them running one hundred and fifty miles in less than twenty-four hours,) says, "Their temperance is not less admirable; for some *meal*, with a few *figs* and *raisins*, which they carry in a goat's skin, serves them a seven or eight days' journey, and their richest liquor is only *honey* and *water*." Not very different from this is the account here given by the sacred writer, of the provisions carried by David and his men, for their support in their hurrying pursuit after the Amalekites, as appears by what they gave the poor famished Egyptian, bread, (water) *figs* and *raisins*. The *bread* of the Israelites answers to the *meal* of Barbary; the *figs* and the *raisins* were the very things which the Moors now carry with them. We do not find any mention of *honey* in this account of David's expedition; but it is represented in other passages of Scripture as something refreshing to those who were almost spent with fatigue; chap. xiv. 27. 29. which is enough to make us think that they *sometimes* carried it with them in their journies or military expeditions. See *Observations*, p. 206.

*Ver. 14. Upon the south of the Cherethites]* It is plain, from this relation, that the Cherethites were Philistines, see ver. 16. and that the Amalekites were enemies to the Philistines; and therefore, however David might have acted beside the intentions of his benefactor, yet he certainly did not act against his interest in destroying them. Calmet, in his dissertation upon the origin of the Philistines, says, that the name *Cherethites*, or *Cherethians*, is the same as *Cretans*; and he maintains that this people were Aborigines of *Crete*.

*Ver. 15. I will bring thee down to this company]* Houbigant adds after these words, *and David swore to him; follow-*

Swear unto me by God, that thou wilt neither kill me, nor deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will bring thee down to this company.

16 ¶ And when he had brought him down, behold, *they were* spread abroad upon all the earth, eating and drinking, and dancing, because of all the great spoil that they had taken out of the land of the Philistines, and out of the land of Judah.

17 And David smote them from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day: and there escaped not a man of them, save four hundred young men, which rode upon camels, and fled.

18 And David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away: and David rescued his two wives.

19 And there was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters, neither spoil, nor any *thing* that they had taken to them: David recovered all.

20 And David took all the flocks and the herds, *which* they drave before those *other* cattle, and said, *This is* David's spoil.

21 And David came to the two hundred men, which were so faint that they could not follow David, whom they had made also to abide at the brook Besor: and they went forth to meet David, and to meet the people that *were* with him: and when David came near to the people, he saluted them.

22 ¶ Then answered all the wicked men and *men* of Belial, of those that went with David, and said, Because they went not with us, we will not give them *ought* of the spoil that we have recovered, save to every man his wife and his children, that they may lead *them* away, and depart.

23 Then said David, Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the LORD hath given us, who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand.

24 For who will hearken unto you in this

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following the Syriac and Arabic. The words might certainly be understood, if they are not expressed.

Ver. 17. *And David smote them, &c.*] The number of Amalekites that fled, was equal to that of all David's forces; and out of self-preservation, he was obliged to put as many of them to the sword as he could, to prevent being surrounded and destroyed by so superior a number. A partial victory, instead of being of any service to him, would have rather turned out to his disadvantage; because the straggling parties might have united, and watched an opportunity of retrieving their defeat by a second attack; and it was not unknown to David, nor can it be unknown to any impartial reader, that the Amalekites were such inveterate enemies to the Israelites, and so restless at the same time, that they would have lost no opportunity of wiping off their disgrace, or endangering the very being of the Israelitish nation. I affirm, lastly, that David not only acted prudently, but well, in pursuing his victory, and extirpating them, as they were proscribed by God himself, and condemned to be utterly cut off.

Ver. 20. *And David took all the flocks and the herds, &c.*] To crown his success, David and his men not only recovered every man his wife and children, and every thing they had lost; but all the plunder which the enemy had taken elsewhere; vast flocks and herds of cattle, which they now separated from their own, and, in honour of their leader, distinguished by the name of *David's spoil*; of which spoil, when David returned to Ziklag, he sent presents to all his friends who had protected and entertained him in his exile, whether in Judea or out of it; ver. 26—31. And from the account of this matter in the verses referred to, it appears, that David had in this

exile sojourned in many places, whither the sacred historian did not think fit to trace him. Those places were principally in the tribe of Judah. This conduct of David's is certainly a high proof of the honest and overflowing gratitude of his heart for favours received.

Ver. 23—25. *Ye shall not do so, my brethren*] David pronounced, in contrariety to the inhuman resolutions of some evil men who attended him, that they who went down to battle, and they who stayed behind to guard the goods and provisions of the army, should share alike in the enemy's spoil; well knowing that there was as much merit in contributing to save a citizen, as in destroying an enemy; and that those who now stayed behind had no other demerit than that of a weaker constitution. Chalcondylas tells us, (lib. v.) that the Pisidians went further, and gave part of the spoil to those who staid at home and guarded the houses; and God himself appointed half to those who staid at home in the war with Midian. Numb. xxxi. This determination of David's became a law among the Israelites from that day: and we have reason to believe, that it lasted as long as the Jewish polity did, and was restored with it; and it is generally understood to have been practised by the Maccabees. 2 Mac. viii.

REFLECTIONS.—1st. David, having encouraged himself in God in this his great distress, addresses himself to him for direction.

1. He orders Abiathar to bring the ephod, and inquire whether he should go down after these spoilers, and whether he should overtake them; he receives a command to go, and an assurance of success. Had he consulted God before his expedition with the Philistines, perhaps all his trouble



matter? but as his part *is* that goeth down to the battle, so *shall* his part *be* that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike.

25 And it was *so* from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for

Israel unto this day.

26 ¶ And when David came to Ziklag, he sent of the spoil unto the elders of Judah, *even* to his friends, saying, Behold a present for you of the spoil of the enemies of the LORD;

trouble might have been prevented. It is good to be made wise by past overights.

2. Encouraged by this answer from God, he immediately pursues with his six hundred men, who, though fatigued with their march, and more with their trouble, follow hard after the track of these spoilers. At the brook Besor two hundred were quite faint and disabled; these, therefore, he is compelled to leave there to recover themselves, while he continues the pursuit with the remainder, trusting not on the arm of flesh, which was thus weakened, but on the promise of God. *Note;* (1.) Discouraging providences will but exalt the faith of the determined soul. (2.) They who still press forward, will infallibly seize the prize. (3.) The Son of David considers our infirmities, and pities our weakness.

3. God brings them a guide: a wretched Egyptian lies in their way, sunk under the complicated pressures of sickness and want, speechless, and ready to expire. The men bring him to David, and compassion moves him to relieve so miserable an object. The refreshment they gave him soon brought him to his senses, and enabled him to give an account of himself, and say to whom he belonged. He was an Egyptian, and servant to an Amalekite, as indeed his treatment shewed. Being overtaken with sickness, occasioned by his hard service, his inhuman master had deserted him, and left him barbarously to perish for want. He gives David an account of their expedition, their ravages on the south of Judah, and their capture of Ziklag; and, at David's request, having by an oath bound him not to deliver him up to his cruel master, offers to bring him down to the place where these plunderers were. *Note;* (1.) Great events often depend on very trivial and unexpected incidents. (2.) No man is so mean and despicable, as to be beneath our notice: we know not how much good or evil the weakest instruments may do us. (3.) He is a cruel and an Amalekite master, who, when his poor servants are sick, dismisses them hastily, and leaves them to shift for themselves while they are so disabled and helpless. (4.) Nothing is ever lost by compassion: charity usually brings its own reward.

4. The Amalekites are surpris'd in the midst of their feast. Triumphant in their success, and concluding themselves safe from all fear of being pursued, military order was neglected; all were busy in eating, drinking, and dancing, spending the evening in mirth and jollity; when David and his men suddenly fell upon them, and, without resistance, put them to the sword. The pursuit continued till the evening of the next day, and not an Amalekite escaped, except four hundred young men, who owed their preservation to the swiftness of the camels, or dromedaries, on which they rode. All the spoil of their camp fell into the victor's hands: they recovered not only all they had lost, particularly David's wives, who are mentioned

as the dearest and nearest to his heart, but also the flocks and herds of the Amalekites, which in triumph were driven home before them as David's spoil. *Note;* (1.) Security is the destruction of the sinner. (2.) Death unseen is hovering over many a soul which to dance and song devotes the day, and little thinks, in the midst of the throng of pleasures, how near he stands on the brink of never-ending pain. (3.) In prosperity they will be caressed and honoured, who in distress were, like David, insulted. (4.) The Son of David has recovered out of the hands of sin and Satan all that poor sinners had lost, and enriched his faithful people with better spoils than these flocks and herds, even with treasures which robbers can never steal, and mansions of glory, which are incorruptible, undefiled, and never fade away.

2dly, We have here David returning triumphant, and laden with spoil.

1. His wearied troops, who were left at the brook Besor with their baggage, come to meet him, and congratulate him on his victory, and David receives them with great kindness and affection. *Note;* They who are willing, but weak, must not be upbraided with, but comforted under, their infirmities.

2. The same wicked men, who had talked so mutinously against their leader, now shew the same inhumanity and uncharitableness to their brethren; and would greedily rob them, not only of part of the spoils, but of all that was their own, except their wives and children, which, left thus stript and destitute, would be but a burthen to them. *Note;* The covetous heart is hardened against the sufferings of the needy.

3. David rejects so unreasonable a proposal. It was highly ungrateful to God, whose hand alone had given them the victory. It was most injurious to their brethren, who, not by choice, but necessity, were left behind, and even then were employed in the needful service of guarding the baggage. David, therefore, commands an equal distribution to be made between them all. Herein they acquiesced, overcome by his persuasion, and overawed by his authority. *Note;* Resolute firmness is needful in a commander to restrain factious spirits.

4. David generously distributes his own share of the spoil among his friends in Judah and elsewhere, in gratitude for the favour and protection that they had shewed him during his haunts among them. *Note;* (1.) Every gracious soul must be generous: he who gives a new heart gives a liberal hand. (2.) They who have shewn us kindness deserve a recompence whenever God puts it in our power. (3.) They who are disposed to receive the Son of David for their king, will be enriched by his munificence, not merely with the gifts of grace in time, but with the riches of glory in eternity.

27 To *them* which *were* in Beth-el, and to *them* which *were* in south Ramoth, and to *them* which *were* in Jattir,

28 And to *them* which *were* in Aroer, and to *them* which *were* in Siphmoth, and to *them* which *were* in Eshtemoa,

29 And to *them* which *were* in Rachal, and to *them* which *were* in the cities of the Jerahmeelites, and to *them* which *were* in the cities of the Kenites,

30 And to *them* which *were* in Hormah, and to *them* which *were* in Chor-ashan, and to *them* which *were* in Athach,

31 And to *them* which *were* in Hebron, and to all the places where David himself and his men were wont to haunt.

C H A P. XXXI.

*The Israelites are overcome by the Philistines: Saul and his three sons perish: the Philistines fasten his body to the walls of Bethshan: valiant men from Jabesh-gilead carry off the bodies of Saul and his sons, and bury them near their city.*

[Before Christ 1055.]

**N**OW the Philistines fought against Israel: and the men of Israel fled from before

the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa.

2 And the Philistines followed hard upon Saul and upon his sons; and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Malchishua, Saul's sons.

3 And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him; and he was sore wounded of the archers.

4 Then said Saul unto his armour-bearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armour-bearer would not: for he was sore afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it.

5 And when his armour-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise upon his sword, and died with him.

6 So Saul died, and his three sons, and his armour-bearer, and all his men, that same day together.

7 ¶ And when the men of Israel that *were* on the other side of the valley, and *they* that *were* on the other side Jordan, saw that the men of Israel fled, and that Saul and his sons

C H A P. XXXI.

*Ver. 1. Now the Philistines fought against Israel.]* That is, as most interpreters understand it, began to fight against, or attacked, the Israelites. The word נִלְחַמִּים *nilehamim*, as Dr. Delaney observes, might as properly have been rendered *assaulted*. He is of opinion, not only that the Philistines attacked Saul in his camp, but that they did so soon after his return from Endor, and that, probably, they were encouraged to this attempt by some secret information of Saul's having stolen out of the camp the evening before with his general (for *Abner* is supposed to have been one of his attendants) and another person: and if this was the case, then his applying to the Pythoness was the immediate cause of his destruction; now this gives light to 1 Chron. x. 13. and at the same time receives light from it.

*Ver. 2. And the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, &c.]* Ishboseth probably either was not in the battle, or escaped by flight. Thus the prediction of Samuel was fulfilled. But who can forbear to drop a tear over the faithful, the amiable, the excellent Jonathan. There are few characters among men more lovely, or more extraordinary: fortitude, fidelity, magnanimity; a soul susceptible of the most refined friendship, and superior to all the temptations of ambition and vanity; and all these accomplishments crowned with the most resigned submission to the will of God.

*Ver. 3. And the archers hit him]* Houbigant renders this verse thus, *Then the battle going hard against Saul, the archers rushed upon him, from whom he received a great wound.* Saul, says he, would hardly have commanded his armour-bearer to kill him, if he had not been in a desperate state. The words, *lest they thrust me through and abuse me*, are not to be separated. Saul was not so much afraid of being killed, as of being abused, by these insulting enemies. Commentators observe, that there is no mention of any archers in any of the Philistine armies or battles before this. The use of the bow, however, was not unknown: Jonathan is celebrated for his skill and dexterity in it, and so were some of the worthies who resorted to David; but it seems not to have been yet brought into common practice, if, as it has been collected from 2 Sam. i. 18., David after this battle had the Israelites taught the use of it. If this was so, it seems to prove that they gained in this battle great advantage by means of their archers: for, doubtless, he would have taught it them much sooner, when he commanded the armies of Saul against the Philistines, had they then gained any advantage over the Israelites by means of these weapons. Sir Isaac Newton tells us, that those mighty numbers of men who aided the Philistines against Saul in the beginning of his reign, were the shepherds expelled from Egypt by Amasis; some of whom fled into Phœnicia, and others into Arabia Petræa. Now his son Ammon conquered Arabia. Why then may we not fairly presume, that these archers, who now aided the

were dead, they forsook the cities, and fled; and the Philistines came and dwelt in them.

8 ¶ And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his three sons fallen in mount Gilboa.

9 And they cut off his head, and stripped off his armour, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to publish *it in the house of their idols, and among the people.*

10 And they put his armour in the house of Ashtaroth: and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth-shan.

11 ¶ And when the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead heard of that which the Philistines had done to Saul;

12 All the valiant men arose, and went all night, and took the body of Saul, and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan, and came to Jabesh, and burnt them there.

the Philistines, were either Arabs who fled thither from Ammon, or those Egyptians who fled before to Arabia, and learned archery there from the natives, who were allowed to be the best bowmen in the world: since the time and circumstances suit, the conjecture will not, I believe, be thought ill-grounded. The *Cherethites*, so often mentioned in the following books, were of these archers whom David employed in his armies.

*Ver. 4, 5. Then said Saul unto his armour-bearer*] Saul and his armour-bearer died by the same sword; that his armour-bearer died by his own sword, is out of all doubt: the text expressly tells us so; and that Saul perished by the same sword is sufficiently evident. *Draw thy sword*, says he to him, *and thrust me through*; which when he refused, *Saul*, says the text, *took THE sword*, אֶת הַחֶרֶב *eth hachereb* [*the very sword*], and fell upon it. What sword? not his own; for then the text would have said so: but, in the plain, natural, grammatical construction, the sword beforementioned must be the sword now referred to, that is, his armour-bearer's; 1 Chron. x. 4, 5. Now it is the established tradition of all the Jewish nation, that this armour-bearer was *Doeg*: I see no reason why it should be discredited; and if so, then Saul and his executioner both fell by that weapon with which they had before massacred the priests of God. So Brutus and Cassius killed themselves with the same swords with which they slew Cæsar; and Calippus was stabbed with the same sword wherewith he killed Dio.

*Ver. 6. So Saul died*] Josephus runs out into high encomiums upon Saul, who, knowing that he was to die, thus gallantly exposed himself for his country. But, in truth, there is not the least room for panegyrick. He died, not gallantly fighting, but by his own hand. He died, not as a hero, but as a deserter. Self-murder is demonstrably the effect of cowardice, and it is as irrational and iniquitous as it is base. God, whose creatures we are, is the sole arbiter, as he is the sole author of life: our lives are his property; and he has given the world, his church, our country, our family, and our friends, a share in them: and therefore, as Plato finely observes in his *Phædo*, "God is as much injured by self-murder, as I should be by having one of my slaves killed without my consent;" not to insist upon the injury done to others in a variety of relations by the same act. Much nobler than Saul's was the resolution of Darius; who, finding himself betrayed, and that he was to be either murdered by his own subjects, or delivered into the hands of Alex-

ander, would not, however, be his own executioner: "I would rather," says he, "die by another's guilt, than by my own." Quint. Curt. lib. v. cap. 12.

*Ver. 11, 12. And when the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead heard, &c.*] *Beth-shan* was a city in the tribe of Manasseh, not far from Jordan and the sea of Gennesareth, to which the men of Jabesh might march in a night's time, and accomplish their design. The Jabeshites had great obligations to Saul. He delivered them at the beginning of his reign from the fury of Nabash, chap. xi. 11. They resolved, therefore, to rescue his body and those of his sons from the disgrace to which the Philistines exposed them. A band of valiant men among them marched away in the night, came to Beth-shan, and happily achieved their design: a pleasing example of gratitude, which is by no means so common among nations as it ought to be; upon which account it is, that Aristotle says, the temples of the graces were built in the midst of the cities of Greece, to admonish all the Greeks to be grateful. The historian adds, that after the men of Jabesh had carried off the bodies, they came to *Jabesh*, and burnt them there; which creates some difficulty, as it was the custom of the Jews to embalm, and not to burn; and particularly, as in the parallel passages there is not the least mention of their having done any other than buried their bones or bodies. See the note on 2 Sam. ii. 4. and 1 Chron. x. 12. The Chaldee and other versions render it, *and they burnt or kindled a light or lamp over them there, as they are accustomed to burn over kings*: upon which a rabbi observes, that this has reference to a custom delivered down from their ancestors, of burning the beds and other utensils of the dead upon their graves, or to the burning of spices over them. See Jerem. xxxiv. 5. It seems by far the most probable, that something of this kind was done, and is implied in the text, as we have not anywhere the least trace of burning the bodies of the dead among the Jews. See Lamy.

REFLECTIONS.—When the Philistines return to strip the slain, to their great joy they find their enemy Saul a breathless corpse, and his sons fallen with him. Hereupon we have,

1. The insult offered to the dead body of Saul. They cut off his head, which (see 1 Chron. x. 10.) they stuck up as a trophy of their victory in the house of their god Dagon; placed his armour in the temple of Ashtaroth; then took the trunk and the bodies of his sons, and ignominiously

13 And they took their bones, and buried *them* under a tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days.

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miniously fastened them with nails to the wall of Bethshan, or hung them on gibbets upon the wall. Thus the insult, that Saul wished by self-murder to avoid, overtook him.

2. They proclaimed their victory through the land, and set apart a day of solemn thanksgiving to praise their idols, to whom they ascribed their success. *Note;* Blind idolaters often shew more gratitude to, and dependance upon, stocks and stones, than they who pretend to worship the true God express to the living Jehovah; therefore, in the day of judgment these shall rise up to condemn them.

3. The men of Jabesh-gilead, fired with indignation

at the insult shewn to the royal corpses, as well as mindful of their particular obligations to Saul, boldly adventure to cross Jordan, and by night take down, unperceived, the bodies from the wall of Bethshan. Thus closes this First Book of Samuel, where Israel's sun sets in blood, and darkness and despair seem to cover the land: but we shall find the morning break upon us in the opening of the next book; and the bright sun of David, the glorious type of Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, arising to cheer the desolate valleys of Judah, and shining forth in his meridian splendor, whilst all their enemies are led captive at his chariot-wheels!

THE  
SECOND BOOK of SAMUEL,

OTHERWISE CALLED THE

SECOND BOOK of the KINGS.

THIS book may properly be divided into three parts. In the first, the author describes the happy commencement and glorious success of the kingdom of David, chap. i.—x. In the second, he relates the unhappy fall, and the misfortunes which followed it, notwithstanding the repentance of this monarch, chap. xi.—xviii. In the third, he celebrates the re-establishment of this prince; and gives an account of the events which signalized his reign during its last period, chap. xix.—xxiv. The whole comprehends a space of something more than forty years; from the year of the world, 2949, to the year 2989. Mr. Locke remarks, that Abarbanel says, that the books of Samuel were most probably written by Jeremiab, from the memoirs of Samuel, Nathan, and Gad. See the introduction to the first book.

CHAP. I.

A young man brings tidings to David, that Saul and his sons are fallen and dead; and that he himself had slain Saul at his request: David commands the young man to be put to death. His lamentation over Saul and Jonathan.

[Before Christ 1055.]

NOW it came to pass after the death of Saul, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, and David had abode two days in Ziklag;

2 It came even to pass on the third day, that, behold, a man came out of the camp from Saul with his clothes rent, and earth upon his head: and so it was, when he came to David, that he fell to the earth, and did obeisance.

3 And David said unto him, From whence comest thou? And he said unto him, Out of the camp of Israel am I escaped.

4 And David said unto him, How went the matter? I pray thee, tell me. And he

answered, That the people are fled from the battle, and many of the people also are fallen and dead; and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also.

5 And David said unto the young man that told him, How knowest thou that Saul and Jonathan his son be dead?

6 And the young man that told him said, As I happened by chance upon mount Gilboa, behold, Saul leaned upon his spear; and, lo, the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him.

7 And when he looked behind him, he saw me, and called unto me. And I answered, Here am I.

8 And he said unto me, Who art thou? And I answered him, I am an Amalekite.

9 He said unto me again, Stand, I pray thee, upon me, and slay me: for anguish is come upon me, because my life is yet whole in me.

CHAP. I.

Ver. 9. For anguish is come upon me] The word שָׁבַץ *shabat*, signifies an inclosing, or inclosure; and the mean-

ing seems to be, "kill me, because an inclosure, or inclosing part of the enemy, has seized me." See the 6th verse, and Parkhurst on the word. Houbigant renders it, with the

10 So I stood upon him, and slew him, because I was sure that he could not live after that he was fallen: and I took the crown that *was* upon his head, and the bracelet that *was* on his arm, and have brought them hither unto my lord.

11 ¶ Then David took hold on his clothes, and rent them; and likewise all the men that *were* with him:

12 And they mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the LORD, and for the

house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword.

13 ¶ And David said unto the young man that told him, Whence *art* thou? And he answered, I *am* the son of a stranger, an Amalekite.

14 And David said unto him, How wast thou not afraid to stretch forth thine hand to destroy the LORD's anointed?

15 And David called one of the young men, and said, Go near, *and* fall upon him. And he smote him that he died.

the Vulgate, *tenent me angustia; for I am in straits. Because, &c.* should, I think, be rendered, *though my life is yet whole in me.* As this story of the Amalekite is a falsehood, there is less reason to be solicitous, as some of the critics are, to render it consistent; for falsehood is rarely so. The design of the young man was evidently to ingratiate himself with David. There are always numerous strollers who follow camps, and this lad probably was one of them. Their business is pillage and the stripping of the dead: our young Amalekite, it seems, knew his business, and got the start of the Philistines in the pillage of Saul. The serious reader, perhaps, may not think it an observation unworthy of his regard, that an Amalekite now took from Saul's head that crown which he had forfeited by his disobedience in relation to Amalek.

*Ver. 10. I took the crown—and the bracelet*] This crown, probably, was one of the diadems worn by the eastern monarchs, made of a bandage of white linen, and which might easily be concealed under the helmet of Saul. It is not *impossible*, that the *bracelet* might be no part of the regalia of the kingdom of Israel; but merely a thing of value which Saul had about him, and which the stranger thought fit to present *with his crown* to David; but it seems *rather* to be mentioned as a royal ornament; and it is as certain, that it has been since used in the east as a badge of power; for when the Calif Caiem Bienrillah granted the investiture of certain dominions to an eastern prince, which his predecessors had possessed, and among the rest, of the city of Bagdat itself, it is said, this ceremony of investiture was performed by the Calif's sending him letters patent, a *crown*, a *chain*, and *bracelets*. See D'Herbelot, p. 541. I do not, however, find, that any of the commentators have considered Saul's bracelet in this light. All the observation which Grotius makes upon it is, that it was an ornament used by men, as well as women of those nations; upon which he cites Numb. xxxi. 50. The ornament, probably, was not so common as we may have been ready to suppose; for, though the word *bracelet* is frequently to be met with in our translation, the original word in this text occurs *at most* but in two other places; and as the children of Israel found one or more of these bracelets among the spoils of the Midianites, so they killed at the same time five of their *king's* Numb. xxxi. 8. The other place indeed (Isaiah iii. 18.) speaks of female ornaments; but, if the word is the same,

might not the women of that age wear an ornament, which, from its likeness to one of the ensigns of royalty, might be called by the same name; as in some countries of late, brides have worn an ornament, which has been called a *crown*, though the word, indisputably long before that time, marked out the chief badge of royal dignity. See Olearius's Travels, p. 238. and Observations, p. 297.

*Ver. 15. And he smote him, that he died*] Though it be a maxim of the Jewish law, that no man should be condemned out of the mouth of one witness, and that no man's confession should be taken solely against himself; yet Maimonides asserts, that it was the royal prerogative to condemn a man upon the evidence of a single person, or upon the strength of his own confession; and he produces this fact as an instance. See Bishop Patrick. This self-convicted wretch intended to make a merit of his falsehood: but he knew not David; he knew not that a crown would be unwelcome to *him*, at the price of treason; and that the throne would not tempt him, if to be purchased by parricide. He who himself thrice spared Saul when he had him absolutely in his power, could he forbear punishing the man that boasted of having murdered him?—no: he justly ordered his immediate execution for having slain the Lord's anointed. It is true, he died for a crime which he had not committed; yet well deserved to die, for taking the guilt of it upon him; thus doubly devoted to destruction. David rightly judged, that Saul had no power over his own life, and, consequently, should not have been obeyed in such a command. God and the state had as much right to his life when he was weary of it, as when he most loved it; and further, it behoved David to vindicate his innocence to the world by so public an execution: he might otherwise, perhaps, have been branded with the guilt of employing that wretch to murder his persecutor. Besides this, David had it in view to deter others by this example. He consulted his own safety in this, as Cæsar is said, by restoring the statues of Pompey, to have fixed his own. This was a wise lecture to princes, and many of them unquestionably have profited by it. Mr. Saurin, in the second dissertation of his 5th volume, has justified this conduct of David towards the Amalekite, by shewing at large, 1. That the Amalekite deserved death: 2. That David had a right to inflict the punishment of which he had made himself worthy: 3. That no want of formality rendered

16 And David said unto him, Thy blood be upon thy head; for thy mouth hath testified against thee, saying, I have slain the LORD's anointed.

17 ¶ And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son:

18 (Also he bade them teach the children

of Judah *the use of the bow*: behold, *it is written in the book of Jasher*.)

19 The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen!

20 Tell *it* not in Gath, publish *it* not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.

rendered this rigour unlawful: and, 4. That if the conduct of David towards this murderer be just in itself, it had nothing exceptionable in the motives which led him to it.

REFLECTIONS.—Very different from what the Amalekite expected, was David's reception of his tidings:

1. In the agony of sorrow, he rent his clothes; and all that were with him followed his example; the day is spent in bitter mourning, and they observe a solemn fast until evening. He mourned for Jonathan his friend, but there was hope in his death; he mourned for Saul his enemy, where no hope appeared; and especially over the desolations of Israel, fallen by the sword of the Philistines. *Note*: (1.) His country's sufferings are a grief to the true patriot's heart. (2.) As a good man loves his enemy whilst alive, he is so far from rejoicing at his fall, that he can weep over his grave.

2. He commands immediate execution on the messenger, who hoped to have received high preferment, but suffers the just reward of his deeds. Thus did David express his own detestation of regicide, and testify the sincerity of his grief.

*Ver. 17. David lamented with this lamentation*] Let any one but read over this admirable ode; than which there is nothing more elegant and passionate in all antiquity; and he will find the utmost decency and propriety in the concern which David discovers, and the encomiums respectively passed on Saul and Jonathan; nothing but what became the characters of both, and suited the situation of him who penned it. Saul he celebrates for his former victories, his swiftness and strength; and sheds a tear over him for his defeat, and the indignities which were offered to him after his death; which humanity would draw from the eye, even over an enemy, that was otherwise brave, and died fighting for his country; and, what deserves to be mentioned to his honour, without a single reflection upon his past injustice and cruelty towards himself. But as to Jonathan, how just and warm is the grief he manifests! *I am distressed for thee, &c.*

*Ver. 18. Also he bade them teach the children of Judah the use of the bow*] Read, says Mr. Locke, *the bow*; the words, *the use of*, not being in the original; for that which the sons of Judah were commanded to learn, was not *the use of the bow*, but *the bow*, as it is originally set down; i. e. a song of David's so called; or this song of lamentation over Saul and Jonathan, as says the learned Gregory. Houbigant, Saurin, Dr. Lowth, Dr. Waterland, and many others, are of the same opinion. Houbigant renders

the verse thus: *Which also he commanded that the children of Judah should learn: this is the song, which is inscribed the bow, in the book of Jasher, or the righteous; a poetical book, long since lost, which had its name, like many other of the Hebrew books, from the first word in it. It is well known too, that the Hebrews gave titles to their sacred hymns, or compositions, alluding to the subject; of which we have sufficient examples in the book of Psalms. Probably this lamentation was called, the bow, either in memory of the slaughter received from the archers of the enemy, 1 Sam. xxxi. 3. or from the bow of Jonathan, of which particular mention is made in the 22d verse. See Dr. Hunt's note, p. 306. of Lowth's Prelections, 8vo. edit., where a pleasing critique upon this fine poem will be found; which is not only most excellent, but the first piece of the kind that remains among the monuments of antiquity. Scaliger thinks, that the custom of funeral songs passed from the ancient Hebrews to the heathens. Herodotus speaks of those of the Egyptians; and Homer has preserved to us the elegy which Achilles made in honour of Patroclus, and that of Hecuba and Andromache upon Hector. The bursts of sorrow in the poem are so strong, so sudden, so pathetic, so short, so various, so unconnected; no grief was ever painted in such living and lasting colours; and it is one sure sign and beautiful effect of it, that David's heart was so softened and melted by it, as to lose all traces of Saul's cruelty to him. He remembered nothing in him now, but the brave man, the valiant leader, the magnificent prince; the king of God's appointment; his own once-indulgent master; his Michal's and his Jonathan's father.*

*Ver. 19. The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places*] As Jonathan's death touched David the nearest, it was natural that he should be the first object of his lamentation. *Beauty or glory of Israel, slain upon thy high places!* And to put it out of all doubt that Jonathan is here meant, he varies it in a subsequent verse. *Jonathan, slain in thine high places! How are the mighty fallen!* "How untimely and lamentably Jonathan; how sadly and shamefully Saul, by his own hand." This death, as it was matter of just reproach upon Saul, he knew would be matter of more triumph with the enemy. He could not bear the thought of this infamy to his country and his king; and therefore he breaks out into that beautiful apostrophe; *tell it not in Gath, &c.* for of all things grief is most impatient of reproach and mockery. See Lamentations, i. 21. \* Kennicott would render this verse thus: *O beauty of Israel! a warrior on thine high places.* And he asks, "Can any thing be more worthily conceived, or more happily expressed, than this applause given by David to his dear friend Jonathan,—the ornament  
" and

21 Ye mountains of Gilboa, *let there be no dew, neither let there be rain, upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil.*

22 From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty.

23 Saul and Jonathan *were* lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.

24 Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with *other* delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel.

“and defence?” But *how are the mighty fallen!* since Saul and Jonathan also are slain in battle. Whoever recollects the preceding history of David, will see the truest nature in his thus breaking forth in the praise of Jonathan *only*, and that without naming him here at first; and then in his decently lamenting the king and the prince together. And that the first break was thus expressive of Jonathan’s praise *only*, is evident from ver. 25. where the same words are repeated, and Jonathan’s name is expressly mentioned. But how languid and mean are the several translations of this first exclamation at present! The English translation above is, *the beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: but whose high places?* And then the lamentation couched in the next words, *how are the mighty fallen, or slain!* is entirely anticipated by the term *slain*, which is read in the words before them. It seems, therefore, but reasonable, that we should render the word חָלַל *chalal*, not as a verb, but as a noun, signifying a warrior; which will give beauty not only to this verse, but to another in this celebrated dirge.

Ver. 21. *Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, &c.]* Dr. Delaney renders this verse thus: *Mountains of Gilboa, nor dew nor rain upon you, nor fields of waved offerings; for there the shield of the brave was cast away; the shield of Saul, the weapons of the anointed with oil: and Houbigant thus: Mountains of Gilboa, let no dew descend upon you, nor rain upon you, O ye fertile fields: [such as afford in abundance first-fruits to be offered to God:] For there the shield of the brave was thrown away, the shield of Saul: nor is the anointed of the Lord any more upon thee.* Throwing away the shield, was matter of the highest reproach in all the accounts of antiquity; and this, in the practice of so brave a prince as Saul, was an example of terrible consequence, and therefore must not go unreproved, especially in a song which soldiers were to learn. David could not censure Saul. He was his prince and his enemy; the infamy, however, must fall somewhere. Be then the place it happened in, accursed. Poetry justifies this; and I do not scruple to say, that it is the most masterly stroke the art will admit. Here I cannot but observe, with what inimitable address David has conducted this reproach; for at the same time that the mountains are cursed for it, he has contrived to turn it into praise upon Saul: *there the shield of the mighty was cast away: no hint by whom.* Dr. Delaney, instead of חָלַל *beli*, which we render by the periphrasis *as though he had not been*, reads כְּלִי *keli*, *weapons*, as in the last verse; which appears a very ingenious and excellent criticism.

Ver. 22. *From the blood of the slain, &c.]* The Hebrew is מִדַּם הַחַיִּים *middam chalalim*, which words, as מִמֶּנּוּ *mem* is

allowed by Noldius to signify *without*, may be thus rendered; *without the blood of the warriors, without the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan returned not back.* Upon this construction, we see, the *warriors* and the *mighty*, is a beautiful gradation upon the *blood of the warriors*; just as in Prov. vii. 26. which should have been rendered, *she hath cast down many warriors, and many strong men have been slain by her: for the word חַיִּים chulalim*, should not be translated *slain*, but *warriors* in both these places. Kennicott.

Ver. 23. *Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives]* David means in this verse to express the union of Saul and Jonathan by friendship in life, and by the same common fate in death; and he does not by any means appear to design a commendation of the loveliness or excellency of their lives in any other respect. Dr. Lowth, in his poetical paraphrase, has finely expressed the meaning;

Nobile par, quos junxit amor, quos gloria junxit,  
Unaque nunc fato jungit acerba dies.

Houbigant renders it, *Saul and Jonathan, while they lived, were in mutual friendship and love; and even in death they were not separated.* The elegant opposition which this version forms, evidently gives it the preference; and we should remark upon this song, as upon the other sacred pieces of Hebrew poetry, that the clauses in it alternately correspond each to the other. Though Jonathan thought differently from Saul in what concerned David, he appears always to have maintained a great friendship with his father, and never to have been wanting in filial duty; and Saul also appears in the general to have lived in great friendship with Jonathan. David proceeds to bestow on them the highest eulogium that can be given to warriors, saying, that they united in their combats the rapidity of the eagle, and the invincible courage of the lion; and as courage is the peculiar property of the lion, the last clause would be better rendered, *they are more courageous than lions.* See Prov. xxx. 30. and Green’s Notes.

Ver. 24. *Ye daughters of Israel, weep]* Nothing can be more elegant than this verse: while the *warriors* of Israel lamented their chiefs, the divine poet calls upon the *women* of the land to shed their tears over the ashes of princes, whose warlike exploits had so often procured them those ornaments which are perhaps too pleasing to the sex, and had enriched them with the spoils of their enemies. There is nothing for *other* in the Hebrew, which literally runs thus: *Weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with, or in, delights; that is to say, in scarlet, white-*



25 How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, *thou wast slain in thine high places.*

26 I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.

27 How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!

## CHAP. II.

*David is anointed king in Hebron by the tribe of Judah. Abner makes Ish-boseth king of Israel. The two armies being prepared for battle, twelve young men of each party come forth to single combat, and all perish. Afabel is killed by Abner.*

[Before Christ 1055.]

**A**ND it came to pass after this, that David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I

go up into any of the cities of Judah? And the LORD said unto him, Go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? And he said, Unto Hebron.

2 So David went up thither, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail Nabal's wife the Carmelite.

3 And his men that *were* with him did David bring up, every man with his household: and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron.

4 And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. And they told David, saying, *That the men of Jabesh-gilead were they that buried Saul.*

5 ¶ And David sent messengers unto the men of Jabesh-gilead, and said unto them, Blessed *be* ye of the LORD, that ye have shewed

wherewith you are so much delighted. Houbigant renders it, *who clothed you in garments shining with purple: and Green, who clothed you in pleasing scarlet.* He observes, that the prophet Jeremiah seems to have had his eye on this passage, when he addresses Jerusalem as a beautiful woman, chap. iv. ver. 1.

*Ver. 25. How are the mighty fallen, &c.!*] David's grief, as it began with Jonathan, naturally ends with him. It is well known, that we lament ourselves in the loss of our friends, and David was no way solicitous to conceal this circumstance. "It may be the work of fancy; but to me, I own," says Dr. Delaney, "this conclusion of the ode is the strongest picture of grief that I ever perused; to my ear, every line in it is either swelled with sighs, or broken with sobs."—"In the former part of this lamentation," says Mr. Green, "David celebrates Jonathan as a brave man; in the latter, he laments him as his friend. And in this he does but discharge the obligation to him when dead, which he owed him while living: for the sacred historian acquaints us (1 Sam. xviii. 1—5.) that Jonathan's friendship for David, however it was cemented afterwards, was first founded on his *military* merit; that having seen his intrepid behaviour in slaying Goliath, he immediately conceived an affection for him, and solicited his friendship; and from that moment his soul was knit with, or as the word is translated, Gen. xlv. 30. bound up in the soul of David; that Saul no sooner took David home to his court, but Jonathan made a covenant of mutual friendship with him, that they would each love the other as their own souls; and that, upon the ratification of it, Jonathan made him the military present of his robe and his armour.

"Concerning the measure of this ode,—whoever considers, will find it divided into six distinct parts of complaint and lamentation. These parts I take to be so many stanzas, like the strophe, antistrophe, and

"epode of Pindar; and if so, then the beginnings of "six of the verses are plainly pointed out to us. The "first stanza contains ver. 19, 20.; the second, ver. 21.; "the third, ver. 22.; the fourth, ver. 23.; the fifth, "ver. 24. and half the 25th; and the sixth stanza half "the 25th, and the 26th, and 27th verses. Every sentence "I take to be a verse, because real grief is short and "sententious; and to me, many of these verses plainly "demonstrate their own beginnings and endings, without the aid either of unnatural elisions, or those mutilations and divisions of words, with which some critics "have defaced some of the best odes of Pindar. That "noble exclamation, *How are the mighty fallen!* with "which three stanzas are marked, I take to be the "simple dictate of sorrow upon every topic of lamentation. It is therefore, I think, to be considered as a "kind of burden to the song."

## CHAP. II.

*Ver. 1. And he said, Unto Hebron]* Though God had appointed David to the kingdom, he would not pretend to take upon him the administration of affairs without immediately applying himself to him, by Abiathar the high-priest, to know when and by what means he should best be put into possession of it. He was directed by God to go up to Hebron, which was situated in the midst of the tribe of Judah, on the top of a ridge of high mountains, equally famed for fruits, herbage, and honey. Mr. Sandys seems to have surveyed the whole region round it with uncommon rapture; and Dr. Shaw has considered it with singular care and attention. He observes of that region, that it is admirably fitted for olives and vineyards, and in many parts for grain and pasture. It seems, therefore, to be a region peculiarly adapted to the reception of David and his men; for there they might then dwell, as Dr. Shaw tells us the inhabitants do now, in greater numbers, and with greater advantage: for here, says he, they themselves have bread

this kindness unto your lord, *even* unto Saul, and have buried him.

6 And now the LORD shew kindness and truth unto you : and I also will requite you this kindness, because ye have done this thing.

7 Therefore now let your hands be strength-

ened, and be ye valiant : for your master Saul is dead, and also the house of Judah have anointed me king over them.

8 ¶ But Abner the son of Ner, captain of Saul's host, took Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim ;

bread to the full, while their cattle browse upon a richer herbage ; and both of them are refreshed by springs of excellent water. Besides this, Hebron had also other advantages ; it was a Levitical, priestly, and patriarchal city ; venerable for the sepulchres of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and, as tradition adds, of Adam also ; and upon all these accounts, long reputed (as it is at this day, even by the Turks) holy, and honoured with the title *chosen* or *beloved*. God had before appointed it for the residence of his favourite servants, and it was now peculiarly proper for the reception of David, as being the metropolis of his tribe. See Numb. xiii. 22. Josh. xiv. 13.

*Ver. A.* And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king] David had no other title to the succession than the appointment of God by Samuel ; and this claim, on which he founded his pretensions, was universally known to the people of Israel, and the avowed reason why they advanced him to the throne. It was known to Jonathan his friend ; Saul himself was no stranger to it ; Abigail confesses this appointment of God ; Abner was not ignorant of it, as appears by his words to Ish-bosheth ; and his message to the elders of Israel, who also acknowledged it : so that David's appointment to be king by the God of Israel, who anointed him by Samuel, was the foundation of his claim, and the reason why all at last centered in him ; and which justified his pretensions to, and contest for the crown, after the death of Saul : and it was a better claim than what Ish-bosheth had, who, in reality, had none at all, as the crown was never made hereditary in Saul's family, and was entirely at God's disposal, who was the supreme King and Governor of Israel. Besides, it was natural for the men of Judah to prefer one of their own family. Jacob had long since predicted the establishment of the sovereignty in the tribe of Judah. David was of that tribe, beyond all dispute elected and appointed to succeed Saul ; and what had the men of Judah to do, but to concur with the predeterminations of Providence in his favour ? Accordingly, *they anointed him king*. But whether they did this with more dispatch to influence the determination of the other tribes in his favour, or whether it was delayed until their dispositions were founded upon the point, is nowhere said. This is certain, that one tribe's acting separate and independent of the rest, might be in a general point of view of dangerous example ; nor could any thing but the divine authority justify it. Houbigant, however, is of opinion, and he combats Calmet on this head, that, as the tribe of Judah well knew the designation of David to the throne, they ought not to have waited till the other tribes were assembled that they might all unanimously acknowledge David king, unless they meant to thwart what God had done ; or unless David was not king, though immediately appointed by God, if all the tribes did not give their assent to the divine appointment.

REFLECTIONS.—David's army had been much reinforced, as appears 1 Chron. xiii., yet he does not immediately seize the throne, or march to compel allegiance to himself, though Israel's anointed sovereign ; but,

1. Inquires of God whether it be his will that he should go up into Judah, where, as being his own tribe, he hoped to be most readily received ? *Note* ; They who wait upon God for direction, will be led in the right way to the kingdom.

2. David immediately obeys the divine direction, and takes his wives along with him, and his men of war and their households ; they had been his companions in tribulation, it is but right and honourable to take them to share in his advancement. *Note* ; They who follow Christ under the cross, shall reign with him in the day of his appearing and glory.

3. He meets with a very welcome reception. The men of Judah recognised the divine designation, and anointed him their king. *Note* ; They who would have Christ to reign over them, must choose him for their king.

4. On inquiry, probably, after Saul's corpse and Jonathan's, for which he purposed an honourable interment, he is informed of the generous behaviour of the men of Jabesh-gilead. As a token how kindly he took this noble action of theirs, he sends them a hearty commendation, prays the Lord to bless them for their kindness, and declares that he will take occasion to requite them. Though Saul is dead, who defended them, David, who is anointed in his stead, will be their friend ; therefore they need not fear any thing from the Philistines, who might resent their deed : he bids them be strong and valiant ; and, as he hoped they would receive him as their king, they might depend upon his protection. *Note* ; (1.) A kindness shewn to our friends is an obligation conferred on ourselves. (2.) It is not enough to bestow our good wishes, but we must recompense in such manner as we are able, those who have well deserved. (3.) To have those for our friends, whose fidelity to others has been tried, is a valuable acquisition.

*Ver. 8.* Abner, the son of Ner] Abner was Saul's general, and near kinsman. Interest and ambition, therefore, and it may be envy too, strongly swayed him against his duty ; for it appears sufficiently from the sequel of his history, that he was well acquainted with David's divine designation to the throne. But should he now submit to it, he must no more hope for the supreme command of the army, of which Joab was in possession, and well deserved to be so, as he was a tried friend and near kinsman of David. Nor was this all : Ish-bosheth was Abner's near kinsman, the interest of whose tribe and family was connected with his own. Add to all this, that Abner commanded under Saul in all the expeditions that he made against David ; and it appears sufficiently clear from the history, that David was greatly an over-match for him in all military conduct.

9 And he made him king over Gilead, and over the Ashurites, and over Jezreel, and over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, and over all Israel.

10 Ish-bosheth Saul's son *was* forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and reigned two years. But the house of Judah followed David.

11 (And the time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months.)

12 ¶ And Abner the son of Ner, and the servants of Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon.

13 And Joab the son of Zeruah, and the servants of David, went out, and met together

by the pool of Gibeon: and they sat down, the one on the one side of the pool, and the other on the other side of the pool.

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

15 Then there arose and went over by number twelve of Benjamin, which *pertained* to Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David.

16 And they caught every one his fellow by the head, and *thrust* his sword in his fellow's side; so they fell down together: wherefore that place was called Helkath-hazzurim, which *is* in Gibeon.

17 And there was a very fore battle that

Thus envy, ambition, interest, and personal pique, led him to espouse the cause of Ish-bosheth, whom he *brought over* Jordan with him to Mahanaim; a city in the tribe of Gad, (see Gen. xxxii. 2.) which he chose for his residence, the better to gain that part of the country to his interest, to be more out of the reach of David's and the Philistines' incursions, and to have the better opportunity of recruiting his army among a people not only brave and courageous, but very well affected to the cause that he had espoused.

*Ver. 10. Ish-bosheth—was forty years old,—and reigned two years.]* Ishbosheth was born in the year that Saul was made king, for Saul reigned forty years, Acts xiii. 21. *Ish-bosheth reigned two years,* says the sacred writer. Now, by referring to the next verse, and the first of the next chapter, we shall see that this is to be understood with some restriction. Ish-bosheth reigned all the time that David resided at Hebron, that is seven years and a half; but they both reigned two years in peace, without attacking each other; which seems to be all that the sacred historian would affirm. The five last years of Ish-bosheth's reign, were rather the years of Abner's reign than of his own; for this general left him only the name of a king. Different solutions are given to this passage by other interpreters. Houbigant, in particular, reads *six* instead of *two years*, but without any authority; and Le Clerc and Schmidt think, that Ish-bosheth really reigned only two years; an opinion utterly irreconcilable with the next chapter. Possibly, the words *reigned two years*, may be considered as referring to what follows in the 12th verse, to mark out the epocha of the commencement of hostilities between the two kings; and so they might be rendered, *and he had reigned two years*: then, inclosing the next and what follows in a parenthesis, the 12th verse might begin, *Then Abner, &c.* The phrase, *went out*, in that verse is military; and we frequently find *to come in* and *go out*, used in that sense in Scripture.

*Ver. 14. Let the young men now arise, and play before us.]* The word rendered *play* signifies to *conflict*, or *contend* together. See Parkhurst on *שָׂחַק* *sachak*. It seems most probable, that Joab was ordered to act only upon the de-

ensive, David having sworn not to destroy the family of Saul. 1 Sam. xxiv. 22. In all likelihood, this was only a scheme of Abner's to pique Joab, and draw on the battle. Josephus understands the proposal as a trial of skill, to shew who had the best disciplined or bravest soldiers. Antiq. lib. vii. c. 1. and see Dr. Shaw's Travels, part ii. p. 250.

*Ver. 16. They caught every one his fellow by the head.]* i. e. By the hair of the head, or beard. See 2 Sam. xx. 9. Plutarch tells us, in his Apophthegms, that all things being prepared for a battle, Alexander's captains asked him, whether he had any thing else to command them? "Nothing," said he, "but that the Macedonians shave their beards." Parmenio wondering what he meant, "Don't you know," replied he, "that there is no better hold in fight than the beard."

REFLECTIONS.—The ambition of Abner, (who was general to Saul,) and zeal for his family, prevail upon him to set up Ish-bosheth, the only surviving and legitimate son of Saul as king; and whilst David, in dependance upon God's promises, remained quiet at Hebron, Abner, by his assiduity, gained over the land of Gilead beyond Jordan first, and then all the tribes but Judah, to acknowledge Ish-bosheth. And thus began that competition which, after two years of peace and five of war, terminated in the death of Ish-bosheth, and the entire submission of all the tribes to David. *Note;* Before we come to the throne, our faith will be tried, and we must expect war in the gates.

1. Abner begins the war, which, as it seems, David would never have entered into, though his right to the crown was so evident, if he had not been obliged; so desirous was he, rather to preserve the lives of those who should be his future subjects, than treat them now as rebels against his crown.

2. Abner seeing Joab, probably, backward to engage, David being unwilling to shed Israelitish blood, challenges him to produce twelve men of Judah, against twelve of his Israelites, to play before them, that is, fight so many duels; for, to a fierce warrior, blood and wounds

day; and Abner was beaten, and the men of Israel, before the servants of David.

18 ¶ And there were three sons of Zeruiah there, Joab, and Abishai, and Afahel: and Afahel was as light of foot as a wild roe.

19 And Afahel pursued after Abner: and in going he turned not to the right hand nor to the left from following Abner.

20 Then Abner looked behind him, and said, *Art thou Afahel?* And he answered, *I am.*

21 And Abner said to him, Turn thee aside to thy right hand or to thy left, and lay thee hold on one of the young men, and take thee his armour. But Afahel would not turn aside from following of him.

22 And Abner said again to Afahel, Turn thee aside from following me: wherefore should I smite thee to the ground? how then should I hold up my face to Joab thy brother?

23 Howbeit he refused to turn aside: wherefore Abner with the hinder end of the spear smote him under the fifth rib, that the

spear came out behind him; and he fell down there, and died in the same place: and it came to pass, *that* as many as came to the place where Afahel fell down and died stood still.

24 Joab also and Abishai pursued after Abner: and the sun went down when they were come to the hill of Ammah, that *lieth* before Giah by the way of the wilderness of Gibeon.

25 ¶ And the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together after Abner, and became one troop, and stood on the top of an hill.

26 Then Abner called to Joab, and said, Shall the sword devour for ever? knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end? how long shall it be then ere thou bid the people return from following their brethren?

27 And Joab said, *As God liveth*, unless thou hadst spoken, surely then in the morning the people had gone up every one from following his brother.

28 So Joab blew a trumpet, and all the

are sport and pastime. Joab, like too many, had entertained those false notions of honour, according to which he dared not refuse the challenge; the men are selected, matched, enter the lists, and engage: each instantly seizes his fellow, plunges his sword into the other's side, and all of them fall together; so lavish are generals often of the lives of their brave soldiers, to gratify their caprice. The place, from this occurrence, is called חלקת הצורים *chelkath hazzurim*, *The Field of Rocks*, from the brave men, hardy and firm as rocks, who fell there. *Note:* (1.) They buy honour very dear, who purchase it at the expence of their brother's blood. (2.) False notions of honour are among the accursed wiles that Satan employs for the destruction both of men's bodies and souls.

3. The general battle hereupon ensues, and Abner and his forces are routed. They who thus stir up strife, often muddle to their own hurt; and it is just in God, to punish the aggressor, and cover those with shame who seek to advance themselves upon their neighbour's ruin.

*Ver. 18. And Afahel was as light of foot as a wild roe*] Afahel was a gallant man, and one of David's twelve captains, remarkably valiant, but more remarkably swift; *light of foot as a roe in the field.* See 1 Chron. xii. 8. Hasselquist's *Travels*, p. 190. and Shaw's *Travels*, part ii. p. 414.

*Ver. 21. Turn thee aside to thy right hand, &c.*] The conduct of Abner appears heroic and amiable. He was very desirous of sparing Afahel, advising him not to engage with an old and experienced officer like himself, but to turn against one of the *young men*, who would be

an easy conquest, and whose armour he might carry off as his spoil. Afahel, however, was not to be persuaded; and therefore Abner *smote him under the fifth rib*, ver. 23. or *in the belly.* See 2 Sam. xx. 10. *With the hinder end of the spear* we render it, which does not seem to have been the case, as he rather smote him with the upper end of the spear; for the spear went through his belly and came out at his back: therefore Houbigant renders it, properly, *Abner smote him in the belly, turning his spear backwards:* as Abner was foremost, he turned his spear behind him, and so killed Afahel. See Scheuchzer on the place.

*Ver. 27. And Joab said, as God liveth, &c.*] "*Unless thou hadst spoken*, probably means, *unless thou hadst said, let the young men, &c.* ver. 14. i. e. unless thou hadst provoked me to battle; *surely all the people had ceased from following their brethren even from the morning:* "*unless thou hadst drawn on the combat, there had been neither slaughter nor pursuit.*" Cicero well observes of civil wars, that all things are miserable in them, but victory most miserable of all. Joab seems to have been very sensible of this, as he so readily withdrew his forces from the pursuit.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Abner's forces being routed, he himself is compelled to fly for his life, but is closely pursued by Joab's brother Afahel, whose swiftness was as the mountain roe: having singled him out, he sticks close to him, ambitious to make him his prisoner, and hoping thus to end the war, of which Abner was the chief support. It was nobly aimed, but he was an unequal match,

people stood still, and pursued after Israel no more, neither fought they any more.

29 ¶ And Abner and his men walked all that night through the plain, and passed over Jordan, and went through all Bithron, and they came to Mahanaim.

30 ¶ And Joab returned from following Abner: and when he had gathered all the people together, there lacked of David's servants nineteen men and Afahel.

31 But the servants of David had smitten of Benjamin, and of Abner's men, *so that* three hundred and threescore men died.

32 ¶ And they took up Afahel, and buried him in the sepulchre of his father, which *was in* Beth-lehem. And Joab and his men went all night, and they came to Hebron at break of day.

### C H A P. III.

*Children are born to David in Hebron. Abner comes over to David, and is killed by Joab. David laments him, and enjoins a public mourning.*

[Before Christ 1048.]

**N**OW there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David:

match, and therefore pursued only his own ruin. *Note;* They who aim too high, stand on a precipice which makes their fall the deeper. Abner saw the young man's ambition, and kindly admonished him of his danger, desiring him to seize some other prey, to which he might be equal; but, fired with ambition, he continues the pursuit, and perhaps imputes to timidity the friendly caution. Once more Abner begs him not to put him on the unwilling necessity of hurting him; for how should he then look his brother in the face, whom, though an enemy, he respected. The remonstrance was vain, Afahel persists, and rues his folly. Abner, as he advanced, gave him a mortal stroke, and he fell dead to the earth. *Note;* (1.) The qualifications that we are proud of commonly prove our ruin. (2.) When we are most eager in the pursuit of our worldly schemes, and seem ready to grasp the prize of happiness, death, like Abner's spear, stops our career, and lays our big-sworn hopes and honour in the dust.

2dly, The routed troops of Abner making a stand on the hill, being joined by some fresh forces from Benjamin,

1. Abner begs of Joab to stay the pursuit. He who made a sport of the sword in the morning, now dreads its devouring edge, and fain would have it return to the scabbard again; he pleads with Joab the near relation between the people; they were brethren; and if brother

but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker.

2 ¶ And unto David were sons born in Hebron: and his first-born was Amnon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess;

3 And his second, Chileab, of Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite; and the third, Absalom the son of Maacah, the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur.

4 And the fourth, Adonijah, the son of Haggith; and the fifth, Shephatiah, the son of Abital;

5 And the sixth, Ithream, by Eglah David's wife. These were born to David in Hebron.

6 ¶ And it came to pass, while there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, that Abner made himself strong for the house of Saul.

7 And Saul had a concubine, whose name *was* Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah: and *Ish-boseth* said to Abner, Wherefore hast thou gone in unto my father's concubine?

8 Then was Abner very wroth for the words of Ish-boseth, and said, *Am* I a dog's head, which against Judah do shew kindness this day unto the house of Saul thy father, to

imbrued his hands in brother's blood, whichever of them gained the day, the remembrance would be bitter: sound reasoning, but just a day too late; had he thus argued with himself before, the sword had not been drawn. But we can see that right when the case is our own, which pride and prejudice prevented us from discerning when our neighbour's interest only was at stake.

2. Joab nobly agrees to the request: no doubt, his orders were to be sparing of blood, and therefore he lays the blame of what had been shed on Abner's obstinacy, but for whose challenge they might have retired in the morning in peace. A retreat is now founded, and Abner suffered to depart to Mahanaim, while Joab returns to his king at Hebron. Afahel receives all military honours, and is buried in the sepulchre of his fathers, but the rest on the field of battle. Thus terminates the first rencounter in favour of David, as a prelude to his greater future successes. *Note;* (1.) It is vain to struggle against the divine appointment. (2.) Though the clods of the valley are made more honourable to some than others, and they are distinguished in the grave, yet when they come again from thence, nobility will meet no distinction, and only the good be great on a resurrection-day.

### C H A P. III.

*Vcr. 6—8. Abner made himself strong for the house of Saul* Immediately after the sacred historian has informed us that

his brethren, and to his friends, and have not delivered thee into the hand of David, that thou chargest me to-day with a fault concerning this woman?

9 So do God to Abner, and more also, except, as the LORD hath sworn to David, even so I do to him;

10 To translate the kingdom from the house of Saul, and to set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan even to Beer-sheba.

11 And he could not answer Abner a word again, because he feared him.

12 ¶ And Abner sent messengers to David on his behalf, saying, Whose is the land? saying also, Make thy league with me, and behold, my hand shall be with thee, to bring about all Israel unto thee.

13 ¶ And he said, Well; I will make a league with thee: but one thing I require of

thee, that is, Thou shalt not see my face, except thou first bring Michal, Saul's daughter, when thou comest to see my face.

14 And David sent messengers to Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, saying, Deliver me my wife Michal, which I espoused to me for an hundred foreskins of the Philistines.

15 And Ish-bosheth sent, and took her from her husband, even from Phaltiel the son of Laish.

16 And her husband went with her along weeping behind her to Bahurim. Then said Abner unto him, Go, return. And he returned.

17 ¶ And Abner had communication with the elders of Israel, saying, Ye sought for David in times past to be king over you.

18 Now then do it: for the LORD hath spoken of David, saying, By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel out

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that Abner made himself strong for the house of Saul, we have an account of Ish-bosheth's accusing him of a criminal intimacy with his father's concubine. Both these circumstances put together, excite a just suspicion that Abner meant, when he was strong enough to throw off the mask, to set up for himself, and lay Ish-bosheth aside; it being clearly enough to be collected from the course of this history, that an attempt upon the king's concubine was then understood as an attempt upon the crown. However this might be, Abner was enraged at the charge, and broke out into bitter resentment. *Am I a dog's head*, said he, *which*, &c.? that is, according to Bochart, "Do you pretend to treat me, as if I was a leader or manager of a pack of dogs, rather than a general of the armies of Israel?" Or, more simply, "Do you take me for a miscreant, for a dog, for one of the vilest of animals?" Conformably to which Majus reads, "Am I a dog, I, who am the chief of Judah,—the first person of my country, &c.?" See his *Observat. Sacr. tom. i. p. 174.*

*Ver. 9. So do God to Abner, and more also*] We have here a clear discovery of the character of Abner. Instigated by revenge, he not only threatens to abandon his master, but acknowledges the injustice of the cause in which he had engaged, and the divine appointment of David to the throne. "Such," says Pellican, "is the character of many courtiers. Irritated upon slight occasions to the greatest contradictions, they are less the subjects of kings than their masters."

*Ver. 13. One thing I require*] David did right in making this stipulation; for, whatever may be said of his other wives, he had certainly a claim to this, as she was his first wife, and a king's daughter: and there was something of true generosity in this, both to her and to Saul, in that he received her after she had been

another man's, remembering how once she loved him; knowing, probably, that she was without her consent separated from him, and to shew that he did not carry his resentment of Saul's cruel and unjust persecutions of him to any of his family; whereas many princes, for much less provocations of a wife's father, would have turned off their consorts, in revenge of them; and even put them to death for having been married to another. Chandler. Mr. Bayle considers it as cruelty in David to ravish Michal from a husband who loved her so well; see ver. 16.; that is, Mr. Bayle thinks it a great cruelty in David to disturb Phaltiel in an adultery which was agreeable to him, and to restore Michal to her only husband, the husband of her affection and her choice, for whom she had so much tenderness as to save his life at the hazard of her own. Phaltiel certainly is no proper object of pity; and yet his distress upon this occasion is one of the finest pictures of silent grief that any history has left us. Conscious that he had no right to complain, or molest Michal with his lamentations, he follows her at a distance, with a distress silent and self-confined, *going and weeping behind her*. However such fine paintings of nature pass unregarded in the sacred writings, I am satisfied that in Homer we should survey this with delight. The Jewish rabbies are unanimously of opinion, that Phaltiel was a strictly religious man, and had no nuptial commerce with Michal. *Note*; Polygamy had long received sanction from prevailing custom; but it is in itself evil, and no custom or authority can consecrate a bad practice. And could David, indeed, have foreseen how his children would have turned out, it would have abated his joy at their birth; for three of them at least lived to give him many a bitter pang. So often do we find our scourges in that wherein we promised ourselves the greatest comfort.

of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies.

19 And Abner also spake in the ears of Benjamin: and Abner went also to speak in the ears of David in Hebron all that seemed good to Israel, and that seemed good to the whole house of Benjamin.

20 So Abner came to David to Hebron, and twenty men with him. And David made Abner and the men that *were* with him a feast.

21 And Abner said unto David, I will arise and go, and will gather all Israel unto my lord the king, that they may make a league with thee, and that thou mayest reign over all that thine heart desireth. And David sent Abner away; and he went in peace.

22 ¶ And, behold, the servants of David and Joab came from *pursuing* a troop, and brought in a great spoil with them: (but Abner *was* not with David in Hebron; for he had sent him away, and he was gone in peace.)

23 When Joab and all the host that *was* with him were come, they told Joab, saying, Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he hath sent him away, and he is gone in peace.

24 Then Joab came to the king, and said, What hast thou done? behold, Abner came unto thee; why *is* it *that* thou hast sent him away, and he is quite gone?

25 Thou knowest Abner the son of Ner, that he came to deceive thee, and to know thy going out and thy coming in, and to know all that thou doest.

26 And when Joab was come out from

David, he sent messengers after Abner, which brought him again from the well of Sirah: but David knew *it* not.

27 And when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him quietly, and smote him there under the fifth *rib*, that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother.

28 ¶ And afterward when David heard *it*, he said, I and my kingdom *are* guiltless before the LORD for ever from the blood of Abner the son of Ner:

29 Let it rest on the head of Joab, and on all his father's house; and let there not fail from the house of Joab one that hath an issue, or that is a leper, or that leaneth on a staff, or that falleth on the sword, or that lacketh bread.

30 So Joab and Abishai his brother slew Abner, because he had slain their brother Asahel at Gibeon in the battle.

31 ¶ And David said to Joab, and to all the people that *were* with him, Rend your clothes, and gird you with sackcloth, and mourn before Abner. And king David *himself* followed the bier.

32 And they buried Abner in Hebron: And the king lifted up his voice, and wept at the grave of Abner; and all the people wept.

33 And the king lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dieth?

34 Thy hands *were* not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters: as a man falleth before wicked men, *so* fellest thou. And all the people wept again over him.

*Ver. 27. For the blood of Asahel his brother*] How empty and ill-founded are the purposes of vain man! Abner, who promises kingdoms, (ver. 10.) cannot secure to himself one single hour of life. David had *sent him away*, and he *departed in peace*; but being called back by *Joab*, he fell. Envy, doubtless, and jealousy of Abner's merit with David in gaining over the tribes to him, were principal motives to this base action, as well as revenge for the blood of Asahel.

*Ver. 29. Let it rest on the head of Joab*] Houbigant very properly renders this in the future tense, *but it shall, or will rest upon the head of Joab, and on all his father's house, and there will not fail*, &c. by which rendering every thing doubtful in the text is removed. The king commanded a general mourning to be made for Abner; and it is remarkable, that the command begins with *Joab*. David

wept over Abner, and buried him with all solemnity, himself attending the bier, which was not the custom of kings; and he added a lamentation (ver. 33.) which every eye will discern to be truly poetic in the most literal translation, though none have pretended to determine the measure.

As dies the criminal, shall *Abner* die?—  
Thy hands not bound,  
Nor to the fetters were thy feet applied:  
As is their fate that fall  
Before the faces of the sons of guilt,  
So art thou fallen.

Josephus says, that David interred Abner magnificently, and that he wrote funeral lamentations to his honour; i. e. as some suppose, he raised a magnificent tomb for him, and engraved upon it an epitaph in his praise.

35 And when all the people came to cause David to eat meat while it was yet day, David swore, saying, So do God to me, and more also, if I taste bread, or ought else, till the sun be down.

36 And all the people took notice of it, and it pleased them: as whatsoever the king did pleased all the people.

37 For all the people and all Israel understood that day that it was not of the king to slay Abner the son of Ner.

38 And the king said unto his servants, Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?

39 And I am this day weak, though anointed king; and these men the sons of Zeruah be too hard for me: the LORD shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness.

*Ver. 35. All the people came to cause David to eat*] When any one died among the Jews, it was customary with the friends of the family to resort to the house immediately after the funeral, and bring the best provisions they had along with them, to support and refresh their friends in affliction, to the utmost of their power. The presumption was, that the people in affliction forgot, or, it may be, neglected their proper refreshment, at a time when they most needed it; and therefore it was the business of friendship, and one of its kindest offices, to supply that care. Agreeably to this usage, all the people waited upon the king, to cause him to take meat, as the text expresses it, *whilst it was yet day*; but David absolutely refused to touch a morsel; and confirmed the refusal by an oath, that he would taste nothing till the sun went down. He was resolved to clear his innocence by all the tests of real sorrow; and, to satisfy the people that this was a just occasion of grief, he put them in mind of his dignity to whom he paid it: *ver. 38.*

*Ver. 36—39. It pleased them: as whatsoever, &c.*] David's behaviour towards Abner had its success. The sincerity of his sorrow was seen by all the people, and he was universally acquitted of all guilt in his death: nor was this all; he took care to let his servants know, and they doubtless took care to inform the people, that nothing but the weak and unsettled condition of his affairs, *ver. 39.* hindered him from executing just vengeance upon the author of it. In short, his whole behaviour on this occasion gave great satisfaction to his people, as did every part of his conduct. *Whatsoever the king did, pleased all the people.* Rare felicity of princes! or, shall I add? felicity peculiar to David! The fall of a man like Abner must inspire every mind with grave and serious reflections: *A great man fallen!* fallen by so unexpected and so surprising a treachery! in the very instant of returning to his duty; and in the eye of a

## C H A P. IV.

*Baanah and Rechab slay Ish-bosheth, and bring his head to David: David orders them to be slain, and the head of Ish-bosheth to be buried.*

[Before Christ 1048.]

AND when Saul's son heard that Abner was dead in Hebron, his hands were feeble, and all the Israelites were troubled.

2 ¶ And Saul's son had two men that were captains of bands: the name of the one was Baanah, and the name of the other Rechab, the sons of Rimmon a Beerothite, of the children of Benjamin: (for Beeroth also was reckoned to Benjamin:

3 And the Beerothites fled to Gittaim, and were sojourners there until this day.)

4 And Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son that was lame of his feet. He was five years old

great revolution, seemingly depending upon his fate!—True:—but then this great man sported with the lives of his brethren; and perhaps deliberately opposed himself to the dictates of his known duty to God, for a series of years. He spilled the first blood shed in this civil war. As to David, he evidently declined all occasion of combat with his adversaries: we hear of him no where out of Hebron during the whole course of this long civil war. This surely may be numbered among his felicities, never to have drawn his sword upon a subject in a contest of seven (and a war of five) years' continuance. It is true, Abner was now returned to his duty; but it is as true, that he returned to it now, as he departed from it before, upon a pique, and from motives of ambition, interest, and revenge. He well knew the purposes and declarations of God in relation to David, and yet he deliberately opposed himself to them. And it is but just in the appointments of Providence, (and nothing is more conspicuous in his government of the world,) not to permit the wicked to effect that good from wrong motives, which they once obstructed upon the same principles. The occasions of duty, once notoriously neglected, seldom return, at least to equal advantage. Let no man decline the good which is in his power; if he once does so, he is no more worthy to be the happy instrument in the hand of God of effecting it.

## C H A P. IV.

*Ver. 1. And all the Israelites were troubled*] That is, all those who were united to the interest of Ish-bosheth.

*Ver. 2, 3. (For Beeroth also was reckoned to Benjamin)* Beeroth was a city formerly belonging to the Gibeonites, within the lot of Benjamin, but most certainly not inhabited by them, when the Beerothites fled to Gittaim, after the defeat of Gilboa; for Gittaim was a Benjaminite city, and had those Beerothites been Gibeonites, they would have fled to any region of the earth, rather than to the



when the tidings came of Saul and Jonathan out of Jezreel, and his nurse took him up, and fled: and it came to pass, as she made haste to flee, that he fell, and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth.

5 And the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, went, and came about the heat of the day to the house of Ish-bosheth, who lay on a bed at noon.

6 And they came thither into the midst of the house, as though they would have fetched wheat; and they smote him under the fifth rib: and Rechab and Baanah his brother escaped.

7 For when they came into the house, he lay on his bed in his bed-chamber, and they smote him, and slew him, and beheaded him, and took his head, and gat them away through the plain all night.

8 And they brought the head of Ish-bosheth unto David to Hebron, and said to the king, Behold the head of Ish-bosheth the son of Saul thine enemy, which sought thy life; and the LORD hath avenged my lord the king this day of Saul, and of his seed.

9 ¶ And David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, and said unto them, As the LORD liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity,

10 When one told me, saying, Behold, Saul is dead, thinking to have brought good tidings, I took hold of him, and slew him in Ziklag, who thought that I would have given him a reward for his tidings:

11 How much more, when wicked men have slain a righteous person in his own house upon his bed? Shall I not therefore now re-

the protection of the tribe of Benjamin, the tribe of Saul, the mortal enemy to their race. What then are we to infer from the flight of the Beerothites to a Benjamite city at that time, but that they themselves were Benjamites? And how could this city be then inhabited by Benjamites, otherwise than by the expulsion and eradication of the Gibeonites, when Saul destroyed them? And what reason was there for Saul's destroying them, but to give their possessions to his friends, the Benjamites? And certainly there can be no doubt upon the point, when we find them in fact possessed of that city. Here then the divine justice is very remarkable. Saul cut off the Gibeonites, to make way for his Benjamites; and two of these very Benjamites, the sons of a Benjamite of Beeroth, cut off his posterity, the chief stay and hope of his house; and did this against all the dictates of duty, gratitude, and natural affection. How adorable and how dreadful are the divine retributions of vengeance!

*Ver. 4. Jonathan—had a son that was lame*] This account of Mephibosheth is properly inserted here; for, as the murderers of Ish-bosheth wished to destroy the whole house of Saul, in order to ingratiate themselves with David, the flight of Mephibosheth is designedly mentioned to inform the reader, that he was not put to death with Ish-bosheth, because, after the slaughter of Saul and Jonathan, he was carried away, and did not dwell in the house with Ish-bosheth.

*Ver. 6, 7. They came thither into the midst of the house*] Houbigant, following the version of the LXX, translates the whole thus: *the keeper of the house, while he was cleaning wheat in the midst of it, slept in the sun; therefore Rechab and Baanah his brother entered the house secretly, and whilst Ish-bosheth slept upon his bed, in an inner chamber, they smote him till he died, and they took his head, which they had cut off, and travelled all the night by the way of the desert, &c.*

REFLECTIONS.—Abner, the stay of Saul's family, being

dead, Ish-bosheth's affairs sunk the faster; and no other of Saul's house remained who could pretend to the crown, but a child of Jonathan's who was lamed by a fall; and thus was, both by his age and misfortune, unfit to retrieve their ruined circumstances. *Note;* (1.) The perils of tender infancy are great; to have escaped them unhurt, is a singular mercy. (2.) When God will accomplish his designs, every obstacle in the way will be removed.

In this desperate situation of Ish-bosheth, instead of endeavouring to support or comfort him,

1. Two of his servants conspire his death. Pretending business in some of the magazines, which lay near the king's apartments, they break into his chamber, and murder him. *Note;* (1.) The higher a man's station, the more dangerous it is. (2.) Ere we close our eyes, let us ever think of our souls, as those who know not whether they shall ever awake again. (3.) A sinking cause is oftener hastened to ruin by the treachery of pretended friends, than the attacks of avowed enemies.

2. The murderers fly, and take the head of Ish-bosheth, as thinking it the most acceptable present they can bring to David; and, pretending zeal not only for his service, but for avenging God's quarrel against the house of Saul, they would cloak their treachery and murder under the pretext of religion. *Note;* Religion has often been made a cloak for ambition; but God will strip the hypocrite, and cover him with confusion.

*Ver. 11. How much more when wicked men*] It was a fine reflection which fell from Darius upon finding that Bessus was plotting against him: he told the traitor, that he was as well satisfied of Alexander's justice, as he was of his courage; that they were mistaken who hoped he would reward treachery; that, on the contrary, no man was a more severe avenger of violated faith. It was upon this principle that Cæsar put Pompey's murderers to death, and the Romans sent back the Faliscian school-master under

quire his blood of your hand, and take you away from the earth?

12 And David commanded his young men, and they slew them, and cut off their hands and their feet, and hanged *them* up over the pool in Hebron. But they took the head of Ish-bosheth, and buried *it* in the sepulchre of Abner in Hebron.

C H A P. V.

*David is anointed king of all Israel. He takes the strong-hold of Zion from the Jebusites, builds himself a house, and twice overcomes the Philistines.*

[Before Christ 1048.]

**T**HEN came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake, saying, Behold, we *are* thy bone and thy flesh.

2 Also in time past, when Saul was king over us, thou wast he that leddest out and

broughtest in Israel: and the LORD said to thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain over Israel.

3 So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; and king David made a league with them in Hebron before the LORD: and they anointed David king over Israel.

4 ¶ David *was* thirty years old when he began to reign, *and* he reigned forty years.

5 In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months: and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years over all Israel and Judah.

6 ¶ And the king and his men went to Jerusalem unto the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land: which spake unto David, saying, Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither: thinking, David cannot come in hither.

under the lashes of his own scholars. There is no one villany which the human soul so naturally, so instinctively abhors, as treachery, because it is perhaps the only villany from which no man living is secure; and for this reason every man must take pleasure in the punishment of it. Thus ended the dominion of the house of Saul. *Note*, Sooner or later every enemy must fall before the Son of David, and his cause prove triumphant over all the powers of earth and hell.

C H A P. V.

*Ver. 2. Thou shalt feed my people*] Bishop Patrick observes, that this is the first time we meet with any ruler or governor of a people characterised under the idea of a shepherd, though it was afterwards very familiar both with the Greeks and Romans; and I cannot but think it remarkable, that the first man so characterised, was at first, in fact, a shepherd: and when we find him, after his advancement to the throne, still characterised by God himself under the same idea; what can be a clearer inference, than that God's raising him to be a king was but exalting him to a nobler office of the same nature with his first? How fine a document is this to princes, that they are not, in the intention of Providence, the tyrants, but the guardians of their people; that their business is the preservation and well-being of the flock, from the duty they owe to the great Lord and owner of both! And how fully is this document confirmed to us, when we find bad princes set forth in the prophetic style, under the character of roaring lions, hungry bears, and devouring wolves! It was a noble maxim of Cyrus, that every man, aspiring to the government of others, should take care to be a better man than those whom he ruled.

*Ver. 6. The king and his men went to Jerusalem*] David was of an enterprising genius, which he always employed

for the honour and interest of his country. His siege of Jerusalem was founded in justice, and the taking it was necessary to the safety of his government and people. It was situated in the middle of the tribe of Benjamin, and taken by the Hebrews soon after Joshua's death; not indeed the whole of it, but the lower city: for the Jebusites kept possession of the fortrefs of Zion, the Hebrews and Jebusites dwelling together in the other part of the city after it was rebuilt. The Hebrews dwelt in it in the reign of Saul; for David took the head of the Philistine, and brought it to Jerusalem, 1 Sam. xvii. 54. But the whole city, as well as the fort, was now in the hands of the Jebusites; for, when David demanded the restitution of the city, the Jebusites said, *Thou shalt not come in hither*. Josephus also affirms, that they were in possession both of the city and the fortrefs. How it came into the possession of the Jebusites, is not said: probably, they seized it during the war between Saul and the Philistines, or the contest between David and Ish-bosheth, which lasted for above seven years. David, therefore, had a right to recover it, as the ancient possession and property of his people; and would have been an impolitic, negligent prince, had he suffered so strong a fortrefs, in the midst of his dominions, to have remained in the hands of his enemies. And what fixed David the more in his resolution to become master of it, was the insult offered him by the Jebusites in the town and fortrefs, upon the supposition that it was impregnable. See Joseph. Antiq. l. vii. c. iii. sect. 1.

*Except thou take away the blind, &c.*] Some imagine, that by the *blind* are to be understood the Jebusite deities, called the *blind* and *lame* by way of derision. Yet it is not likely that the Jebusites should revile their own deities; and we must remember, that these deities are supposed to be here called *blind* and *lame* by the Jebusites themselves. But, admitting them to be idol deities, what meaning can there be in the Jebusites telling David, he should not come into the

7 Nevertheless David took the strong hold of Zion; the same is the city of David.

8 And David said on that day, Whosoever

getteth up to the gutter, and smitteth the Jebusites, and the lame and the blind, *that are* hated of David's soul, *he shall be chief and cap-*

the city unless he took away the deities upon the walls? If he could scale the walls, so as to reach these guardian deities, he need not ask leave of the Jebusites to enter the citadel. And what can be the meaning of the latter end of ver. 8. *wherefore they said, &c.*? For, *who* said? Did the Jebusites say their own deities should not come into the house,—should not come where they were; or should not come into the *house of the Lord*? Or could these deities say that David and his men should not come into the house? The absurdity of such a speech attributed to these idols, whose known character is, that *they have mouths, and speak not*, needs no illustration. But though the deities could not enounce these words, some imagine the Jebusites might; that it is possible the *blind and the lame* may signify the Jebusites, and that the Jebusites in general are called *blind and lame*, for putting their trust in *blind and lame idols*. This seems too refined a sense; and the *blind and lame* means the same both in the 6th and 8th verses. It is farther observed, that the words, ver. 8. *Whosoever smiteth the Jebusites, and the lame and the blind*, shew, that they are spoken of as different from the Jebusites. Perhaps, then, they were so; perhaps they were, in fact, a few poor creatures who laboured under the infirmities of *blindness and lameness*, and therefore were different from the general body of the Jebusites. But we may ask, How we can rationally account for that bitterness which David expresses against these blind and lame; and how it was possible for a man of David's humanity to detest men for mere unblameable, and, indeed, pitiable infirmities? The Jebusites looked upon David's attempt as vain, and fit to be treated with insolence and raillery. Full of this fond notion, they placed the blind and lame upon the walls, and told David he should not come in thither, for the blind and the lame were sufficient to keep him off; which they should effect only by their shouting, *David shall not come hither,—No! David shall not come hither.* That the *blind and the lame* were contemptuously placed upon the walls by the Jebusites, as before described, we are assured by the concurrent testimony of Josephus. Now, that these blind and lame, who appear to have been placed upon the walls, were to insult David in the manner before mentioned, seems evident, from the impossibility of otherwise accounting for David's indignation against these naturally pitiable people. The Hebrew particles *כי אם* *ki im*, rendered *nevertheless*, should be rendered *for*, as in Prov. xxiii. 18. The Hebrew verb *הסיר* *hesirka*, translated *thou take away*, should be translated *shall keep thee off*: the LXX have rendered it plural. Should it be objected, that the word is, in the original, in the preter tense, still it may be asserted, that it should be rendered as if it were in the future; it being agreeable to the genius of the Hebrew language, frequently to speak of events yet future, as having actually happened, when the speaker would strongly express the certainty of such events. It is very remarkable, that the sense affixed to this passage is confirmed by Josephus; and it is further remarkable, that the same sense is given to these words in

the English Bible of Coverdale, printed in 1535, where they are rendered, *Thou shalt not come hither, but the blynde and lame shall dryve the awaie.* That it was improperly rendered before that edition, appears from Wickliffe's Manuscript version of 1383, where we read, *Thou shalt not entre bidur; no, but thou do awaie blynd men and lame, &c.* According to these emendations, this verse will be, "And the inhabitants of Jebus said, Thou shalt not come hither; for the blind and the lame shall *keep thee off*, by saying, David shall not come in hither." See Kennicott's Dissert. vol. i. p. 32, &c.

Ver. 8. *Whosoever, &c.*] Dr Kennicott observes, that the Hebrew word *צנור* *zinnor*, gutter, occurs but once more in the Bible, and does not seem commonly understood in this place. The English version calls it a gutter; the Vulgate, pipes; Vatablus, channels; Junius and Tremellius, a common sewer; Poole, a pipe for water; and Bochart, a bed or channel of a river. But most interpreters agree in making the words signify something hollow, and in applying it to water; which might well be applied to a *subterraneous passage*, or great hollow, through which men could pass and repass for water. That this *zinnor*, in the text, was such an under-ground passage, might be strongly presumed from the text itself; but it is proved to have been so by Josephus. For, speaking of this very transaction, he says, "The citadel being as yet in possession of the enemy, the king promised that he would make any one general of all his forces who should ascend into the citadel through the *subterraneous cavities.*" Here, then, we have the *subterraneous cavities* most remarkably answering to *zinnor*, and putting this interpretation upon a very solid footing. I shall only add upon this point, that the true sense of the obscure word *צנור* *zinnor* in this place, remarkably occurs in the commentary of Hugo de Vienna; where it is explained by "*subterraneous passages* through which there was a communication to the town." That the preposition *ב* *beth*, prefixed in the Hebrew to *zinnor*, sometimes signifies *through*, is evident from Noldius; and that it signifies so in this place, is certain from the nature of the context, and the testimony of Josephus. See Antiq. lib. vii. cap. 3. Thus far Dr. Kennicott; upon which Dr. Chandler has the following remarks: "I am perfectly of his mind, that the blind and the lame were really such. But when David attacked the fort, he gave orders, that, 'whoever should smite the Jebusites, *וינע* *veiggag*, let him smite also *בצנור* *bezinnor*, εν παραξ; *φιδ.* with the sword, as the LXX render it, *both the lame and the blind.*' And I think some instrument or weapon seems plainly to be intended by the very construction. And it may be observed, that and this word in the Arabic dialect signifies *the handle of a shield*, or a *shield itself*; and accordingly the Arabic and Syriac render the word in this very place by a *shield*; and this gives a good sense: 'Let him also strike with a *shield* both the blind and the lame.' We may observe also, that the word is rendered by the Chaldee, a *strong hold*; by Kimchi, the *fortress*, or *strong place*; and if we

" under-

tain. Wherefore they said, The blind and the lame shall not come into the house.

9 So David dwelt in the fort, and called it the city of David. And David built round about from Millo and inward.

10 And David went on, and grew great,

and the LORD God of hosts was with him.

11 ¶ And Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar-trees, and carpenters, and masons: and they built David an house.

12 And David perceived that the LORD had

“ understand the word in this sense, the version will be, “ ‘Whoever smites the Jebusites, let him also strike at, or “ in, the fortrefs, the lame and the blind.’ If we understand by בנין *bezinnor*, a canal, an aqueduct, water-pipe, or channel, we may then render the words, ‘Whoever smites the Jebusites, let him also strike into the “ channel or break, the blind and the lame.’ That the “ future tense in the Hebrew is used for the imperative mood, is too well known to need any proof. Dr. Kennicott’s conjecture, who renders the word by *subterraneous passage*, is certainly very ingenious, but I want authority “ for it.” See Rev. p. 176. These lame and blind are said to be hated of David’s soul. But certainly, as Houbigant well observes, they should rather be rendered, conformably to the Hebrew, as well as the LXX, *who hate David’s soul*. The words, *he shall be chief and captain*, are not in the Hebrew. David’s proposal to the army is begun, and a circumstance or two mentioned; but the reward proposed, and the person rewarded, are totally omitted. The words in the coinciding chapter of Chronicles, regularly fill up this omission; and we may add, that St. Jerome expressly asserts, that they are to be understood. Houbigant, however, does not see any such necessity. He translates the verse thus: *But on the same day David gave this command, Whoever is about to kill a Jebusite, let him rush with a dagger upon the lame and the blind, who hate the soul of David: therefore came this proverb, the blind and the lame shall not enter the house.* He renders the word *zenur*, a dagger, with the LXX, and herein agrees with Dr. Chandler; and he thinks that David calls the Jebusites the lame and the blind in contempt. Pfeiffer, in his *Dubia Vexata*, gives us the following interpretation of the text, ver. 6. “ *And the king and his men went to Jerusalem; (undertook an expedition against the Jebusites, who possessed that land) but they said to David, Thou shalt not come in hither, unless thou shalt first remove these lame and these blind (pointed at, as it were, with the finger, by way of reproach; as much as to say, it is impossible for David to come in hither; for, as he cannot remove the blind and the lame from their station, we may be secure for the rest).* Ver. 7. *But David took the fortrefs of Zion, which otherwise is called the city of David.* Ver. 8. *And David said on that day, (having heard the taunt of the Jebusites,) Whoever shall smite the Jebusites, and shall reach to the canals of the city, and at the same time shall smite those lame and blind, (placed there by way of reproach,) hateful to David, because of that reproach; he shall be chief: (as it is supplied, 1 Chron. xi. 6.) Therefore they say (proverbially) the blind and the lame must not enter this house, the proverb being taken from those blind and lame who were besieged and were afterwards killed, never to return to their home.” Dr. Delaney is of opinion, that the 115th*

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Psalms was written by David as a triumphal song of thanksgiving for this victory.

Ver. 9. *David built round about from Millo*] David, having possessed himself of the castle of Zion, joined the castle to the town beneath it, by building houses from one to the other, and made thereby one regular city. *Millo* is a word that has greatly perplexed the commentators: but it seems to have been the name of the castle of Zion, or the fortrefs of the city of David. The LXX generally render it, as in the text, by *αρχα*, a citadel. And in 2 Chron. xxxii. 5. we read, *he fortified Millo in the city of David*; or rather, *he fortified the castle or citadel of the city of David.* Thus Dr. Lightfoot tells us, *Millo* was a part of Zion, vol. ii. p. 25. and Josephus uses the word *αρχα*, for *Millo*, when he speaks of this very circumstance. Antiq. lib. vii. cap. iii. What we render *and inward*, the LXX render *and his house*. See 1 Chron. xi. 8. 2 Kings, xii. 20. According to Dr. Kennicott, this passage should be translated, *and David built a circuit from Millo, and round to the house; i. e. even to the house of the citadel, or to Millo, from which the works were first begun.* What puts this interpretation (says he) out of all doubt, is the use of this word at the end of the preceding verse; and as it there most certainly means *the house of Millo*, or the citadel, from the walls of which the blind and lame shouted, *David shall not come into this house*; so it must mean the same house of Millo here. See Kenn. diff. i. p. 50.

Ver. 11. *Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers*] The accounts left us of this king are but short; it is evident, however, that he was a magnificent and generous prince, and a believer in the true God, as appears from the form of his congratulation to Solomon upon his accession to the throne, 1 Kings, v. 7. And this character well fitted him to enter into, and to cultivate an alliance with David, as he did, with uncommon friendship and affection, as long as David lived, and continued it to his son for his sake: See Josephus against Appion, book i.

REFLECTIONS.—1. David, with thankfulness, perceived the establishment of his kingdom, every competitor removed, himself beloved by his subjects, courted by his neighbours, and feared by his enemies; and this he ascribes to God’s love to his people, whom he regards, not as given to be his slaves, but as intrusted with him to be made happy under his wise and prudent administration. Happy the nation that has such a king!

2. Many wives and concubines increased his family, and seemed to strengthen his kingdom, though it is to be feared they hurt his heart. Having once suffered his eye to wander on various objects, his neighbour’s wife was not safe at last: so dangerous is the first step from the path of duty; for we know not then where we shall stop.

P p

Ver.

established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for his people Israel's sake.

13 ¶ And David took *him* more concubines and wives out of Jerusalem, after he was come from Hebron: and there were yet sons and daughters born to David.

14 And these *be* the names of those that were born unto him in Jerusalem; Shammuah, and Shobab, and Nathan, and Solomon,

15 Ibhar also, and Elishua, and Nepheg, and Japhia,

16 And Elishama, and Eliada, and Eliphalet.

17 ¶ But when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines came up to seek David; and David heard of *it*, and went down to the hold.

18 The Philistines also came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim.

19 And David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up to the Philistines? wilt thou

deliver them into mine hand? And the LORD said unto David, Go up: for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand.

20 And David came to Baal-perazim, and David smote them there, and said, The LORD hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me, as the breach of waters. Therefore he called the name of that place Baal-perazim.

21 And there they left their images, and David and his men burned them.

22 ¶ And the Philistines came up yet again, and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim.

23 And when David enquired of the LORD, he said, Thou shalt not go up; *but* fetch a compass behind them, and come upon them over-against the mulberry-trees.

24 And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry-trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself: for then shall the LORD go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines.

*Ver. 20. He called the name of that place Baal-perazim]* This was a place in the valley of Rephaim, where the Philistines were encamped: David attacked and dispersed them, and from this circumstance gave the place the name of *Baal-perazim*, the reason of which is assigned as usual in the foregoing part of the verse; *the Lord hath broken forth*; David thus attributing the victory he had gained to the power of the Lord. The images which we are told the Philistines left in the field, ver. 21. were the images of their gods, which, according to the custom of those times, they brought with them to the battle. See the note on chap. x. 11.

*Ver. 24. The sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry-trees]* "This may be rendered, among the first of the *mulberry-trees*; i. e. among the trees which were the first in order, and by which they entered into the grove; so that God gives David for a sign, the sound of many men's feet, walking on the ground amidst the trees, though nobody should be seen among those trees, which were before the eyes of all David's army." Houb. The Hebrew might be rendered, *when thou hearest the sound of a moving in the tops*, &c. Which implies nothing more than a rushing and extraordinary sound among the trees, which was to be the signal for David's attack.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The Philistines, alarmed at David's success, the union of the kingdoms under him, and the friendship of Hiram, thought it high time to fall upon him before he was thoroughly settled in his throne; lest afterwards they should attempt it too late. They invade Israel with a numerous army, and pitch near Jerusalem, in

the valley of Rephaim. David is ready to receive them, and goes down to the hold, some fortrefs which was below Jerusalem, where probably was the general rendezvous of his army. Before he goes forth, however, he inquires of God, and is sent with assurance of success. Confidently, therefore, he attacks and defeats their army, seizes their gods, whom they had brought into the field as their protectors, and, according to the Divine command, cast them into the fire. From this signal victory, the place is called Baal-perazim; God having broken forth as a resistless torrent upon his enemies, and thrown them down slain before him. *Note*; (1.) Though the enemies of God's people think to crush them with their numerous forces, they assemble only to their own confusion. (2.) When we inquire of God upon our knees, we may expect an answer of peace, and go forth with confidence to oppose our spiritual enemies, assured that God will bruise sin and Satan shortly under our feet. (3.) They who put their trust in creature-supports, will find them as vain as the images of the Philistines.

2dly, One repulse abates not their courage, but rather kindles their desire of revenge. They dare a second time renew their invasions, and encamp on the very spot where they had been before routed: so foolishly and wilfully do sinners rush on their own destruction. David again has recourse to God for direction; and, as before he was ordered to march and meet them with the drawn sword, now he must fetch a compass behind them, and God will fight for him; so that he shall have nothing to do, but pursue their flying hosts. A rushing noise among the trees is to be the signal for him to fall on; he obeys, and the Philistines are smitten and pursued to their borders,

25 And David did so, as the LORD had commanded him; and smote the Philistines from Geba until thou come to Gazer.

C H A P. VI.

*While the ark is carried from the house of Abinadab towards Zion, Uzzah toucheth it, and dies. The ark is brought to the house of Obed-edom; and afterwards into the new city. David danceth before the ark, and is derided by his wife Michal.*

[Before Christ 1044.]

**A** G A I N, David gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand,  
2 And David arose, and went with all the people that were with him from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the LORD of hosts that dwelleth between the cherubims.

3 And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abi-

nadab that was in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drave the new cart.

4 And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab which was at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark.

5 And David and all the house of Israel played before the LORD on all manner of instruments made of fir-wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals.

6 ¶ And when they came to Nachon's threshing-floor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it.

7 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God.

as far as Gazer. *Note;* (1.) When we wait God's motions, our warfare must prosper. (2.) The repeated efforts of corruption and temptation in the faithful soul, though grievous for the present, weaken the root of sin, lead to an entire conquest, and strengthen the graces in the hearts of believers. (3.) On a sound like a rushing mighty wind, the Holy Ghost descended upon the Apostles, and then Satan's kingdom fell before the sword of the Spirit, the word of God in their mouths.

C H A P. VI.

*Ver. 1. Again David gathered together all the chosen men, &c.] Afterwards David levied yet thirty thousand men, the chosen strength of Israel; i. e. thirty thousand more than he had before his late victory over the Philistines. Houb.*

*Ver. 2. From Baale of Judah] Baale is the same city which in Josh. xv. 60. is called Kirjath-baal, or Kirjath-jearim. See 1 Chron. xiii. 6.*

*Ver. 5. On all manner of instruments made of fir-wood] In the Hebrew, on all fir-wood. In the parallel place, 1 Chron. xiii. 8. it is, with all their might, and with singing, which is in all respects the preferable reading: for the word אֲצֵי atzei, translated fir-wood, is not used for musical instruments; and besides, it is not probable that all the musical instruments were made of the same species of wood, whether fir, or cypress as some translate.*

**REFLECTIONS.**—Long had the ark lain neglected in the house of Abinadab: we find but once mention made of consulting God before it during all Saul's reign; but David knew the value of that sacred treasure, and therefore prepared to remove it to a place more suited to its reception.

1. He speaks highly of the ark, from its relation to God, whose presence made it glorious, and who was

pleased to dwell between the cherubims. *Note;* (1.) It is God's presence in all ordinances that makes them glorious. (2.) They who have high thoughts of God, will reverence all his holy institutions.

2. He makes great preparations to attend it with a magnificent retinue, in solemn pomp and holy joy. Thirty thousand men, the flower of his army, to guard it; the prime nobility, elders, and great men, out of all the tribes, and instruments of music of all kinds, himself leading the sacred band; and accounting himself honoured, though a king, in this employment of praise and humble attendance before the God of Israel. *Note;* (1.) The greatest kings need not think it any disparagement to their dignity, to join with the meanest Israelite before that God who regardeth not the persons of the rich more than of the poor. (2.) Sacred psalmody always revives, whenever God revives a spirit of religion.

*Ver. 6. When they came to Nachon's threshing-floor] The word נַחֲוֹן Nachon is used by way of anticipation, in allusion to the fate of Uzzah; for נָכַח nakach, signifies to smite, and נַחֲוֹן nachon, the act of smiting. In 1 Chron. xiii. 9. it is called the threshing-floor of Chidon, which conveys the same idea; for כִּיד kid, signifies destruction. See Houbigant's note on the verse.*

*The oxen shook it] The oxen stuck in the mire. Bochart. tom. 1. 13.*

*Ver. 7. God smote him there for his error, &c.] "The ark," says Dr. Chandler, "ought not to have been drawn by oxen, but carried by the Levites on their shoulders, as we find it afterwards, ver. 13. Beside this, the Levites were prohibited from touching the ark, under the express penalty of death, Numb. iv. 15—20. As this was the first instance that we have of violating this prohibition, the penalty of death was incurred, and therefore*

8 And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place Perez-uzzah to this day.

9 And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said, How shall the ark of the LORD come to me?

10 So David would not remove the ark of the LORD unto him into the city of David: but David carried it aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite.

11 And the ark of the LORD continued in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months: and the LORD blessed Obed-edom, and all his household.

12 ¶ And 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. So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom into the city of David with gladness.

13 And it was so, that when they that bare the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings.

14 And David danced before the LORD

with all *his* might; and David *was* girded with a linen ephod.

15 So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.

16 And as the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal Saul's daughter looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart.

17 And 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: and David offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings before the LORD.

18 And as soon as David had made an end of offering burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts.

19 And he dealt among all the people, *even* among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as men, to every one a cake of bread, and a good piece of *flesh*, and a flagon of *wine*. So all the people departed every one to his house.

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“ therefore justly inflicted by him who threatened it, as a warning to others to preserve a due reverence for the institution; it also shews, that the prohibition was divine: and, as David himself and the whole house of Israel were present at this solemnity, the nature of the death, and the reason why it was inflicted, could not be concealed.”

*Ver. 8. And David was displeased*] Rather *was afflicted; was much distressed.*

REFLECTIONS.—1. Every stroke upon others for their sin, should be a warning to us to repent of our own. 2. If the breach between the broken law of a holy God, and a sinful soul, be not healed by the Lord Jesus Christ, an everlasting monument will remain of God's inexorable justice upon the sinner. 3. Obed-edom was no loser by his blessed visitant. He welcomed the ark to his house, notwithstanding the terrible judgments which had overtaken those who irreverently treated it. He knew that if he avoided their sin, he need not fear their punishment; and God rewarded him in a remarkable blessing on himself and household; so that in the three months that the ark continued with him, every thing prospered. *Note.* (1.) None ever lost by fidelity to God. Godliness hath the promise of the life which now is, as well as of that which is to come. (2.) It is a blessing to dwell under a good man's roof, for all who are about him are the better for him. (3.) All our prosperity must be ascribed

to God; and when he adds to all a thankful heart, then we are blessed indeed!

*Ver. 14. David danced before the Lord*] David's behaviour in this particular was no disparagement to his regal dignity. His dancing, that is, his moving in certain solemn measures, suited to music of the same character and tendency, was an exercise fully justifiable in him. Piety taught David, that all men are upon a level in the solemnities of religion. See Delaney; where the reader will find a dissertation upon dancing, wherein David's dancing before the ark is examined, fully vindicated, and shewn to be very different from that kind of dancing, which is too much practised in these days.

*Ver. 19. Flagon of wine*] *Draught of wine.* Hiller. 332.

REFLECTIONS.—The blessing of the ark on Obed-edom and his house soon reached the ears of David; and now his fears are removed, and his desires return to have the ark with him at Jerusalem. Hereupon once more he attempts to remove it, and through the Divine blessing succeeds. *Note.* Though we are sore let and hindered in our race, we must not despair; success shall at last crown our labours.

1. David saw and rectified his former mistake: the Levites, according to Divine prescription, are appointed to carry the ark; and when they had gone six paces, David caused oxen and fatlings to be offered as an atonement for former errors, and in thankfulness for present help.

*Note.*

20 ¶ Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, How glorious was the king of Israel to-day, who uncovered himself to-day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself!

21 And David said unto Michal, *It was*

before the LORD, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel: therefore will I play before the LORD.

22 And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight: and of the maid-servants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honour.

*Note:* (1.) When God by his correction has led us to repentance, we need not doubt that we shall inherit a blessing. (2.) The blood of the one great Sacrifice must be regarded in all our undertakings, as the sole foundation for our dependance on God's favour and regard.

2. David in all humility, with every demonstration of joy, preceded the ark. He laid his royal robes aside, and, in an ephod like that which the ministers of the sanctuary wore, with exultation leaped and praised God with all his might: his heart was engaged in the blessed service, and his body spoke the transport of his soul.

3. The people joined their king in these lively expressions of joy: with shouts of triumph, and the trumpet's cheerful voice, they brought up the ark to the tabernacle. David had provided for it, according to the former usage; and there before it David offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, expressive of his gratitude and thankfulness for the success he had met with.

4. David dismissed the people. He blessed them in the name of God; prayed for them and over them, that they might thus ever delight in God and his ways; and gave each of them a cake, and meat (probably part of the sacrifices, which were always eaten as a sacred feast), and wine. And thus the people returned to their houses, highly satisfied. *Note:* (1.) All God's people are called to feast on the one great Sacrifice, and to eat that bread, and drink of that cup, which the Saviour, the Son of David, has provided for us. (2.) A generous and munificent spirit naturally engages our regard. (3.) When we have the blessing of the King of kings upon us, then may we well depart in peace.

*Ver. 20. Who uncovered himself to-day]* The original word נגלה *niglah*, which we render *uncovering himself*, does not mean exposing any part of the body to view, and is, I believe, never used in that sense, without some other word to determine it to that meaning. And as, in the parallel place, 1 Chron. xv. 29. this circumstance is not at all taken notice of, but only that when she saw David dancing and leaping (or, as the word should be rendered, *playing on some musical instrument*, as it is used ver. 5.), *she despised him*; the meaning can be nothing more than that, by dancing before the ark without his royal habit, (exchanged for the *linen ephod*), and playing on his harp, or some musical instrument like the rest of the people; he appeared, i. e. exposed himself in her eyes, and in the eyes of the maid-servants of his servants, to the very meanest of the beholders, just as one of the vain fellows, openly uncovereth, or *exposeth himself*. The haughty woman,

in the contempt of her heart, calls the Levites, the bearers of the ark, the fingers and players on the instruments, רְקִים *rekim*, empty, low, worthless people; and likens David to them, because he discovered himself as they discovered themselves; i. e. appeared in the same habit, and played and danced just as they did. Michal, perhaps, had learnt infidel notions during her cohabitation with Phaltiel, and, seeing the procession from her window, thought the behaviour of David inconsistent with the dignity of the king of Israel. The word *shamelessly* is not in the original, but injudiciously inserted by our translators, who have themselves put a better word in the margin, namely, *openly*. The Hebrew words are literally, *by uncovering, uncovereth*; and the passage literally runs thus: *How glorious was the king of Israel to-day, who openly appeared to-day, in the eyes of the hand-maids of his servants, according to the open appearance in which one of the vain fellows openly appeareth!*

*Ver. 21. It was before the Lord]* I uncovered myself before the Lord; Houb. who renders the last clause of the verse, *therefore have I rejoiced before the Lord*. The Hebrew word, שִׁחֲקִי *sichakti*, according to Chandler, refers to David's playing like the rest of the people on some musical instrument, as it is expressly said in the 5th verse, that David and all the house of Israel played [משחקים *mesachekim*] before the Lord.

*Ver. 22. I will yet be more vile—and—base]* The words נקלתי *nekalloti*, and שפיל *shapal*, which we render *vile* and *base*, by no means convey the ideas which those English words convey. The first is twice rendered in our version by *despised*; Gen. xvi. 4, 5. The almost constant sense of the latter is *humble*; and the passage before us should be rendered, *And I will be more despicable than this, and humble in mine own eyes*. David's reply is severe, but just, and suited to the nature of Michal's reproach: "Have I descended beneath the dignity of my character, as king of Israel, by divesting myself of my royal robes, and, by dancing, acted like one of the vain people? "It was before the Lord, who chose me before thy father, &c. "And I will play (*viz.* on my musical instruments) before the Lord. And if this be to make myself cheap or contemptible, I will be more so; and whatever may be my condition as a king, I will always be humble in the judgment I form of myself: and as for those maid-servants, of whom thou speakest, I shall be honoured amongst them: the meanest of the people will respect me more for my popularity, when they see me condescend to share in their sacred mirth." And in this he acted as a wife and politic, as well as a religious prince. See Leland's Script. Vind. vol. i. p. 289.



23 Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death.

### C H A P. VII.

*David consults the prophet Nathan concerning the building of the temple: Nathan, at the command of God, answers, that the son of David should build the temple, and that the kingdom of David should be firm and perpetual, David returns thanks to God.*

[Before Christ 1043.]

**A**ND it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and the LORD had given him rest round about from all his enemies;

2 That the king said unto Nathan the pro-

phet, See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains.

3 And Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in thine heart; for the LORD is with thee.

4 ¶ And it came to pass that night, that the word of the LORD came unto Nathan, saying,

5 Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the LORD, Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in?

6 Whereas I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle.

*Ver. 23. Therefore Michal, the daughter of Saul, had no child, &c.]* Either neglected from henceforth by David, or, as is more probable, immediately punished by God himself, Michal had no children from this time till the day of her death, or rather, as the Jews say, with whom Bishop Partrick agrees, she never had any children. See the note on chap. xxi. 8. and Pfeiffer's *Dubia Vexata*.

**REFLECTIONS.**—1. The exercises of religion often provoke the contempt of carnal minds. Having no senses exercised to relish holy joys, they despise them. 2. It is no new thing for the enemies of God's people to charge them with lewdness, and to reproach their assemblies as indecent. 3. Ridicule, not reason, is the weapon chiefly employed by the enemies of truth. 4. We must not be laughed out of a religious profession, nor be ashamed of it; but the more we are opposed, or insulted, the more resolutely must we persevere. 5. If God knows our hearts to be upright before him, the censures of others may well lie light upon us. 6. We can never sufficiently humble ourselves before a holy God; in whose presence the greatest king is no better than sinful dust and ashes.

### C H A P. VII.

*Ver. 1. When the king sat in his house] Dwelt in his house.* Houb. i. e. enjoyed himself in peace and repose in the house which Hiram had built for him. Dr. Delaney supposes, it was during this peace that he composed the 92d Psalm.

*Ver. 2. Nathan the prophet] Nathan was both polite and prudent, and knew how to temper the severity of wisdom with the sweetness of good manners.* Grotius compares him to Manlius Lepidius, who is celebrated by Tacitus, "for diverting the emperor Tiberius from such cruel purposes, as the vile flattery of others was apt to infligate him to." He compares him likewise to Piso, the chief priest of the Romans, who is described by the same historian as one who was never guilty of the least degree of servile adulation, but upon all occasions truly master of his temper. It must be confessed, however, that Nathan went beyond these two celebrated personages; he knew how to reprove princes with authority, and yet

without offence, without losing the least degree of interest or influence, or affection from his sovereign: on the contrary, he increased in both so much, that, as tradition tells us, David named one son after him, and committed another, even his favourite and successor, to his tuition and instruction.

*Ver. 3. Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in thine heart]* Nathan answered as a prudent man, not as a prophet; for the prophets did not know all events, but such only as God thought fit to reveal to them. Nathan, however, had great reason for what he said; for he knew the regard which the Lord had shewn to David, and thence might well conclude, that he would approve this pious design; besides, as David was himself a prophet, Nathan might well presume that this intention was suggested to him from God.

**REFLECTIONS.**—David is now at rest from all his enemies, enjoying in peace that kingdom which he so well deserved: yet is not his comfort complete while the ark of God dwells under curtains. Therefore,

1. He purposes to build a house meet for its reception. He could not look upon his own house of cedar without a secret reproach. He resolves, therefore, to improve the calm that he enjoyed in so grateful a service to the God who had done such great things for him. *Note;* A gracious soul is ever seeking to testify its gratitude, and happy to be employed for the glory of God.

2. David consults with Nathan the prophet about the matter: and as the piety of the design was evident, Nathan hesitates not to encourage him to proceed in the good purposes which were in his heart; but as they consulted not God in the matter, his will appeared different, though the good intention was accepted. *Note;* (1.) We ought to strengthen their hands, who have it at heart to build up the church of Christ. (2.) If the Lord be with us, then the desire of our heart will be to please him.

*Ver. 5. Shalt thou build me an house, &c.]* The interrogation here has the force of a negative. The meaning is, *Thou shalt not build me, &c.* See Psalm cxxxii. 3, &c.

*Ver.*

7 In all *the places* wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel spake I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why build ye not me an house of cedar?

8 Now therefore so shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the sheep-cote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel:

9 And I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy fight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great *men* that *are* in the earth.

10 Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as before-time,

11 And as since the time that I commanded judges *to be* over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the LORD telleth thee that he will make thee an house.

12 ¶ And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up

thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom.

13 He shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever.

14 I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men:

15 But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took *it* from Saul, whom I put away before thee.

16 And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.

17 According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David.

18 ¶ Then went king David in, and sat before the LORD, and he said, Who *am* I, O LORD God? and what *is* my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?

19 And this was yet a small thing in thy fight, O LORD God; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come. And *is* this the manner of man, O LORD God?

Ver. 7. Spake I a word with any of the tribes of Israel] *The Judges of Israel.* [שפטי] Houbigant. Hallet in his notes, vol. ii. p. 25. makes the same remark.

Ver. 10, 11. I will appoint—and will plant] I have appointed—and have planted] Houbigant.

And move no more] Neither may the sons of iniquity afflict them any more, as they have done before time; and even from the time when I placed judges over my people Israel, ver. 11. I also have given thee rest from all thine enemies, &c. Houbigant.

An house] A family. Hamn. in Pf. cxiii. 9. See ver. 27.

Ver. 13—16. I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever] We have often had occasion to remark, in the course of these notes, that the phrase *for ever* and those similar to it, frequently signify in the Old Testament only a considerable length of time. There can be no doubt that these words, in their primary sense, refer to Solomon and his kingdom. But as David was heir of that two-fold government, concerning which we have spoken at large on the book of Genesis; (see particularly chap. ix. and ch. xii.) there can be no doubt that, in their secondary and complete sense, they refer to that Son of David, of whom Solomon the *Jedidiah*, or, *beloved of the Lord*, was a type. See John, xii. 34. and Heb. i. 5. In these double prophecies, we are carefully to distinguish what concerns the type, and what the anti-type.

Ver. 18. And sat before the Lord] Dr. Pococke, in his first volume, p. 213, has given us the figure of a person half sitting, and half kneeling; that is, kneeling so far as to rest the most muscular part of his body on his heels: which, he observes, is the manner in which inferior persons sit at this day before great men, and that it is considered as a very humble posture. Agreeably to which he informs us, in his second volume, p. 102, that the attendants of the English consul, when he waited on the Caiah of the Pasha of Tripoli, sat in this manner resting behind on their hams. In this manner, I suppose, it was that David sat before the Lord, when he went into the sanctuary to bless him for his promise concerning his family. Abarbanel, and some Christian expositors, seem perplexed about the word *sitting* before the Lord; but sitting after this manner was expressive of the greatest humiliation, and therefore no improper posture for one who appeared before the ark of God. *Observations*, p. 263.

Ver. 19. And is this the manner of man, O Lord God?] See 1 Chron. xvii. 17. where we read, *And thou hast regarded me according to the estate of a man of high degree.* David is full of pious wonder, that God should be willing to shew his kindness to him even dead, as is the manner of men, who establish by will their benevolence towards their relations, desiring it to be derived to their sons, and to be perpetual. He renders the passage, *For thou providest*

20 And what can David say more unto thee? for thou, LORD God, knowest thy servant.

21 For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know *them*.

22 Wherefore thou art great, O LORD God: for *there is* none like thee, neither *is there any* god beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears.

23 And what one nation in the earth *is* like

thy people, *even* like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for you great things and terrible, for thy land, before thy people, which thou redeemedst to thee from Egypt, *from* the nations and their gods?

24 For thou hast confirmed to thyself thy people Israel *to be* a people unto thee for ever: and thou, LORD, art become their God.

25 And now, O LORD God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and

*for the house of thy servant for a long while to come, as is the manner of the sons of men.* Various other interpretations are given of the passage; and it is thought by several commentators, that David here refers to God's goodness, not only extended to his immediate posterity, but to the descent of the Messiah from him, who should sit upon his throne for ever.

*Ver. 23. To do for you]* Instead of *for you*, the LXX, Vulgate, and Arabic read, *for them*, which is certainly right. See Houbigant, Hallet, &c. By referring to 1 Chron. xvii. 21. the embarrassment of this verse may be removed, and the whole rendered thus: *For what one nation upon earth is there like thy people Israel, whom God went to redeem to be his own people, that he might make to himself a name; might do in their favour great and terrible things, and might drive the nations, and their gods, before his people, whom he delivered from Egypt.*

REFLECTIONS.—Overcome with Nathan's gracious message from the Lord, though his purposes were prevented, the great and precious promises declared to him by the prophet, awaken the liveliest returns of thankfulness. He immediately repairs to the tabernacle, and there pours forth his prayers and praises before his Covenant-God.

1. Abased in the dust, he confesses his own vileness and unworthiness of these distinguished favours; speaking with deep humility of himself, though so distinguished in gifts and graces. *Note;* They whom God honours, will have the lowliest opinion of themselves.

2. He acknowledges with thankfulness and admiration what God had done for him. It was to him alone that he was indebted for all that advancement at which he was arrived, and God had now added the promise of many days to come. He is overwhelmed with such goodness! Yet thus has God done, exceeding even his utmost wishes, and leaving David nothing more to ask. *Note;* (1.) God bestows on his people not only more than they deserve, but more than they can desire. (2.) Men are niggards of their gifts, especially to those who have offended them: but God blesses them that were his enemies; first reconciles them to himself, then covers them with mercies and loving-kindness, and more than all, gives them still greater blessings in promise, even than those they at present enjoy. (3.) God's covenant of grace contains all that a sinner needs: when we plead that before God, and lay hold by faith on Jesus, in whom

alone this covenant standeth fast, then all things are ours.

3. He ascribes the whole to God's unmerited and boundless grace; who, for his word's sake, according to his promise by Samuel, or for the sake of his incarnate Son, the Word made flesh, thus graciously respected him, and had also made him know their mercies yet in store. *Note;* To know and be assured of our interest in the blessings of the New Covenant, is an unspeakable mercy.

4. He extols the glorious God whose mercy was so great towards him. There is none like unto him, no God beside him; none that can do as he doth, in works of power and grace towards his people.

5. The people of God, from their relation to him, appear also great and distinguished in his eyes. God, or, as the original is, Gods went to redeem them, not Moses and Aaron, (though they as magistrates may be called Elohim,) but the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; to save them from the nations, and their gods, to be a peculiar people to Jehovah, their Covenant-God. *Note;* More glorious is our spiritual redemption from idolatrous affections and servitude to sin, more peculiar our consecration to him through the blood of Jesus, than theirs by the blood of bulls and goats.

6. He concludes with his humble supplications for the fulfilment of the promises wherein God had caused him to put his trust. Since it had pleased him to reveal his great goodness to his servant, David can ask nothing greater, nothing better. Let the word be established; and this he confidently expects from the truth and faithfulness of God, and is thence encouraged in his heart to pray, because God has promised. Let God therefore be magnified, his great and glorious name be exalted in mercy, and, according as he hath said, Let David's house be built and blessed, and his throne continue for ever. *Note;* (1.) We may boldly ask, when we have God's promises to encourage us. (2.) Let us not stagger at the greatness of the promise, but pray in faith, nothing doubting. (3.) Whenever we find in our heart to pray, God will not fail to hear and answer us. (4.) It is the constant desire of the faithful soul, that God may be glorified; and as this is especially the case when the kingdom of his dear Son is enlarged, therefore he prays, thy kingdom come. (5.) All repetition of our prayers is not vain repetition, but rather is often the liveliest expression of faith and importunity.

concerning his house, establish *it* for ever, and do as thou hast said.

26 And let thy name be magnified for ever, saying, The LORD of hosts *is* the God over Israel: and let the house of thy servant David be established before thee.

27 For thou, O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house: therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee.

28 And now, O LORD God, thou *art* that God, and thy words be true, and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant:

29 Therefore now let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue for ever before thee: for thou, O LORD God,

hast spoken *it*: and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever.

CHAP. VIII.

*David subdues the Moabites, the king of Zobab, the Syrians, and Edomites, and brings the spoils to Jerusalem.*

[Before Christ 1041.]

**A**ND after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them: and David took Metheg-ammah out of the hand of the Philistines.

2 And he smote Moab, and measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground; even with two lines measured he to put to death, and with one full line to keep alive. And *so* the Moabites became David's servants, and brought gifts.

CHAP. VIII.

*Ver. 1. Metheg-ammah*] Some learned men think this should be translated, *Metheg, and ber mother*; i. e. the daughter and the mother city; Metheg, and Gath her metropolis: though others choose to translate these words, the *bridle of the angle*, apprehending that Gath was so called, on account of its being a garrison which kept all the contiguous country of Judea in awe. This is certain, that it was the metropolis of one of the five Philistine principalities, the seat of their kings, and the mother of giants.

*Ver. 2. He smote Moab*] It is frequent in the sacred writings to put the inhabitants of a country for the country itself: see Isai. xv. 4. The LXX favour this interpretation, and thus Grotius understands it. And to this the Psalmist seems plainly to refer, when, speaking of the wars of David with Moab, Edom, and other nations, he says, *I will divide Sechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth, viz. in order to divide it.* Psal. lx. 6. *He measured them with a line.* The measurement of lands was formerly by the *line*, as now it is generally done by the *rod*; and because lands were divided into certain tracts and portions by the *line*, hence the *line* is often put for the tract marked out by it, or even where the line had never been made use of at all. Thus, *all the region of Argob*, Deut. iii. 4. is in the original *כל חבל כל* *kal chebel, all the line of Argob.* So *the line of the sea*, Zeph. ii. 5—7. is *the sea-coast.* Thus in the place before us, *he measured them by line*, i. e. divided the country of the Moabites into several parts, that he might the better know what towns it was most proper to demolish, to level with the ground, and to extirpate the inhabitants of them. *Even with two lines, &c.* The ancient versions read differently from our present text. The Vulgate, *he measured two lines, one to kill, and one to keep alive.* The Septuagint differently, but to the same sense, *there were two lines for putting to death, and two for taking alive*; according to which accounts, one half of the inhabitants only were put to death. And

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it appears from the text itself, that it should be thus understood. The words in the original are, *וימדו שני חבלים* *vaimadded shenei chabalim, And he measured two lines.* Repeat from the foregoing words, *חבל* *chebel, a line, ומלא להמית* *umlo lehamith, to put to death, והחיות* *lehachayoth, and the fulness of a line to keep alive.* This supplement is natural and agreeable to the language. Many instances may be produced. Thus, Psalm cx. 3. *what we render, almost without any sense, from the womb of the morning thou hast the dew of thy youth, becomes an elegant expression if we repeat the word dew. The dew of thy youth is as the dew from the womb of the morning.* The verse here then should be rendered, "And he measured two lines; i. e. divided the country into two parts; a line, i. e. a tract for death; and the plenitude of the line, i. e. a very large tract of the country for life, to destroy the inhabitants of the one, and preserve the inhabitants of the larger part." The first clause of the verse, *he measured them with a line, &c.* signifies no more than that David smote Moab, i. e. the country and its inhabitants, and measured them with a line; i. e. took an exact survey of the towns, and cities, and strongholds of the whole land, *השכב אתם ארצה* *haskeb etham artzah, to throw them down to the ground; i. e. to destroy and level them to the ground, as far as he thought necessary to humble them, and to secure himself.* The expression, *fulness of a line*, seems to denote a very large tract of country, and might be a larger than that where the inhabitants were ordered to be put to death.

*The Moabites became David's servants*] Who was the aggressor in these two last actions, is not said; but it may be collected from Psalm lxxxiii. that Edom, Moab, Ammon, Amalek, and others, consulted together to cut off Israel from being a nation, which seems to refer to the wars mentioned in this chapter. However, it may be remarked, that the Philistines, Moabites, and other neighbouring nations, were perpetual enemies of the Jews, and invaded them whenever they were able; and that therefore the Jews thought

3 ¶ David smote also Hadadezer, the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates.

4 And David took from him a thousand chariots, and seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen: and David houghed all the chariot-horses, but reserved of them for an hundred chariots.

5 And when the Syrians of Damascus came to succour Hadadezer king of Zobah, David slew of the Syrians two and twenty thousand men.

6 Then David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus: and the Syrians became servants to David, and brought gifts. And the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went.

7 And David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem.

8 And from Betah, and from Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, king David took exceeding much brass.

9 ¶ When Toi king of Hamath heard that

David had smitten all the host of Hadadezer,

10 Then Toi sent Joram his son unto king David, to salute him, and to bless him, because he had fought against Hadadezer, and smitten him: (for Hadadezer had wars with Toi.) And Joram brought with him vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and vessels of brass:

11 Which also king David did dedicate unto the LORD, with the silver and gold that he had dedicated of all nations which he subdued;

12 Of Syria, and of Moab, and of the children of Ammon, and of the Philistines, and of Amalek, and of the spoil of Hadadezer, son of Rehob, king of Zobah.

13 And David gat him a name when he returned from smiting of the Syrians in the valley of salt, being eighteen thousand men.

14 ¶ And he put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom put he garrisons, and all they of Edom became David's servants. And the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went.

thought they had a right to make reprisals, and to attack them upon every occasion. See Numb. xxiv. 17, &c. where this event is foretold.

Ver. 3. *To recover his border at the river*] The Hebrew להשיב ידו *lehasib yado*, may be literally rendered, *as he went to turn back his hand*; &c. David smote Hadadezer, when he, David, went to turn back his, Hadadezer's, hand, by the Euphrates; i. e. to repel Hadadezer and his forces at the river, and prevent the intended invasion of his dominions. Here then Hadadezer was also the aggressor. In the parallel place, 1 Chron. xviii. 3. it is להציב ידו *lehatzib yado*, *to establish his hand*, or *power*, at the Euphrates. He wanted to extend his dominions to the Euphrates; and in order to it, designed to invade those of David which lay nearest to that river. David, therefore, had a right by force to prevent it.

Ver. 4. *A thousand chariots*] The word *chariots*, though not in the Hebrew, is rightly supplied from the parallel place, 1 Chron. xviii. 4. Instead of *seven hundred horsemen*, says Houbigant, I read also as in the parallel place *seven thousand*, for the horses were always more than the chariots. These are in the number of those parts of the sacred writings, which to my apprehension demonstrate their divine origin. It is utterly abhorrent from all the principles of human policy, to make either creatures or utensils, when once become our own secure property, either wholly useless, or less useful to all the purposes for which either human contrivance has fitted, or Providence appointed them; and therefore David's burning so many chariots, and maiming so many horses taken from the enemy in battle, could only arise from a principle of

obedience to the commands of Almighty God, expressly enjoining such a conduct to his people.

Ver. 7. *The shields of gold*] See Solomon's Song, chap. iv. 4. Note; (1.) The enemies of God's church may associate themselves, but they shall be broken to pieces. (2.) Better to be relied on than shields of gold, is God, the shield and the defence of every spiritual Israelite.

Ver. 13. *David gat him a name*, &c.] *To get a name*, in the Eastern style, does not mean to be called by this or that particular name, but to be celebrated as a happy and glorious person. Thus it is joined with *praises*; Zeph. iii. 20. It is said of God himself, upon account of the signs and wonders he wrought in Egypt, *thou hast made thee a name*; which our version in Dan. ix. 15. renders, *thou hast gotten thee renown*. And thus David got him a name; i. e. as God tells him by Nathan, ch. vii. 9. *I was with thee*, &c.—and have made thee a great name, &c. i. e. made thee esteemed and revered in all the countries round about, as a mighty prince and a successful warrior; a name which he must have had from the Syrians as well as Jews, and from all his enemies whom he subdued by his valour. Houbigant translates the passage thus: *Moreover David, having conquered Syria, when he returned, waged war with the Edomites in the valley of Salt, and slew of them eighteen thousand men*. His note is ingenious, and his criticisms, to which we refer the reader, seem very just. Dr. Delaney supposes, that upon this occasion David wrote the 99th Psalm. See the 4th verse of which, and compare with the 15th of this chapter. Note; (1.) Whatever is great or good in us, let God alone have the praise of it. (2.) These conquests typify, the

15 ¶ And David reigned over all Israel; and David executed judgment and justice unto all his people.

16 And Joab the son of Zeruah was over the host; and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder;

17 And Zadok the son of Ahitub, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, were the priests; and Seraiah was the scribe;

18 And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over both the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David's sons were chief rulers.

greater ones of David's Son and Lord. He must reign till he has put all his enemies under his feet, subdued sin, and destroyed death and hell; when, having rescued his people from all their enemies round about, he shall make them princes and kings in glory, where they shall reign with him.

Ver. 16. *Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder*] i. e. as is generally believed, *remembrancer*, or *writer of chronicles*: an employment of no mean estimation in the Eastern world, where it was customary with kings to keep daily registers of all the transactions of their reign; and a trust, which whoever discharged efficiently must be let into the true springs and secrets of action, and consequently must be received into the inmost confidence. The sacred Writer no sooner gives us an account of David's executing judgment and justice, but he immediately adds a list of the great officers then employed by him; for a principal part of a king's wisdom, as well as of his felicity, consists in the choice of able ministers, to discharge the great offices of the state.

Ver. 17. *Seraiah was the scribe*] Supposed to be the king's secretary of state, or prime counsellor in the law. Bishop Patrick says, that as the Hebrew word סופר *sopher*, which we translate *scribe*, imports something of learning, as the word *scribe* does in the New Testament, he takes Seraiah to have been the king's prime counsellor in the law; and others think there were two of this character, an ecclesiastical and a civil. See 1 Chron. xxvii. 32. It has been supposed by some, that Zadok was the high-priest, and Ahimelech his סגן *segen*, or vicar; while others think, that neither of these was the high-priest, but the vicars of Abiathar, and the heads of the sacerdotal families.

Ver. 18. *Benaiah, &c.*] Benaiah was one of David's three worthies of the second order, eminent for many great exploits, but of which three only are particularly recounted by the sacred historian. There seems to have been something in the fortitude of Benaiah similar and congenial to that of David, which, possibly, was the reason why he made him commander of the Cherethites and the Pelethites, concerning whom the opinions of the critics have been various. That כרתי *Cherethi* is another word for *Philistine*, appears clearly from Zeph. ii. 5. and Ezek. xxv. 16. That David's guards were native Philistines, of his mortal enemies, is not to be imagined; even although we should suppose them proselytes; for, how could their being proselyted more effectually recommend the fidelity of any men to him, than being natives of his own country, and known and tried subjects? The only question then is, Why any of his own subjects should be called *Cherethites*? And the answer is obvious: they were called so from their having gone with him into Philistia, and continued there with him all the time that he was under the protection of Achish.

These were they who resorted to him from the beginning in his utmost distress, and clave to him in all his calamities; and it is no wonder if men of such approved fidelity were in a more immediate degree of favour and confidence with the king, and enjoyed, among other privileges, an exemption from the authority of the captain-general, and were placed under peculiar commanders: I believe, it will be no uncommon thing in the history of any country to find legions and bands of soldiers denominated, not from the place of their nativity, but that of their residence; as general Monk's troops, who sojourned with him in Scotland, were called *Coldstreamers*, and some of the same corps, I believe, are still called by the same name, from a place in Scotland where they had resided for some time, notwithstanding that they were native English. Now as the *Cherethites* were, I apprehend, the body of troops which clave to David from the beginning, and went with him into Philistia; the פלתי *Pelethi* I apprehend to have been the body of troops made up of those valiant men who resorted to him when he was there (I mean when he resided at Ziklag, but still under the protection of Achish); among whom I find one *Pelet, the son of Azmavith*, 1 Chron. xii. 3. who, as I presume, became their captain, and from whom they were called *Pelethites*; as the soldiers disciplined by Fabius and Iphicrates were called *Fabians* and *Iphicratians* (see Corn. Nep. in Iphicrate); and as under the later emperors the soldiers were commonly denominated from their commanders: unless we suppose them rather denominated from *Peleth*, the son of Jonathan, 1 Chron. ii. 33. who was of the king's own tribe. Now as the *Cherethites* adhered to David, and followed his fortunes from the beginning, they justly held the first degree of favour with him: and therefore they are always placed before the *Pelethites*, who only resorted to him when he was in Ziklag; and for that reason were only entitled to the second degree of favour. See 1 Sam. xxx. 14. A learned professor abroad strongly defends the Chaldee interpretation; which is, that *Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada, was over the archers and slingers*: and he observes, that, in the Arabic language, *Caratha* signifies to *hit the mark*, to strike it with an arrow (which probably might occasion the giving the name of *Cretans* to the inhabitants of the island of Crete, so famous in antiquity for their skill in handling the bow); and that in the same language *Pelet*, among other things, signifies to *be alert*, to *leap*, to *run swiftly*; so that the *Pelethites* were possibly soldiers chosen for their speed, and light armed, as were the *Velites* of the Romans, who, with their other weapons, carried very light arrows, which were called *peltes*, and the use of which came from the East. The Romans commonly associated their archers and light soldiers together; the Gauls did the same; but what is of most importance, is, that in after times, under the successors of David, and particularly

## C H A P. IX.

*David sends for Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, and treats him with great kindness for his father's sake.*

[Before Christ 1040.]

**A**ND David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake?

2 And *there was* of the house of Saul a servant whose name *was* Ziba. And when they had called him unto David, the king said unto him, *Art* thou Ziba? And he said, Thy servant *is* he.

3 And the king said, *Is* there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may shew the kindness of God unto him? And Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son, *which is* lame on *his* feet.

4 And the king said unto him, *Where is*

he? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he is in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, in Lo-debar.

5 ¶ Then king David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, from Lo-debar.

6 Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face, and did reverence. And David said, Mephibosheth. And he answered, Behold thy servant!

7 ¶ And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually.

8 And he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?

ticularly under the cruel Athaliah, the body-guards went by the name of *כְּרִי Chari* and *רָצִים Ratzim*: the former were, doubtless, our *Cherethites*; and the name of the second literally points out *runners*, men very active and swift; or possibly couriers, appointed continually to carry the prince's orders; which answers the idea which we have given of the *Pelethites*. The guards of Saul were heretofore so called. Accordingly, the author of the Vulgate renders the names *Cberi* and *Retzim*, 2 Kings, xi. 19. by *Cherethites* and *Pelethites*; and the Syriac interpreter, as well there as in the 4th verse of the same chapter, by *the runners and couriers*. Possibly the *Cherethites*, called also *cheri* and *couri*, (from whence the name *runners* seems to have been formed,) were employed to carry verbal orders from the prince, where it was necessary to do it expeditiously; and the others, that is to say, the *Pelethites*, or *Retzim*, were charged with his letters occasionally. In a day of battle, the former handled the bow; the latter made use of the sling, or a light dart, and had shields which were of the same kind. In fine, it is observable, that in our days the Ottoman emperors have among their guards two orders of soldiers that nearly resemble those who were about the person of David. The first, called *soulaks*, are chosen out of the bravest of the Janissaries: there are three hundred of them, who draw the bow both with the right and left hand. The second, in number sixty, are called *paicks*, and perform the duty of runners and lacqueys. They fly to all parts charged with the sultan's letters, holding a short pike in their hand, and wearing a poinard at their waist. The emperor never goes out unaccompanied with two of his *soulaks*. The *paicks* are, for the most part, Persians, and so swift of foot as to keep up with the strongest and lightest horses. See Rycaut's State of the Ottoman Empire, p. iii. c. 7.

REFLECTIONS.—We have here, David dispensing to his subjects the blessings of an upright

government, as well as subduing their foes before them. All Israel felt and owned his gentle sway; the meanest have access to him, and justice is without partiality dispensed by him: well may it be said, Happy art thou, O Israel! *Note*; We cannot be thankful enough for the blessing of a mild government, and an incorrupt administration of justice.

## C H A P. IX.

*Ver. 1. Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul*] After the establishment of his kingdom, religion was David's first care; chap. vii. 1, 2. Friendship now became his second. It is not, I think, to be imagined, but that he well knew there yet survived one of the sons of his dear friend Jonathan. Knowing him, however, to be under the protection of a very considerable family, where he wanted no convenience of life, it was not altogether so consistent with the principles of political prudence to look out for a rival to his throne, before that throne was thoroughly established; and, perhaps, this is one reason why the sacred Writer lets us know that his throne was now thoroughly established, before he made an inquiry after Saul's posterity. See the foregoing chapter.

*Ver. 3. That I may shew the kindness of God unto him*] That is, "That I may treat him with a benignity resembling that of Almighty God;" who continues his kindness even to the descendants of those who love him.

*Ver. 6. And David said, Mephibosheth, &c.]* David said, *Art thou Mephibosheth? He answered, I am thy servant.* Houbigant. *Note*; (1.) We must be not only ready to do good when applied to, but seek for occasions, and enquire out the most proper objects. (2.) It is not enough to forgive those who hate us, but we must shew kindness to them or their families in their distresses; this is *God-like*. (3.) No advancement, or change of circumstances, should make us forget our old friends; they and theirs have a title to

9 ¶ Then the king called to Ziba, Saul's servant, and said unto him, I have given unto thy master's son all that pertained to Saul, and to all his house.

10 Thou therefore, and thy sons, and thy servants, shall till the land for him, and thou shalt bring in *the fruits*, that thy master's son may have food to eat: but Mephibosheth thy master's son shall eat bread alway at my table. Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.

11 Then said Ziba unto the king, According to all that my lord the king hath commanded his servant, so shall thy servant do. As for Mephibosheth, *said the king*, he shall eat at my table, as one of the king's sons.

12 And Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name *was* Micha. And all that dwelt in the house of Ziba *were* servants unto Mephibosheth.

13 So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem: for he did eat continually at the king's table; and was lame on both his feet.

## C H A P. X.

*The king of the Ammonites treats David's messengers as spies. David sends Joab against the Ammonites and Syrians, who overcomes them; and afterwards himself, passing the Jordan, overcomes them again, and subjects them to him.*

[Before Christ 1040.]

**A**ND it came to pass after this, that the king of the children of Ammon died, and Hanun his son reigned in his stead.

2 Then said David, I will shew kindness unto Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father shewed kindness unto me. And David sent to comfort him by the hand of his servants for his father. And David's servants came into the land of the children of Ammon.

3 And the princes of the children of Ammon said unto Hanun their lord, Thinkest thou that David doth honour thy father, that he hath sent comforters unto thee? hath not David *rather* sent his servants unto thee, to search the city, and to spy it out, and to overthrow it?

4 Wherefore Hanun took David's servants, and shaved off the one half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle, *even* to their buttocks, and sent them away.

5 When they told *it* unto David, he sent to meet them, because the men were greatly ashamed: and the king said, Tarry at Jericho until your beards be grown, and *then* return.

6 ¶ And when the children of Ammon saw that they stank before David, the children of Ammon sent and hired the Syrians of Beth-rehob, and the Syrians of Zoba, twenty thousand footmen, and of king Maacah a thousand men, and of Ish-tob twelve thousand men.

7 And when David heard of *it*, he sent Joab, and all the host of the mighty men.

8 And the children of Ammon came out, and put the battle in array at the entering in of the gate: and the Syrians of Zoba, and of

to our notice, and, according to our power, to our assistance. (4.) That is the acceptable charity, and no other, which is done with an eye to God's glory, and flows from a sense of God's love to us.

*Ver. 9, 10. I have given unto thy master's son, &c.]* Grotius and Dr. Trapp observe, that David made Ziba Mephibosheth's *colonus partiaris*, his farmer, upon the terms of bringing in to his master, yearly, half the annual produce of grain and fruits. The property of the whole patrimony was reserved to Mephibosheth; but Ziba was to take care of the estate, and to be himself and his whole family maintained out of it; and from the character and condition of the man at this time, David, to all appearance, could not have chosen a fitter person for the trust.

*Ver. 11. As for Mephibosheth, said the king, &c.]* *Said the king*, is not in the Hebrew. Houbigant renders the clause thus: *afterwards Mephibosheth did eat at the king's table, as one of the king's sons.* Dr. Delaney supposes, that David composed upon this occasion the 101st Psalm. *Note;*

Our forfeited inheritance is restored to us in Christ; and, though we are utterly undeserving the least of his regard, he kindly condescends to invite us to his table below, and to sit down with him in his kingdom above.

## C H A P. X.

*Ver. 4. Wherefore Hanun took David's servants, &c.]* The wearing of long beards and garments was then, as it still is, the fashion of the East, where they were deemed badges of honour; and, consequently, the cutting off or curtailing of either was regarded as the greatest indignity. Nay, in some places, the cutting off of the beard was not only looked upon as matter of the highest reproach, but also of the severest punishment. So it was anciently among the Indians, and is at this day among the Persians. It was one of the most infamous punishments of cowardice in Sparta, that they who turned their backs in the day of battle were obliged to appear abroad with one half of their beard shaved, and the other half unshaved. There were



Rehob, and Ish-tob, and Maacah, *were* by themselves in the field.

9 When Joab saw that the front of the battle was against him before and behind, he chose of all the choice *men* of Israel, and put *them* in array against the Syrians:

10 And the rest of the people he delivered into the hand of Abishai his brother, that he might put *them* in array against the children of Ammon.

11 And he said, If the Syrians be too strong for me, then thou shalt help me: but if the

children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then I will come and help thee.

12 Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God: and the LORD do that which seemeth him good.

13 And Joab drew nigh, and the people that *were* with him, unto the battle against the Syrians: and they fled before him.

14 And when the children of Ammon saw that the Syrians were fled, then fled they also before Abishai, and entered into the city. So

were two reasons which caused the Easterns of old, as well as at present, to look upon the beard as venerable: in the first place, they considered it as a natural ornament designed to distinguish men from women; secondly, it was the mark of a free man in opposition to slaves: so that, in every view, the insult of Hanun to the ambassadors of David was capital. It was a violation of the laws of hospitality, and of the right of nations. See Tavernier's Voyages to the Indies, part ii. book 2. chap. 7.

*Ver. 5. Tarry at Jericho*] As Jericho had not been rebuilt since the day on which it was miraculously overthrown, the king humanely judged that his ambassadors would be glad to conceal themselves to more advantage in the desolations of that city till their beards were grown. It should seem from the text, that the ambassadors had taken refuge there before David sent to them to *tarry* there. Possibly Jericho might have been then pretty much in the same condition in which Mr. Baumgarten found it in the beginning of the 15th century. He tells us, that Zaccheus's house was the only one then standing there, and even that without a roof. He then adds, "There are round about, about a dozen of small cottages, if I may properly call them so; for nothing of building is to be seen in them, being only fenced with tall hedges of thorns, having within a large place for cattle to stand and be shut up in: but in the middle they have huts or tents, where men used to shelter themselves and their goods from the inclemency of the sun and rain." See Churchill's Travels, vol. i. p. 420.

REFLECTIONS.—When David sits on the throne of his kingdom, no former favours shewn him shall want a recompence.

1. He sends compliments of condolence to Hanun, the son of Nahash, king of the Ammonites, on his father's death, as mindful of the kindnesses which during his state of exile Nahash had shewn to him, not indeed out of love to Israel, but rather out of enmity to Saul: however, at that time they were to David very obliging, and he intended now to make an equal return. *Note*; (1.) We are not to scrutinise the motives from which good is done us; if we are relieved, we are bound to bless the friendly hand. (2.) It is kind to mourn with the afflicted, and by partaking to alleviate their sorrows.

2. The ambassadors meet with a very ill reception.

Hanun might himself have treated them with dignity, as they deserved; but his suspicious courtiers suggested that they came on a base design, as spies: and Hanun, as kings are too often governed by their servants, hearkened to their insinuations, used the ambassadors most infamously, in violation of the law of nations, and sent them back with marks of the highest insult and contempt. *Note*; (1.) There are seldom wanting, in courts, flatterers who seek to instill poison, instead of wholesome counsel, into the ears of kings. (2.) A base mind is ever most suspicious. (3.) They who will be ambassadors for the Son of David must sometimes expect the like insult and ill usage, and have their messages of peace misconstrued into the vilest meaning.

3. David's concern for his ambassadors was as great as his resentment for the insolence against himself, thus affronted in their persons. He sends, therefore, to meet them, and appoints them a retirement at Jericho. *Note*; (1.) Patience will wear off many reproaches; and time, the great revealer of truth, rescue the injured from the cruel and unjust aspersions of their defamers. (2.) It has been the lot of many an innocent man under calumny to be driven into obscurity, whose righteousness will by and by shine as the light.

*Ver. 6. Saw that they stank*] See Gen. xxxiv. 30. and 1 Chron. xix. 6. The children of Ammon, instead of apologizing, or making any reparation for the insult to David's ambassadors, joined their own forces to a Syrian army of 33,000 men, which aggravated their former outrage, and rendered them worthy of the most signal chastisement. *Beth-rehob* was a city belonging to the Canaanites rather than the Syrians, which stood in the tribe of Asher, though the Canaanites kept possession of it. *Maacah* was a city of Palestine beyond Jordan, situated in the tribe of Manasseh, and *Ish-tob*, which might be rendered *the men of Tob*, was the place whither Jephthah fled from the cruelty of his brethren, Judg. xi. 3.

*Ver. 7. And all the host of the mighty men*] Which Houbigant renders *the chosen strength of the army; the flower of the troops*. Some understand thereby the worthies mentioned in the 23d chapter. See Schmidt's Observations. The 94th Psalm is supposed to have been written upon this occasion.

*Ver. 12. Be of good courage, &c.*] There cannot be a more noble martial speech than this. We may learn from it,

Joab returned from the children of Ammon, and came to Jerusalem.

15 ¶ And when the Syrians saw that they were smitten before Israel, they gathered themselves together.

16 And Hadarezer sent, and brought out the Syrians that were beyond the river: and they came to Helam; and Shobach the captain of the host of Hadarezer went before them.

17 And when it was told David, he gathered all Israel together, and passed over Jordan, and came to Helam. And the Syrians set themselves in array against David, and fought with him.

18 And the Syrians fled before Israel; and David slew the men of seven hundred chariots of the Syrians, and forty thousand horsemen, and smote Shobach the captain of their host, who died there.

19 And when all the kings that were servants to Hadarezer saw that they were smitten before Israel, they made peace with Israel, and

served them. So the Syrians feared to help the children of Ammon any more.

C H A P. XI.

*While Joab besieges Rabbah, David commits adultery with Bath-sheba, the wife of Uriah. He sends for Uriah from the army, whom afterwards he sends back to Joab, with orders to set him in the fore-front of the battle. Uriah is slain, and David marries Bath-sheba, who brings him a son.*

[Before Christ 1036.]

AND it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem.

2 ¶ And it came to pass in an evening tide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon.

it, how naturally great dangers inspire sentiments of true religion, even in some who upon other occasions manifest too little of its spirit.

*Ver. 16. The Syrians that were beyond the river*] Beyond the river Euphrates. Hadarezer is the same with Hadadezer, mentioned chap. viii. 3. Houbigant says, that he found it wrote Hadadezer in five manuscripts which he consulted. It is probable that Helam was situated upon the banks of the river Euphrates.

*Ver. 18. Slew the men of seven hundred chariots, &c.*] Though this reading is the same in the Vulgate, LXX, and Chaldee, yet in the Syriac it is seven hundred chariots, and four thousand horse: in the Arabic, one thousand six hundred chariots, and four thousand horse. The parallel place, 1 Chron. xix. 18. reads, seven thousand men that fought in chariots, and forty thousand footmen. Dr. Kennicott says, that the verse should be read thus: David destroyed seven thousand horsemen, seven hundred chariots, and forty thousand foot.

*Ver. 19. When all the kings, &c.*] Thus the arms of David were blessed, and God accomplished the promises which he had made to Abraham, and renewed to Joshua. Gen. xv. 18. Josh. i. 2. 4. Thus, in the space of nineteen or twenty years, David was enabled to finish gloriously eight wars, all righteously undertaken, and all honourably terminated: namely, 1. The civil war with Ishboeth; 2. The war against the Jebusites; 3. Against the Philistines and their allies; 4. Against the Philistines alone; 5. Against the Moabites; 6. Against Hadadezer; 7. Against the Idumeans; 8. Against the Ammonites and Syrians. We shall soon see this last entirely completed

by the conquest of the kingdom of the Ammonites, abandoned by their allies. What glory for the monarch of Israel, had not the splendor of this illustrious epocha been obscured by a complication of crimes, of which one could never have suspected him to be capable!

C H A P. XI.

*Ver. 1. At the time when kings go forth to battle*] The author of the Observations remarks justly, that this passage seems to suppose, that there was one particular time of the year, in this country, to which the operations of war were limited. So Sir John Chardin, speaking of the Basha of Basra, who endeavoured in his time to erect himself into an independent sovereign, tells us, that, perceiving in the spring, that the Turkish army were prepared to thunder upon him the next September or October, (for the heat of those climates will not permit them to take the field sooner,) he sent beforehand to offer his territory to the king of Persia. The contrary, however, obtained in the Croisade wars; in the Archbishop of Tyre's history whereof, we meet with expeditions or battles in every month of the year: yet there is one story which he tells us, that seems to confirm Sir John Chardin's account, and to shew, that, though the active and superstitious zeal of those times might not regard it, the summer was no proper time for war in those countries: and this is where he tells us, that in a battle fought betwixt Baldwin IV. and Saladine, in Galilee, as many perished in both armies by the violence of the heat as by the sword.

*Ver. 2. David—walked upon the roof of the king's house*] See Deut. xxii. 8. and 1 Sam. ix. 25.

*Ver.*

3 And David sent and enquired after the woman. And *one* said, *Is* not this Bath-sheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?

4 And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house.

5 ¶ And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, *I am* with child.

6 And David sent to Joab, *saying*, Send me Uriah the Hittite. And Joab sent Uriah to David.

7 And when Uriah was come unto him, David demanded *of him* how Joab did, and how the people did, and how the war prospered.

8 And David said to Uriah, Go down to thy house, and wash thy feet. And Uriah departed out of the king's house, and there followed him a mess of meat from the king.

9 But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and went not down to his house.

10 And when they had told David, *saying*, Uriah went not down unto his house, David said unto Uriah, Camest thou not from *thy* journey? why *then* didst thou not go down

unto thine house?

11 And Uriah said unto David, The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? *as* thou livest, and *as* thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing.

12 And David said to Uriah, Tarry here to-day also, and to-morrow I will let thee depart. So Uriah abode in Jerusalem that day, and the morrow.

13 And when David had called him, he did eat and drink before him; and he made him drunk: and at even he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but went not down to his house.

14 ¶ And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah.

15 And he wrote in the letter, *saying*, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die.

16 And it came to pass, when Joab observed the city, that he assigned Uriah unto a place where he knew that valiant men *were*.

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*Ver. 4. And she returned unto her house*] What the state of David's mind was, when the tumult of passion had subsided, Bath-sheba was departed, and reason had returned, I shall not take upon me to paint. Calm reflection will best suit the horrors of so complicated a guilt, upon the recoil of conscience; when all those passions, whose blandishments but a few moments before deluded, seduced, and overfret his reason, now resumed their full deformity, or rushed into their contrary extremes; desire into distraction; the sweets of pleasure into bitterness of soul; love into self-detestation; and hope almost into the horrors of despair. In one word, his condition was now so dreadful, that it was not easy for him to bring himself to the presumption of petitioning for mercy.

*Ver. 11. And Uriah said unto David, The ark, and Israel, &c.*] Nothing can be more elegant and heroic than this answer of Uriah. After all that the critics have said upon the subject, it seems to be very plain from hence, that the ark now accompanied the army, as we know it did on a former occasion; see 1 Sam. iv. 5. in order to animate the soldiers by so sacred a symbol of the divine presence: and there is more reason to suppose that this was the case at present, as the expedition appears to have been a very considerable one. See the first verse.

*Ver. 15. And he wrote in the letter, saying, &c.*] As

I have been long of opinion, says Dr. Delaney, that the Greeks borrowed most, if not all their mythology, from the Sacred History; so I think the fable of Bellerophon is founded upon this story of Uriah. *Bellerophon*, (who, as some scholiasts think, should be read *Boulepheron*, a *counsil-carrier*;) was a stranger at the court of Proetus, as Uriah, being an *Hittite*, was at the court of David. He declined the solicitations of Sthenobœa, as Uriah did the bed of Bath-sheba; and was for that reason sent to *Jobates*, general of Proetus's army, with letters, which contained a direction to put him to death, as Uriah was sent to Joab, David's general: and was sent by Jobates with a small guard upon an attack, in which it was intended he should be slain, as Uriah was by Joab to that in which he fell. The main course of the history is the same in both; and the variations such as might naturally be expected in fabulous embellishments. Hence it is, that the mythologist, not being tied to truth, thought himself bound, in point of poetic justice, to deliver the virtue of Bellerophon from the evil intended him: and so his history ends happily in this world; as I doubt not Uriah's does in the next. See Banier's *Mythology*, vol. iii. book ii. chap. 6. and *Lavaux's Conference de la Fable*, &c.

*Ver.*

17 And the men of the city went out, and fought with Joab: and there fell *some* of the people of the servants of David; and Uriah the Hittite died also.

18 ¶ Then Joab sent and told David all the things concerning the war;

19 And charged the messenger, saying, When thou hast made an end of telling the matters of the war unto the king,

20 And if so be that the king's wrath arise, and he say unto thee, Wherefore approached ye so nigh unto the city when ye did fight? knew ye not that they would shoot from the wall?

21 Who smote Abimelech the son of Jerubesheth? did not a woman cast a piece of a millstone upon him from the wall, that he died in Tebez? why went ye nigh the wall? then say thou, Thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.

22 ¶ So the messenger went, and came and shewed David all that Joab had sent him for.

23 And the messenger said unto David, Surely the men prevailed against us, and came out unto us into the field, and we were upon them even unto the entering of the gate.

24 And the shooters shot from off the wall upon thy servants; and *some* of the king's servants be dead, and thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.

25 Then David said unto the messenger, Thus shalt thou say unto Joab, Let not this thing displease thee, for the sword devoureth one as well as another: make thy battle more strong against the city, and overthrow it; and encourage thou him.

26 ¶ And when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband.

27 And when the mourning was past,

*Ver. 26, 27. She mourned for her husband, &c.]* This mourning is generally supposed to have been the keeping of a fast for seven days successively; eating nothing each day till the sun was set. It cannot be denied, that there was a manifest indecency in David's taking Bath-sheba to be his wife so soon after her husband's death; and some think her compliance a proof of her indifference and disregard for her husband. Alas! they were anxious to hide the infamy of their commerce; and to effect that, no time was now to be lost.

**REFLECTIONS.**—1st, Dark and dismal are the contents of this chapter. David's sun suffers a dreadful eclipse; and in the midst of his victories abroad, he is worse than vanquished at home, fallen a slave under brutish lusts and passions.

1. In pursuit of the former victory, Joab presses hard on the deserted Ammonites (David being returned in triumph to Jerusalem), and, having subdued their country, invests their capital.

2. David, in the mean time, is seduced into the grievous crimes of adultery and murder. While other kings were heading their forces in the field, he was indulging himself ingloriously in ease at home; while they endured the hardship of a camp, he rose from his downy bed, idly to saunter on the roof, and enjoy the evening's breeze: there his wandering eye rolled around; and, as sloth had prepared the fuel, a spark of lust entered, that kindled it into a flame. A beautiful woman in her garden retired, or in her chamber overlooked by the king's palace, washed herself from her ceremonial impurity, and thus became a snare to the unguarded monarch. At the sight, unhallowed desires kindle in his bosom; he turns not away from the inflaming object, but, urged by lawless appetite, contrives

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how to possess her. He enquires her name and condition, and, not deterred by her belonging to another man, invites her to his house, and tempts her to his bed; to which, with too easy a compliance, she consents. See now the deadly gloom which covers this great character! Lord, what is man! Every circumstance served to aggravate his crime: a king, who should have punished with death the adulterer; one who wanted not numerous wives of his own; an aged man, in whom these youthful lusts were doubly brutish; the person injured, his friend and servant, now fighting for him in the field; and an accomplished woman, before innocent and respectable, prevailed upon perhaps, not more by the glare of his crown, than the fame of his piety, as though that could not be criminal which David proposed! *Note;* (1.) On this side the grave, no man is secure from presumptuous sins. (2.) The lusts of the flesh are the most besetting evils, and therefore peculiarly to be guarded against. (3.) They who make provision for the flesh, by sloth and sensuality, are prepared for every temptation. (4.) When we are out of the way of duty, we can no longer expect Divine protection. (5.) If the eye be suffered to wander, the heart will not be long restrained from sin. (6.) Every indulgence given to carnal appetite, leaves us more unable to resist its cravings, and hurries body and soul headlong into perdition. (7.) When once the heart is given up to lewdness, then men can sacrifice honour, interest, friends, yea God himself, to the idol of their hateful passions.

2dly, We love, in the next place;

1. The fruit of this illicit commerce. David had sent Bath-sheba home, and all seemed to be hushed up; but God will bring to light these hidden works of darkness. Bath-sheba conceived; and, justly apprehensive of the danger she stood in from an enraged husband, acquaints

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David sent and fetched her to his house, and she became his wife, and bare him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.

the king, who, no doubt, had not scrupled to promise her an infamous protection. *Note;* Promises of secrecy and impunity are the great emboldeners to impurity.

2. David is alarmed for his own character, as well as Bath-sheba's honour and safety, and contrives to save both by sending for Uriah, concluding that he would readily go home to his wife, and then the child would be regarded as his. He bids Joab send him, under pretext of inquiring how the siege advanced, receives him graciously, entertains him, and sends him down to his house, to refresh himself after his journey. And now David probably slept quieter than he had done before, and said in his heart, I shall have peace, the darkness shall cover me. Thus often do men deceive themselves, till their abominable sins be found out.

3. Uriah went not home, but lay down in the guard-chamber. David, no doubt, made inquiry about him, and was greatly disappointed to find his plot did not succeed. Another day he makes a viler attempt upon him; he calls him, expresses his wonder at his not going home, and heats the generous warrior expresses that noble resolution, ver. 11. which should have awakened every remaining sentiment of gratitude and shame in his perfidious bosom. But David had lost shame when he forsook God, and therefore sought to effect that by making him drunk, which he could not obtain from him when he was sober: but God's over-ruling providence defeated his purpose; and Uriah, though inflamed with wine and mirth, forgets not his oath, perseveres in his noble sentiments, and lies down again with David's servants at the palace-gate. *Note;* (1.) One sin seldom comes alone, but usually requires others to conceal it. (2.) The greatest cruelty we can exercise toward our neighbour, is to lead him into sin: the loss of his wife's affection, and the attempt to father on him a spurious brood, were not so great injuries to Uriah, as to bring the guilt of drunkenness on his conscience.

3dly, When once the devil has entangled us, we know not whither he will lead us. David little intended the murder of Uriah when first he cast his eyes upon his wife; but the way of wickedness is steep, and, when he thinks that nothing but this can conceal his shame, he hesitates not at the crime.

1. Uriah is himself made the messenger of his execution. He seems to have entertained no suspicion of what was meditating against him; whilst David, covered with crimes and dark designs, plots his ruin, and in such a way as might most effectually remove him without suspicion of his being accessory to his death. With deliberate malice, therefore, he dictates the fatal letter, takes advantage of Uriah's known courage to place him in the post of danger, and with basest ingratitude thus repays his fidelity: many must necessarily be involved in his fall; but now David is lavish of the blood of his subjects, and dares to tempt, nay command, Joab to be an accomplice in the crime; bringing guilt upon his cause; giving the Ammonites courage, and endangering thereby the loss of his

army, and perhaps of his crown withal: well may it be said, that they who are given up to their lusts, are led captive by the devil at his will. *Note;* (1.) Sin first blinds the eyes, then hardens the heart. (2.) Deliberate malice and murder is the summit of human wickedness.

2. Joab failed not to execute the king's orders; perhaps pleased to find his king no longer able to reproach him with innocent blood, as involved in the same guilt. He sets Uriah, therefore, on an assault where the greatest opposition was expected, and, not supporting him properly, he fell with other brave soldiers, advancing to the breach. *Note;* (1.) It is a pleasure to the sinful world, to find those who are high in a religious profession, in any particular like themselves, and nothing tends more to harden them in their iniquities. (2.) Obedience to the king's orders is not always a sufficient warrant of excuse.

3. Without delay David acquaints Bath-sheba with the death of her husband, and soon after she becomes his wife: thus all the matter seemed hushed up; and the child, though somewhat before the time, would not come so much out of season, but that it might pass without suspicion of evil; yet there was an eye, from which these vain coverings could not conceal his guilt and shame. God marked his dark and winding way; and, with just indignation, regarded the various steps of this infamous procedure, from the first rising of concupiscence, till the sword was bathed in Uriah's blood, and his adulterous wife was taken to his bed. *Note;* Let men promise themselves what secrecy they will, there is an eye from which no darkness, or shadow of death, can hide the works of iniquity.

*The thing that David had done displeased the Lord*] Whoever reads this narrative, must acknowledge that David's crime was attended with the most heinous aggravations; though no person of humanity can relate it, without pitying the circumstances of the unhappy offender, drawn by a concurring train of accidents from the commission of one sin to another, till at length his guilt grew so enormous, as almost to involve him in ruin, and tarnish the glory of a character which would otherwise have been one of the first and fairest of all antiquity. There are some crimes peculiarly aggravated by previous deliberate steps which men take to commit them, when they lay schemes to gratify their passions, and accomplish the wicked purposes of their hearts. David's first offence seems to have been free from any thing of this kind. An unexpected sight fired his passion, and, hurried away by it, without allowing himself time for deliberation, he immediately proceeded to gratify it: nor is he the first, or will be, I am afraid, the last instance of the power of a sudden and unexpected temptation drawing men aside into the commission of those vices, which, in other circumstances, they would have trembled at, and abhorred the thoughts of. The first crime thus committed, and the consequences of it appearing, the unhappy man found himself involved in difficulties, out of which he knew not how to extricate himself.

C H A P. XII.

*Nathan's parable. David confesses his guilt: the child born in adultery dies. Solomon is born, and the city of Rabbah taken.*

[Before Christ 1036.]

**A**ND the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor.

2 The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds:

3 But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe-lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter.

4 And there came a traveller unto the rich

man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfar- ing man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him.

5 And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, *As* the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die:

6 And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.

7 ¶ And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul;

8 And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if

himself. Conscious guilt, concern for his own character, regard for the honour of the partner of his crime, and even fear of his own and her life;—the punishment of their adultery being death;—all united to put him upon forming some contrivances how to conceal and prevent the scandal of it from becoming public. Hence all the little shifts he made use of to entice Uriah to his wife's bed, and thus father the fruit of his adultery upon him. But even these failed him. What must he do? Where can a man stop, when once he is entangled in the toils of vice, and has presumptuously ventured into the paths of guilt?—Bath-sheba must be preserved at any rate! His own honour was at stake to prevent her destruction; and he saw but one way left to secure the end, which he was determined, at any hazard, to obtain! If Uriah lived, she must inevitably die. Uriah could have demanded the punishment; and he seems to have been a man of that firmness of resolution, which would have led him to prosecute his just resentment against her to the utmost. And the law was express and peremptory. Which of the two must be the victim? Cruel dilemma! It is at last determined, that the husband should be sacrificed, to save the wife, whom David's passion had made criminal. But how was Uriah to be got rid of? Poison, assassination, or some secret way of destruction, were methods which eastern princes were well acquainted with. David was above them all, and had a kind of generosity even in his very crimes. He causes him to fall in the bed of honour, gloriously fighting against the enemies of his king and country: and having thereby got rid of him, after Bath-sheba had gone through the usual time of mourning, he makes her his own wife, and thus secures her from the penalty of death, to which he himself had exposed her. This appears to me to be the sad situation to which he had reduced himself; and, though I am far from mentioning these things to excuse

David, or palliate his aggravated offences, yet the circumstances mentioned excite my compassion, and should ever be remembered, to soften the pen that is drawing up the account of it. It will, however, be far better for us to look to our own hearts, and gain instruction from his unhappy fall, than to suppose it a justification of our own vices. From the view of this mournful event, who can fail to acknowledge the fatal power of temptations, the hazards which the best men run of sinking under them, and the reasons they consequently have to add incessant vigilance to prayer, in order to resist them? On the other hand, we are taught from hence, that the greatest men are but men, men capable of the highest faults, and of the most odious deviations; that, therefore, we ought to regulate our conduct solely by the laws of religion, and never, absolutely speaking, by the example of any mortal whatever. When, moreover, we consider the moment in which David fell, how dangerous must indulgence and softness appear to us! How sensible should we be of the necessity and obligation that we lie under to be so employed, as to give no room for the attacks of temptation, nor suffer it ever to put our feeble virtue to the trial!

C H A P. XII.

*Ver. 1. There were two men, &c.]* See Judg. ix. 7. It is not easy to conceive any thing more masterly and exquisite than the present parable. It places Nathan's character in a fine point of view, and at the same time affords the ministers of religion a lively lesson how to manage the great and difficult duty of reproof with wisdom and discretion. We may just observe, that there is no need for parables, any more than for similes, to correspond exactly in every particular. It is sufficient, if the great and leading truth aimed at be marked out in a strong and conspicuous manner.

*that had been* too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things.

9 Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife *to be* thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.

10 Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.

*Ver. 13. David said—I have sinned*] No sooner was the application of the parable made by Nathan, but David owns his offence; and the Psalms he penned on this occasion, shew the deep sense he had of the guilt he contracted, and will be a memorial of his repentance to all future ages. See especially the 51st Psalm. His unhesitating confession, *I have sinned*, short, but more expressive than all the parade of eloquence, darted, as God saw it was, from a contrite, softened, penetrated heart, averted the impending stroke; and God was gracious to heal his soul with those balmy words, *the Lord also hath put away thy sin: thou shalt not die*. Upon the whole, let David stand as a warning to mankind of the frailty of human nature, of the deceitfulness of sin, of the danger of giving way to criminal passions, and the first violations of conscience and duty. Thus will his fall be a means of their security; and they will learn not to insult his memory, but pity the man by whom they are warned and guarded against the like transgressions. Or, if like him they offend, they may hope from his example that *they shall not die*, if, as he did, they acknowledge their sin, and with a broken and contrite heart earnestly implore the divine forgiveness. O what a pregnant lesson to all ages, to keep a constant guard upon their hearts, and to tremble at the thoughts of the unseen, undefinable consequences of every vicious, and particularly every lustful act! Lust is a vice as infectious to the souls, as the disease with which Providence has armed it is to the bodies of men. No lewd person knows, or can guess, to how many souls the poison of lewdness may communicate itself. The hearts of thousands may be tainted by means of one single act. The moral infection of it may spread on through successive subjects, producing in its ravages not only habits of lewdness, but thefts, perjuries, adulteries, murders—till the day of doom arrive, to call the pale astonished wretch from the long train of sins which sprung from his lust, to that dreadful condemnation, which nothing could have eluded, but an humble, contrite, perpetual repentance. Happy was it for David that he took this only expedient to obtain from God, in Christ, “that his sins should be put away, and remembered no more!”

*The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die*] That is, has put away the guilt and eternal punishment, together with the temporal punishment of death, due to this offence by the Mosaic law.

11 Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give *them* unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun.

12 For thou didst *it* secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.

13 And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.

REFLECTIONS.—If God were not to restore us in our vile and sinful departures from him, every iniquity would issue in apostacy; but he hateth putting away, therefore he delivers our souls, when we seem appointed unto death.

1. God sends Nathan the prophet to awaken David from his lethargy. David had not cast off the form of religion, though so degenerated from the power of it, but still retained and honoured the prophets and priests of the Lord, and continued a profession of godliness. Nathan instantly obeys the command, and, though prepared to reprove him sharply, yet introduces his message in such a way, as to insinuate deeper into David's conscience, and leave him self-condemned. *Note*; A reproof wisely administered is doubly effectual.

2. Nathan appears a poor man's advocate to the king against a rich oppressor, and, under this fictitious character, represents the circumstances of David's guilt, and draws from him his own condemnation. He represents the case as lately happening between two men, (David and Uriah,) the one rich in flocks and herds, (for David had many wives,) the other possessing but one ewe lamb, (Bathsheba,) which lay in his bosom, and was treated with the greatest tenderness. A traveller coming to the rich man, (Satan, who goeth to and fro in the earth to tempt, or his own inordinate concupiscence which craved indulgence,) he spared his own flocks and herds, (his own wives, and robbed the poor man of his lamb (even Uriah's wife,) to dress for the traveller (his own corrupt lust and appetite). So tender a story awakened David's anger; and, little suspecting how nearly he was concerned, he swears the offender shall die for his inhumanity, as well as his oppression. *Note*; (1.) Every wife has a title to her husband's singular and endeared affection. (2.) Multiplying wives never cures concupiscence, but inflames it. He who is not satisfied with one, will never be satisfied with more. (3.) Those are often severest in their censures on others, who are themselves most deserving of that severity. (4.) They who pronounce sentence in anger, will, it is to be feared, exceed the boundaries of justice as well as mercy.

3. Nathan unmasks his battery against David's conscience, and plainly charges him home with the very guilt that he had condemned. *Thou art the man; thou hast not only robbed the poor man of his lamb, but of his life too.*

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14 Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also *that is* born unto thee shall surely die.

15 ¶ And Nathan departed unto his house. And the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick.

16 David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth.

17 And the elders of his house arose, and

went to him, to raise him up from the earth; but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them.

18 And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died. And the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead: for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice: how will he then vex himself, if we tell him that the child is dead?

In the name of the God of Israel, that sacred name before which he used to tremble, Nathan upbraids him with his deep ingratitude: God had delivered him from Saul, had given him a kingdom, and his master's wives into his bosom; filled his house with riches, and would have done for him more if that had not sufficed him. Most ungrateful, therefore, were these returns. He boldly charges his crimes upon him; high contempt of God, and the greatest baseness and cruelty to man. He had despised God's government by the most open violation of his commands; had taken the wife of Uriah to the bed of adultery, and had then murdered the husband, with the deepest treachery, by the sword of the uncircumcised, after plunging him into the guilt of drunkenness. Therefore he denounces the sentence of terrible, but most just judgment against him. The sword he had so wickedly used should smite his own house, and never depart from it; beginning in the slaughter of his son Amnon and Absalom, and, after long wars, completing the ruin of his kingdom. The adultery he had committed secretly, should be visited upon him in his own wives, prostituted in the sight of the sun; and this evil, for its greater aggravation, should arise out of his own house; a house that he would live to see defiled with murder, incest, rebellion, and full of misery and wretchedness. *Note;* (1.) We must deal plainly and freely with the sinner's conscience. (2.) The root of all sin is unbelief of the divine threatenings, making men think lightly of the divine law. (3.) The poisoned chalice returns justly to the lips of him that mingled it. (4.) They must pay dear for their lusts who dare indulge them, either in present punishment, or shortly in eternal torment.

4. David, thunderstruck with the application, confounded with guilt, and self-condemned, confesses the charge, owns the heinousness of his guilt against God, and is ready to sink under despair on the black review. But God, though correcting him, will not give him over unto death. He revives his failing heart with hope: *Thou shalt not die*, as a murderer and adulterer deserves; thy sin is put away, is forgiven, so far as relates to eternal punishment. But let him not think all was over; no, dire marks of God's displeasure he should receive, because God will vindicate his honour, which was by this wicked conduct blasphemed among the people; and, as a present striking instance of God's anger, he denounces the death of the new-born babe: though he shall not die in his sin, he shall not enjoy the fruit of it. *Note;* (1.) The only way to

avoid the judgments that we have provoked, is by returning to God, through Jesus Christ, with humble acknowledgment of our guilt. (2.) They shall not die eternally, whose iniquity God in his dear Son has put away and forgiven. (3.) Nothing causes more reproach on God and his cause, than these scandalous falls of professors. (4.) God will make those sins bitter to his people, in which they foolishly and wickedly sought enjoyment, and by dire experience cause them to feel how evil and bitter a thing it is to transgress against him.

*Ver. 16. David therefore besought God for the child*] It may be thought surprising to see so wise a man as David fasting and mourning in this extraordinary manner for a child, who, being yet an infant, could not possibly have been endeared to him by any of those blandishments which so strongly fix the parental affections to their offspring; and who must moreover, if he should live, be a perpetual brand of infamy upon his parents. The true way of accounting for it is by ascribing it, as Le Clerc does, to David's excess of passion for Bath-sheba, which so strongly attached him to every offspring of hers, and made him forget every thing in this child but that motive of endearment. Besides this, there is something in human nature which prompts us to rate things after a manner seemingly unaccountable, and to estimate them, not according to their real worth, but according to the expence, or trouble, or even distress, that they have cost us.

*Ver. 18. It came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died*] Thus was the first instance of the divine vengeance upon David's guilt speedily and rigidly executed. Other instances of it were fulfilled in their order before his own eyes; and the dreadfulest of all the rest, *the sword shall never depart from thine house*, sadly and successively fulfilled in his posterity; from the death of Amnon by the order of his own brother, to the slaughter of the sons of Zedekiah by the king of Babylon. Indeed, David's guilt was more signally and dreadfully punished in his own person and in his posterity, than any guilt that I ever heard or read of in any other person since Adam. The Jews are of opinion, that his own decree of repaying the robbery *four-fold*, was strictly executed upon him. And as he was professedly punished by the death of one of his sons for the murder of Uriah, they imagine that the other three also, who died violent deaths, fell so many sacrifices to the divine justice upon the same account. In this view, can David's example be an encouragement for sin? Who would incur



19 But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead: therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead.

20 Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed *himself*, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat.

21 Then said his servants unto him, What thing *is* this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child, *while it was* alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread.

22 And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell *whether* God will be gracious to me, that the child may live?

23 But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.

24 ¶ And David comforted Bath-sheba his wife, and went in unto her, and lay with her: and she bare a son, and he called his name Solomon: and the LORD loved him.

25 And he sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet; and he called his name Jedidiah, because of the LORD.

26 ¶ And Joab fought against Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and took the royal city.

27 And Joab sent messengers to David, and said, I have fought against Rabbah, and have taken the city of waters.

28 Now therefore gather the rest of the people together, and encamp against the city, and take it: lest I take the city, and it be called after my name.

his guilt, to go through such a scene of sorrow and repentance?

*Ver. 23. Now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? &c.]* If David meant only that he should die, and go to the grave like his son, as some commentators explain this passage, the consolation which it conveys would be very poor, and we should lose one of the noblest lessons that was ever penned, upon all that is reasonable and religious in grief. There can be no doubt that David believed the immortality of the soul. His writings abundantly prove it: and in this view we may well paraphrase the words thus, "If I cannot have the consolation to partake with this infant the temporal happiness wherewith the divine goodness has blessed me, yet, I hope, to rejoin his soul one day in Heaven, and to partake with him eternal felicity." Considered in this light, the words convey the most satisfactory comfort; and, surely, it would be wrong to suppose that David was unacquainted with the felicities of that future state, and incapable of drawing the only solid consolation from that knowledge, when a heathen confessedly has done so. For who admires not those fine sentiments of Cato of Utica, who cries out with so much rapture, "O happy day! when I shall quit this impure and corrupted multitude, and join myself to that divine company of great souls, who have quitted the earth before me! There I shall find not only those illustrious personages, but also my Cato, who, I can say, was one of the best men, of the best nature, and the most faithful to his duty. I have placed his body upon that funeral pile whereon he ought to have laid mine. But his soul has not left me, and, without losing sight of me, he has only gone before into a country where he saw I should soon rejoin him!" See Cic. de Senect. ad fin.

*Ver. 24. And she bare a son, and he called his name Solomon]* As David was now in peace with God, and foresaw, in the spirit of prophecy, that his son would be a pacific

prince, he called his name *Solomon*, or *peaceable*; and as this son was conceived in innocence, in the happy season of God's reconciliation to his parents, and to their establishment in true religion, by sincere repentance and humiliation before him, it pleased God to accept him in a singular manner, which is signified to us by that remarkable expression, *and the Lord loved him*: and to manifest his favour to him for the consolation of David, God conveyed his benediction to the son by the same hand which had before conveyed his chastisements to the father. He sent Nathan to David, to bestow upon his son, in his name, the most blessed of all earthly, the most blessed but one of all heavenly appellations; *Jedidiah*, or *the beloved of the Lord*. Bath-sheba some time after had another son, called Nathan; and it is in him that the two lines of our Saviour's genealogy unite themselves; who, on Joseph's side, descended from Solomon, and on Mary's from Nathan. See Matt. i. 6, 7. Luke, iii. 31. Berruyer is of opinion, that Solomon was born in the fourth year after the death of the infant mentioned above.

*Ver. 26. And Joab fought—and took]* Or, *Now Joab had fought—and had taken.*

*Ver. 27, 28. I have fought against Rabbah, and have taken the city of waters, &c.]* Rabbah was a royal, a large, and a populous city, watered, and in some measure encompassed by the river Jabbok. It had its name from its grandeur, being derived from a Hebrew word, signifying to increase and grow great, and was now in the height of its glory. As the *city of waters* must mean Rabbah only, Houbigant translates after Josephus, *and I have intercepted, or cut off the waters from it*, which gives a good reason for Joab's message, as it was not probable that the city in this case should hold out long. Nothing can be more gallant and generous than the message of Joab: *Lest I take the city, and it be called after my name.* There is a magnanimity in the proposal capable of creating admiration in the meanest minds. The man who could

29 And David gathered all the people together, and went to Rabbah, and fought against it, and took it.

30 And he took their king's crown from off his head, the weight whereof *was* a talent of gold with the precious stones: and it was *set* on David's head. And he brought forth the spoil of the city in great abundance.

31 And he brought forth the people that *were* therein, and put *them* under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brick-kiln: and thus did he unto all the cities of the children of Ammon. So David and all the people returned unto Jerusalem.

transfer the glory of his own conquests to his prince, needs no higher eulogy as a general; and it is but justice to the character of Joab, to declare, that he is supreme, if not unrivalled, in this singular instance of heroism.

*Ver. 30. And he took their king's crown, &c.]* David formally deposed this king; and Dr. Trapp thinks that the form of his depofal was, by arraying him in his royal robes, and probably placing him on his throne with his crown upon his head, and then divesting him of all his ensigns of royalty. If instead of *weight* we read the *price* or *value* of his crown, *was a talent of gold*, all the difficulties will be removed which have given commentators so much trouble, arising from the extraordinary weight of this crown, which certainly was too heavy to have been borne upon the head: and the original word will well bear this meaning, which the context seems to confirm; for it is there said, that the *value* was so much *with the precious stones*; but if the weight only had been spoken of, certainly the mention of the precious stones would have been improper. See Le Cene's Proposal for a new version. Some, however, who defend the present version, suppose, that the Syriac, not the Hebrew *talent* is here meant; the latter being four times heavier than the former. See Pfeiffer, and Michaelis.

*Ver. 31 And he brought forth the people, &c.]* This treatment of the Ammonites having shocked some unthinking readers, it will not be unseasonable to inform them, that the words will bear a milder interpretation. Literally, they may be rendered thus: *And he brought forth the people, and placed them by*, [במגרה וישם במגרה] *vaiufem bamgerah,* or, more nearly, *put them to the saw, and to iron harrows, or mines, and to axes of iron, and made them pass by, or to, the brick-kilns*; i. e. made them slaves, and put them to the most servile employments; sawing, harrowing, or making iron harrows, or mining, and hewing of wood, and making of bricks. That the prefix ב *beth*, signifies *to*, in numerous places, may be seen in Noldius; and it does so in construction with this very verb במגרה *bamgerah*, in the place before us; *let not the king* [ישם יאסם] *put this thing* [בעבדו] *to his servant*; 1 Sam. xxii. 15. and in several other instances which might be mentioned. It may also be observed, that the Syriac and Arabic versions give a more favourable interpretation of this passage, and render it, *he brought them out, and threw them into chains, and iron shackles, and made them pass before him in a proper measure, or by proper companies at a time*. The version of the LXX is not so clear. *He put them in, or to, the saw, &c. and made them pass by the brick-kiln, which may well be interpreted of his putting them to these servile employments*. The words בחרצ'י הברזל *bacharitzei habbarzel,*

rendered *harrows of iron*, signify *iron mines*; which will determine the meaning in this more favourable sense. Thus חרוץ *charutz*, signifies *gold*, as being *deeply dug out* of the mines, from חרץ *cheretz*, to dig; Prov. iii. 14. But what shall we say to the parallel place, 1 Chron. xx. 3. which our version renders, *he cut them with saws, and with harrows of iron, and with axes*? Why, first, the verb does not agree in sense with the several punishments mentioned; for if נשך *nadar* be the root of וישך *vaiisfar*, as our version makes it to be, it properly signifies *he cut with a saw*; and therefore cannot be applied either to the *ax*, or *harrow*, or *mine*. But though this be the original sense of *nasar*, yet it is used in the Arabic in a more general sense, to signify, *he dispersed, divided, separated*, and the place may be rendered, *he divided or separated them to the saw, harrows, or iron mines, and axes*; i. e. to these servile employments, some to one, and some to another. It may be farther observed, that the root ישך *isfar*, may be שור *sur*; the meaning of which is, *he ruled, or governed them*, viz. by the *saw, the harrows, or mines, and axes*; made them slaves, and condemned them to these servile employments. The word is thus rendered by Schmidius, *he ruled by the saw, &c.* And this interpretation is far from forced, agreeable to the proper sense and construction of the words, and will vindicate David from any inhumanity which can be charged upon him in this instance. The Syriac version is, *he bound them with iron chains, &c. and thus he bound them all*: and the Arabic, *he bound them all with chains, killing none of the Ammonites*. This account may be farther confirmed by the next clause, *thus did he unto all the cities of the children of Ammon*: for, had he destroyed all the inhabitants by these or any methods of severity, it would have been an almost total extirpation of them: and yet we read of them as united with the Moabites, and the inhabitants of Seir, and forming a very large army to invade the dominions of Jehoshaphat. It may be added, that if the punishments inflicted on this people were as severe as our version represents them, they were undoubtedly inflicted by way of reprisals. Nahath the father of Hanun, in the wantonness of cruelty, would admit the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead to surrender themselves to him, upon no other condition than their every one consenting to have their right eye thrust out, that he might lay it as a reproach upon all Israel. If these severities of David were now exercised by way of retaliation for former cruelties of this nature, it will greatly lessen the horror which may be conceived on account of them, and in some measure justify David's using them, considering more especially the dispensation of grace under which he lived: and as the sacred writers, who have transmitted this history to us,

## C H A P. XIII.

*Amnon forceth his sister, and afterwards hateth her, and putteth her from him: Absalom revenges the injury by the death of Amnon, and flies to the king of Geshur.*

[Before Christ 1034.]

**A**ND it came to pass after this, that Absalom the son of David had a fair sister, whose name was Tamar; and Amnon the son of David loved her.

2 And Amnon was so vexed, that he fell sick for his sister Tamar; for she was a virgin; and Amnon thought it hard for him to do any thing to her.

3 But Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah David's brother: and Jonadab was a very subtil man.

4 And he said unto him, Why art thou, being the king's son, lean from day to day? wilt thou not tell me? And Amnon said unto him, I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister.

5 And Jonadab said unto him, Lay thee down on thy bed, and make thyself sick: and when thy father cometh to see thee, say unto him, I pray thee, let my sister Tamar come,

and give me meat, and dress the meat in my sight, that I may see it, and eat it at her hand.

6 ¶ So Amnon lay down, and made himself sick: and when the king was come to see him, Amnon said unto the king, I pray thee, let Tamar my sister come, and make me a couple of cakes in my sight, that I may eat at her hand.

7 Then David sent home to Tamar, saying, Go now to thy brother Amnon's house, and dress him meat.

8 So Tamar went to her brother Amnon's house; and he was laid down. And she took flour, and kneaded it, and made cakes in his sight, and did bake the cakes.

9 And she took a pan, and poured them out before him; but he refused to eat. And Amnon said, Have out all men from me. And they went out every man from him.

10 And Amnon said unto Tamar, Bring the meat into the chamber, that I may eat of thine hand. And Tamar took the cakes which she had made, and brought them into the chamber to Amnon her brother.

do not pass any censure on David as having exceeded the bounds of humanity in this punishment of the Ammonites, we may reasonably conclude, either that the punishment was not so severe as our version represents it; or, that there was some peculiar reason which demanded this exemplary vengeance, and which, if we were acquainted with it, would induce us to pass a more favourable judgment concerning it; or, that the law of nations then subsisting admitted such kind of executions upon very extraordinary provocations, though there are scarcely any which can justify them.

## C H A P. XIII.

*Ver. 1. It came to pass after this, &c.]* When David had taken Rabbah and all the other cities of Ammon, he had not long returned to Jerusalem before his domestic misfortunes began to multiply upon him, and to verify the terrible threats which Nathan had denounced from the Lord, *I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house.* Tamar was the daughter of Maacah, the daughter of the king of Geshur, and the uterine sister of Absalom. Amnon was David's eldest son by Ahinoam.

*Ver. 2. Amnon was so vexed, that he fell sick]* It is natural to think, that the passion of love is nowhere so wasting and vexatious as where it is unlawful. A quick sense of guilt, especially where it is enormous, as in the present instance, strikes the soul with horror; and the impossibility of an innocent gratification loads that horror with desperation. Witness the two most remarkable instances of this kind found

in history; that of Antiochus for Stratonice his mother-in-law, and this of Amnon for Tamar his sister. Indeed, that of Antiochus appears the less criminal of the two, inasmuch as he seemed determined to conceal his till death, and at the same time to hasten that death to prevent its publication, had not the sagacity of his physician discovered it. Though possibly Amnon had done the same, had not the importunity of his false and subtle friend Jonadab the son of Shimeah, David's brother, drawn the secret from him. It is lamentable to think, that the heirs of royalty, whose virtue is of infinitely more consequence than that of meaner men, should yet be under more temptations to taint it, from the poison of infectious flatterers.

*Ver. 9. She took a pan, &c.]* Tamar came and prepared food at Amnon's desire, with all the housewifely skill of those simple ages, when an utter inattention to all the purposes of domestic life made no part even of a princess's praise. See Gen. xviii. 6. and Herodot. lib. viii. cap. 137. After having baked the cakes, it is said, *she took a pan, and poured them out;* which makes it probable that she fried them in oil, according to the custom of that country. *But he refused to eat.* The insinuation was, that he was grown worse; and, to cover the deceit the better, he ordered every body to go out of his room, as if he could neither bear the sight nor the noise of company. And when they were gone, he desired his sister to bring the victuals into an inner chamber, *ver. 10. She, suspecting no evil, did as he desired.*

*Ver.*

11 And when she had brought *them* unto him to eat, he took hold of her, and said unto her, Come lie with me, my sister.

12 And she answered him, Nay, my brother, do not force me; for no such thing ought to be done in Israel: do not thou this folly.

13 And I, whither shall I cause my shame to go? and as for thee, thou shalt be as one of the fools in Israel. Now therefore, I pray thee, speak unto the king; for he will not withhold me from thee.

14 Howbeit he would not hearken unto her voice: but, being stronger than she, forced her, and lay with her.

15 ¶ Then Amnon hated her exceedingly; so that the hatred wherewith he hated her *was* greater than the love wherewith he had loved her. And Amnon said unto her, Arise, be gone.

16 And she said unto him, *There is* no cause: this evil in sending me away *is* greater than the other that thou didst unto me. But

he would not hearken unto her.

17 Then he called his servant that ministered unto him, and said, Put now this *woman* out from me, and bolt the door after her.

18 And *she had* a garment of divers colours upon her: for with such robes were the king's daughters *that were* virgins apparelled. Then his servant brought her out, and bolted the door after her.

19 ¶ And Tamar put ashes on her head, and rent her garment of divers colours that *was* on her, and laid her hand on her head, and went on crying.

20 And Absalom her brother said unto her, Hath Amnon thy brother been with thee? but hold now thy peace, my sister: he *is* thy brother; regard not this thing. So Tamar remained desolate in her brother Absalom's house.

21 ¶ But when king David heard of all these things, he was very wroth.

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*Ver. 12. She answered him, Nay, my brother*] Amnon having mentioned his criminal passion to Tamar, she represents to him in the most lively manner the horror of his crime; that it was a violation of the laws, that it would be her destruction, and that it would dishonour him in the highest degree before all Israel: but, finding all these considerations fruitless, she changed her tone, and tried to flatter him into forbearance. He was her father's eldest son, his darling, who could deny him nothing. He had only to speak to the king for her, and his request would certainly be complied with: an argument which, as is generally thought, she urged in order to extricate herself at present from his hands. See Joseph. Antiq. lib. vii. cap. 8.

*Ver. 15—17. Then Amnon hated her exceedingly*] The flux and reflux of passion in a brutal breast are here finely painted. Commentators are at a loss to account for this sudden and excessive hatred; and, indeed, there seems to be something extraordinary in it. Tamar's rape had an effect upon her ravisher directly contrary to that of Dinah upon her's. But their circumstances were different. Hope seconded and supported *Shechem's* passion, but despair drove *Amnon's* into its opposite extreme. This is often observed to be the case with passions too tumultuous and unruly. Amnon's mind was first agitated by lust, and then by remorse, which drove to different extremes like the vibrations of a pendulum. God abandoned him thus to the tumult of his own intemperate mind, to make this other punishment of David's adultery more flagrant, and the prophet's prediction of *raising up evil to him out of his own house* more conspicuous; for Amnon's barbarous behaviour now precluded all possibility of concealing his guilt.

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*Ver. 18. She had a garment of divers colours*] See Gen. xxxvii. 3. and Martin's Explicat. des Textes Difficiles, p. 172.

*Ver. 20. Hath Amnon thy brother been with thee*] Oppressed with sorrow, and overwhelmed with shame, Tamar went to her brother Absalom's house, who, seeing her confusion and distress, easily apprehended the cause of it, and put the question to her, *whether her brother Amnon had been with her*; covering the gross injury he suspected, under the veil of the most decent and distant phrase which could hint his suspicion; and, as if all this had not been enough to save her blushes, and let her see that he understood her distress, he stopped her short from attempting any answer: *but hold now thy peace, my sister; he is thy brother; regard not this thing.* However, as all he could say could not remedy the evil, so neither could it relieve it; which seems sufficiently implied in what is added, *So Tamar remained desolate in her brother Absalom's house.* In all probability she continued so her whole life long, unmarried and undone; and Amnon had the horror of reflecting, that for one moment's base and brutal indulgence he had made his nearest kinswoman, an amiable and innocent sister, miserable to the last moment of her life.

*Ver. 21. When king David heard of all these things, he was very wroth*] We may easily conceive what resentment and uneasiness David felt for this crime: but how he punished it we know not. The truth is, he could not punish it without exposing the infamy of his house, and cutting off his eldest son: and how hard was it for a father to do this. The LXX and the Vulgate, whom Houbigant follows, add these words to the present

S f

verse:

22 And Absalom spake unto his brother Amnon neither good nor bad: for Absalom hated Amnon, because he had forced his sister Tamar.

23 ¶ And it came to pass after two full years, that Absalom had sheep-shearers in Baal-hazor, which is beside Ephraim: and Absalom invited all the king's sons.

24 And Absalom came to the king, and said, Behold now, thy servant hath sheep-shearers; let the king, I beseech thee, and his servants go with thy servant.

25 And the king said to Absalom, Nay, my son, let us not all now go, lest we be chargeable unto thee. And he pressed him: howbeit he would not go, but blessed him.

26 Then said Absalom, If not, I pray thee, let my brother Amnon go with us. And the king said unto him, Why should he go with thee?

27 But Absalom pressed him, that he let Amnon and all the king's sons go with him.

28 ¶ Now Absalom had commanded his servants, saying, Mark ye now when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say unto you, Smite Amnon; then kill him, fear not: have not I commanded you? be courageous, and be valiant.

29 And the servants of Absalom did unto Amnon as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king's sons arose, and every man gat him up upon his mule, and fled.

30 ¶ And it came to pass, while they were in the way, that tidings came to David, saying, Absalom hath slain all the king's sons, and there is not one of them left.

31 Then the king arose, and tare his garments, and lay on the earth; and all his servants stood by with their clothes rent.

32 And Jonadab, the son of Shimeah David's

verse: David, when he knew all these things, was very much afflicted: but he would not grieve the spirit of his son Amnon, for he loved him exceedingly, as being his first-born. There can be no doubt but that David's consciousness of his own guilt with Bath-sheba, rendered him more backward to punish that of Amnon. However, the guilt which human justice or human infirmity did not chastise as it deserved, the divine vengeance did.

Ver. 22. And Absalom spake unto his brother Amnon neither good nor bad, &c.] But Absalom spoke not at all with Amnon, because he was enraged against him for having violated his sister Tamar. Houb. Though grieved to the soul for the injury done to his sister, and resenting it to death, yet Absalom so well dissembled his resentment, as not to take the least notice of it to Amnon.

Ver. 26. I pray thee let my brother Amnon go with us] As heir presumptive to the crown, Amnon might represent the king; and it was probably upon this pretence that Absalom was so pressing for his attendance.

REFLECTIONS.—Such a transaction as this of Amnon's could not be concealed.

1. David heard of it, and very wroth he was; yet, instead of punishing this rape and incest with death, as it deserved, he spared his son; but God will not; vengeance shall overtake him. Note; Over-indulgent parents, by their sinful lenity, make a severe scourge for themselves.

2. Absalom, though silent, entertains deep-rooted vengeance in his bosom. He saw, probably, that to seek for justice were vain; or he desired the malicious gratification of being his own avenger. Two long years he waited opportunity, whilst the civility of his carriage, and his taking no notice of the rape, had now removed all suspicion of the sanguinary revenge that he meditated in his heart. But now the day approaches for the accomplishment of his dark design, a festal day, when, on shear-

ing his sheep, he invited the king and his family to grace his entertainment at Baal-hazor: and when his father, fearing it would be too expensive and burdensome to him if they all went, excused himself, thanked him for his kindness, and gave him his paternal benediction, he presses him at least to send his brethren, and Amnon in particular, as the most honourable. David with reluctance, at his importunity, complies; and Amnon, unsuspecting of the plot, goes with his brethren to the feast. Note; (1.) The longer hatred is smothered, the fiercer it burns; and when it finds the moment for revenge, the deeper it strikes. (2.) Many are over-generous in their invitations, and consider not the expence of their entertainments, till the pressures of poverty make them smart for their extravagance.

3. The festal board is spread, the glass goes round, and Amnon, flushed with wine, little suspects the sword that hangs over him. The signal is given, which had before been concerted between Absalom and his servants; they suddenly rush into the room, and lay Amnon dead at their feet. Such were their master's guilty commands, and they judge this sufficient to authorize them; while he, who, as next heir to the crown, would be able to protect them, encourages them not to startle at the bloody work, but courageously execute his orders. Hereupon all the king's sons fled, fearing lest the same fate should overtake them. Note; (1.) To die in a state of drunkenness is very terrible. (2.) The fear of man is usually stronger than the fear of God; and many dare not dispute the commands of a master, though at the hazard of their eternal damnation. (3.) It was just in God to permit the death of Amnon, though wicked in Absalom to assassinate him. When sinners execute God's designs, they mean no such thing; but, while instruments of his vengeance, fill up the measure of their own iniquities.

Ver.

brother, answered and said, Let not my lord suppose *that* they have slain all the young men the king's sons; for Amnon only is dead: for by the appointment of Absalom this hath been determined from the day that he forced his sister Tamar.

33 Now therefore let not my lord the king take the thing to his heart, to think that all the king's sons are dead: for Amnon only is dead.

34 But Absalom fled. And the young man that kept the watch lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came much people by the way of the hill-side behind him.

35 And Jonadab said unto the king, Behold, the king's sons come: as thy servant said, so it is.

36 And it came to pass, as soon as he had made an end of speaking, that, behold, the king's sons came, and lifted up their voice and wept: and the king also and all his servants wept very fore.

37 ¶ But Absalom fled, and went to Talmi; the son of Ammihud, king of Geshur. And

David mourned for his son every day.

38 So Absalom fled, and went to Geshur, and was there three years.

39 And *the soul of* king David longed to go forth unto Absalom: for he was comforted concerning Amnon, seeing he was dead.

## C H A P. XIV.

*A woman of Tekoah, by the advice of Joab, comes to the king, and, under a fictitious story, persuades him to recal Absalom: the king gives Joab leave to bring back Absalom to Jerusalem, who continues there for two years, before he is admitted into the king's presence.*

[Before Christ 1029.]

**N**OW Joab the son of Zeruah perceived that the king's heart *was* toward Absalom.

2 And Joab sent to Tekoah, and fetched thence a wise woman, and said unto her, I pray thee, feign thyself to be a mourner, and put on now mourning apparel, and anoint not thyself with oil, but be as a woman that had a long time mourned for the dead:

*Ver. 32. This hath been determined, &c.]* What unparalleled impudence and effrontery was this! to speak with such calmness and unconcern of a horrid villany, which he himself had contrived, and of which he now saw the dreadful consequences! Could there be a more miscreant minister?

*Ver. 37. But Absalom fled, &c.]* As he had committed a wilful murder, he could have no city of refuge in his own country; and therefore he fled out of the kingdom, to his mother's father. Thus did God, by withdrawing his restraining grace from Amnon, and leaving him a prey to his own passions, *raise up evil to David out of his own house*: a daughter ravished by her own brother; that brother murdered by another brother; that other in exile for it, and soon to perish by a fate yet more deplorable, had it not been, if possible, more deserved!

REFLECTIONS.—Bad news flies apace, and never loses in the relation.

1. David is alarmed with the death of all his sons; such were the first flying reports; and, ready to fear the worst in remembrance of his past doings, and the threatenings against his family, he rends his clothes, and falls prostrate on the earth in an agony of grief, while his servants, with their clothes rent, stand round him. *Note*; It becomes us to sympathize with the afflicted.

2. Jonadab, who suspected the truth from reflecting on former circumstances, suggests, that Amnon only is dead, in revenge for his rape of Tamar; and the event verified his conclusion, for the king's sons now appeared in sight from the watch-tower, and haste to his presence. There with tears they report the sad catastrophe; and, though it

was some alleviation that they were not all slain, yet Amnon's death awakened the king's bitter sorrow. *Note*; (1.) In all our calamities we have to thank God that they are no worse. (2.) The loss of a son, and a wicked son too, is a deep wound in a godly parent's heart.

3. Absalom fled immediately from justice, and sought an asylum with his grandfather Talmi, where three years he lived an exile. *Note*; One rash action often makes the whole life miserable.

4. As time wore off the grief for the dead Amnon, the love of the living Absalom revived. His sin was overlooked, and his return ardently longed for; though how to restore him, in opposition to honour and justice, David hardly knew. *Note*; (1.) It is a mercy that time blunts the edge of sorrow, else all our days would be embittered with mourning. (2.) The greatest provocations cannot extinguish parental affection.

## C H A P. XIV.

*Ver. 2. Joab sent to Tekoah, &c.]* Tekoah was a city in the tribe of Judah, and lay about twelve miles south of Jerusalem. Joab's conduct in this affair was remarkably artful: he chose a *widow*, because her condition of life was more proper to move compassion; one who lived at a distance from Jerusalem, as her case might not be so readily inquired into; and a woman *advanced in years*, as Josephus asserts, that her application might have the more weight. She appeared in a habit of mourning, to heighten the idea of her distress, and that her circumstances, her mournful tale, her dress, and her person, might make one united impression on the king, and secure

3 And come to the king, and speak on this manner unto him. So Joab put the words in her mouth.

4 ¶ And when the woman of Tekoah spake to the king, she fell on her face to the ground, and did obeisance, and said, Help, O king.

5 And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, I *am* indeed a widow woman, and mine husband is dead.

6 And thy handmaid had two sons, and they two strove together in the field, and *there was* none to part them, but the one smote the other, and slew him.

7 And, behold, the whole family is risen against thine handmaid, and they said, Deliver him that smote his brother, that we may kill him, for the life of his brother whom he slew; and we will destroy the heir also: and so they shall quench my coal which is left, and shall not leave to my husband *neither* name nor remainder upon the earth.

8 And the king said unto the woman, Go to thine house, and I will give charge concerning thee.

9 And the woman of Tekoah said unto the king, My lord, O king, the iniquity *be* on me, and on my father's house: and the king and his throne *be* guiltless.

10 And the king said, Whosoever faith *ought* unto thee, bring him to me, and he shall not touch thee any more.

11 Then said she, I pray thee, let the king remember the LORD thy God, that thou wouldest not suffer the revengers of blood to destroy any more, lest they destroy my son. And he said, *As* the LORD liveth, there shall not one hair of thy son fall to the earth.

12 Then the woman said, Let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak *one* word unto my lord the king. And he said, Say on.

13 And the woman said, Wherefore then hast thou thought such a thing against the

her his attention. The whole design of her speech was to frame a case similar to that of David, in order to convince him how much more reasonable it was to preserve Ab-salom. But there was great art in not making the similitude too plain and visible, lest the king should perceive the intention of the woman's petition, before she had obtained a grant of pardon for her son, and came to make the application to the king.

Ver. 7. *So they shall quench my coal which is left*] The expression is singularly beautiful and expressive. Heathen authors seem to have borrowed it from hence. Plato and Lucian call the few men who survived the deluge ζωνύρα, *live coals*, who were to re-kindle the vital flame, and continue the human race: and in Scripture a man and his successors are often called a *lamp* or *light*: see chap. xxi. 17. Pf. cxxxii. 17. and Calmet and Le Clerc.

Ver. 9—11. *My lord, O king, the iniquity be on me, &c.*] The king having told the woman that she might return to her house, and leave the care of her business to him, she adds, with great address, that if she had pressed his majesty to any thing in itself unjust, or any way misinformed him, or misrepresented the state of the case, she wished all the iniquity of that guilt, or misrepresentation, might fall upon her own head, and upon her family: *My lord, O king, &c.* The king then bade her, ver. 10. if any molested her further, to bring them before him, and he would take care to stop any further proceedings against her. She then begged, ver. 11. that, in making that promise to stay the avenger of blood from causing any further destruction in her family, he would *remember the Lord his God*; i. e. remember that he made that promise in the presence of God; drawing him thus distantly and insensibly into the obligation of an oath: and

her address had its effect: *as the Lord liveth, said he, there shall not one hair of thy son fall to the earth.* Houbigant thinks that the woman in the ninth verse insinuates, that she is less concerned for her own son and her family, than for the son and the family of the king.

Ver. 12—17. *Then the woman said, &c.*] The woman, having so far gained her point, begged leave to say one word further; and, having obtained permission, immediately proceeded, ver. 13. to expostulate with the king upon his own conduct, and his unkindness to the people of GOD, in not pardoning his own son, and bringing him back from exile. His mercy to *her* son made him self-condemned in relation to his own. She then added a very natural and seasonable reflection, ver. 14. that death was the common lot of all men, some by one means, some by another; that in that state *we are like water spilled upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again*; that God, if he pleased, could strike the offender dead; but inasmuch as he did not, it was because *he would leave room for mercy*; that he had *devised means* in his own law to arrest the avenger of blood, and in his appointed time to recall the manslayer from his exile in the city of refuge: Numb. xxxv. 25. But here, apprehending that she might have gone too far, and made too free with majesty, in expostulating so plainly upon a point of such importance, she excused this presumption, ver. 15. from the force put upon her by her people, who had so severely threatened her, that in this extremity she plainly saw she had no resource or hope of relief, but in laying her son's case before the king; which she, ver. 16, 17. confiding in his majesty's mercy, and assuring herself that he would hear her with his wonted clemency, at length adventured to do; hoping that it might be a means of saving both *herself and her son*  
from

people of God? for the king doth speak this thing as one which is faulty, in that the king doth not fetch home again his banished.

14 For we must needs die, and *are* as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect *any* person: yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him.

15 Now therefore that I am come to speak of this thing unto my lord the king, *it is* because the people have made me afraid: and thy handmaid said, I will now speak unto the king; it may be that the king will perform the request of his handmaid.

16 For the king will hear, to deliver his handmaid out of the hand of the man *that would* destroy me and my son together out of the inheritance of God.

17 Then thine handmaid said, The word of my lord the king shall now be comfortable: for as an angel of God, so *is* my lord the king to discern good and bad: therefore the LORD thy God will be with thee.

18 Then the king answered and said unto the woman, Hide not from me, I pray thee, the thing that I shall ask thee. And the woman said, Let my lord the king now speak.

19 And the king said, *Is not* the hand of Joab with thee in all this? And the woman answered and said, *As* thy soul liveth, my lord the king, none can turn to the right hand or to the left from ought that my lord the

king hath spoken: for thy servant Joab, he bade me, and he put all these words in the mouth of thine handmaid;

20 To fetch about this form of speech hath thy servant Joab done this thing: and my lord *is* wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God, to know all *things* that *are* in the earth.

21 ¶ And the king said unto Joab, Behold now, I have done this thing: go therefore, bring the young man Absalom again.

22 And Joab fell to the ground on his face, and bowed himself, and thanked the king: and Joab said, To-day thy servant knoweth that I have found grace in thy sight, my lord, O king, in that the king hath fulfilled the request of his servant.

23 So Joab arose and went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to Jerusalem.

24 And the king said, Let him turn to his own house, and let him not see my face. So Absalom returned to his own house, and saw not the king's face.

25 ¶ But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him.

26 And when he polled his head, (for it was at every year's end that he polled *it*: because *the hair* was heavy on him, therefore he polled *it*;) he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels after the king's weight.

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*from being destroyed out of the inheritance of God, insinuating that her own life was wrapped up in his. We may here observe, that the single design and address of this device are sufficient proofs, if there were no other, to evince the Jewish people to have been neither unpolite nor uninformed. The clause in the 13th verse, for the king doth speak this thing, &c. is thus rendered by Houbigant, for the king's purpose not to recall his exile is a kind of fault. The words in the 14th verse, neither doth God respect any person, may be rendered according to the ancient versions, but the Lord doth not take away the life.*

*Ver. 22. Joab fell to the ground on his face, &c.] There cannot be a greater refinement of flattery and address. Joab places that obligation entirely to his own score, which he knew was the greatest that he could lay upon his master.*

*Ver. 24. Let him turn to his own house, &c.] This discountenance and rebuke, which Absalom received from his father, was certainly little enough to signify the king's abhorrence of his late cruel revenge upon his brother; yet*

*not more than was necessary to mortify his pride and repress his popularity, which now in all probability began to blaze out upon the news of this reconciliation to his father: and this appears to be the reason why the sacred historian immediately subjoins to this account of the king's discountenance, a particular description of Absalom's beauty, ver. 25, 26. which is a frequent foundation of popularity; and then acquaints us with his having three sons and one fair daughter, ver. 27. whom he named after his unhappy sister, Tamar, which was probably another fountain of pride, popularity, and presumption.*

*Ver. 26. And when he polled his head, &c.] Houbigant remarks, that it is a mistake to suppose that Absalom polled his head every year: the Hebrew, מִקֵּץ יָמִים miklets jamim, which we render at every year's end, signifies only at the return of a certain season, and he renders the passage, for there were certain seasons when he polled it, that he might deliver himself from the weight; and when he polled it, the weight was two hundred shekels. This seemingly prodigious weight of hair, according to Bochart, if computed by the Jewish shekel, amounted*



27 ¶ And unto Abfalom there were born three fons, and one daughter, whose name was Tamar: ſhe was a woman of a fair countenance.

28 ¶ So Abfalom dwelt two full years in Jeruſalem, and ſaw not the king's face.

29 Therefore Abfalom ſent for Joab, to have ſent him to the king; but he would not come to him: and when he ſent again the ſecond time, he would not come.

30 Therefore he ſaid unto his ſervants, See, Joab's field is near mine, and he hath barley there; go and ſet it on fire. And Abfalom's ſervants ſet the field on fire.

31 Then Joab aroſe, and came to Abfalom unto *his* houſe, and ſaid unto him, Wherefore have thy ſervants ſet my field on fire?

32 And Abfalom answered Joab, Behold, I ſent unto thee, ſaying, Come hither, that I may ſend thee to the king, to ſay, Wherefore am I come from Geſhur? *it had been* good for me *to have been* there ſtill: now therefore let me ſee the king's face; and if there be *any* iniquity in me, let him kill me.

33 So Joab came to the king, and told him:

and when he had called for Abfalom, he came to the king, and bowed himſelf on his face to the ground before the king: and the king kiſſed Abfalom.

## C H A P. XV.

*Abfalom conſpires againſt David, and draws over Abithophel to his party. David flies from Jeruſalem, and is followed by Zadok and Abiathar, whom he commands to return to Jeruſalem with the ark. He ſends Huſhai to Jeruſalem to defeat the counſel of Abithophel.*

[Before Chriſt 1023.]

**A**ND it came to paſs after this, that Abfalom prepared him chariots and horſes, and fifty men to run before him.

2 And Abfalom roſe up early, and ſtood beſide the way of the gate: and it was ſo, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Abfalom called unto him, and ſaid, Of what city *art* thou? And he ſaid, Thy ſervant *is* of one of the tribes of Iſrael.

3 And Abfalom ſaid unto him, See, thy matters *are* good and right; but *there is* no man *deputed* of the king to hear thee.

amounted to three pounds and two ounces of our weight. But Biſhop Patrick remarks, that when the books of Samuel were reviſed after the Babyloniſh captivity, ſuch weights were mentioned as were then known to them; and therefore, when the hiſtorian ſpeaks of this weight of Abfalom's hair, he adds, by way of explanation, that it was *after the king's weight*; i. e. after the weight of the king of Babylon, whoſe ſhekel was only one-third of that of the Jews; and therefore this large quantity of hair, which has given ſo much occaſion to the enemies of revelation to ridicule the ſacred text, is reduced ſo as not to ſeem at all enormous. Beſides, we ſhould recollect, that the hair, being in thoſe days reckoned a great ornament, was perfumed with large quantities of fragrant oils, which would make it more heavy than otherwiſe it would have been: and further we ſhould remark, that it is very evident from the peculiar manner in which it is mentioned in the ſacred text, that there muſt have been ſomething extremely ſingular, even at that time, in this large quantity of Abfalom's hair. Thoſe, however, who are deſirous to enter further on the ſubject, which has been very thoroughly examined, may find full ſatisfaction in Michaelis's Comment. Gotting. tom. ii. or in Stackhouſe on the place.

*Ver. 29. Abfalom ſent for Joab.]* The reader who is little verſed in courts will naturally be ſurpriſed to ſee Joab ſo zealous to get Abfalom recalled from exile, and to obſerve him afterwards ſo cold and indifferent about having him re-

eſtabliſhed in his father's favour. The truth is, when Joab had greatly gratified the king, and gained credit with him, by bringing back Abfalom to Jeruſalem, he had little reaſon, as a miniſter, to be ſolicitous to bring him about the king's perſon, and reſtore him to full favour; becauſe in that caſe he might naturally apprehend, that Abfalom's intereſt with his father might impair his own. This the young man's ambition could but ill endure, and therefore he took this extraordinary ſtep to be ſet right with his father; a ſtep, indeed, which ſhewed him determined to go any lengths, rather than fall ſhort of his ambitious aims. He that could ſet his friend's field on fire barely to be admitted to court, would little ſcruple to ſet his country in a flame (if I may be allowed the expreſſion) to be raiſed to a crown: although, poſſibly, this injury to Joab might have been an artifice to prevent the king's ſuſpicion of their combination, and Joab's too great attachment to the intereſt of his ſon.

REFLECTIONS.—Joab is prevailed upon to intercede with David, and he at laſt conſents to receive him. Abfalom is introduced; the king, with paternal tenderneſs, ſeals by a kiſs his reconciliation; and, believing his ſon's profeſſions *real*, reſtates him in all his former honours. *Note;* (1.) A parent's fondneſs often makes him blind to his children's ill deſigns: he ſain would hope the beſt, even againſt hope. (2.) How much more tender is the reception which the returning prodigal meets with from his heavenly Father, when by the Spirit his pardon is ſealed!

4 Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!

5 And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him.

6 And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

7 ¶ And it came to pass after forty years, that Absalom said unto the king, I pray thee, let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed unto the LORD, in Hebron.

8 For thy servant vowed a vow while I abode at Geshur in Syria, saying, If the LORD shall bring me again indeed to Jerusalem, then I will serve the LORD.

9 And the king said unto him, Go in peace. So he arose, and went to Hebron.

10 ¶ But Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron.

11 And with Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem, that were called; and they went in their simplicity, and they knew not any thing.

CHAP. XV.

*Ver. 6. Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel]* Dr. Delaney is of opinion, that Absalom took this occasion to increase his popularity, during the time that his father David lay confined with a very grievous sickness. See the xxxviii. xxxix. xl. and xli. Psalms.

REFLECTIONS on ver. 1—6.—No sooner is Absalom restored to favour, than we find him plotting to dethrone his father, and seeking, for that purpose, to alienate from him the love of his subjects, and attach them to himself. For this purpose,

1. He prepares a grand equipage and retinue. His chariots, his horsemen, and fifty footmen to clear the way, afforded a degree of magnificence which Israel had not seen before, and which dazzled vain minds, as some great thing. Probably David himself was proud of the figure his son made, and, by connivance, encouraged his ambitious views. *Note;* (1.) Parents who indulge their children in pomp and pride, know not the injury they do them and themselves. (2.) The vanity of making a figure in the world, is the rock on which more young persons split than on any other.

2. He pretends great zeal for Israel's good, is seen constant and early at the gate, as if longing to have business dispatched; and kindly enquires into every man's cause, as if solicitous to do them justice. On a slight hearing, when one party only represented his case, he flattered him with certain success in his cause, if there were but any one deputed to hear him, but insinuates the negligent administration of justice, and how much the land suffered for want of an active and upright magistrate; intimating how happy it would be for the people, if he were judge, when every man might expect speedy redress, and equitable decisions. Such pretensions easily sunk down into unthinking minds, and flattered them with halcyon days under his administration: and his familiarity and condescension to the lowest of the people soon won their hearts; for he shook them by the hand, embraced them as if a friend or a brother, and scrupled not to stoop, however low, in order to climb into the throne. *Note;* (1.) Zeal for the public good, and redress of grievances, is often the dust thrown

into the eyes of the populace to conceal the projects of ambition. (2.) The best of kings, and the most upright administration, must never expect to escape the malignant aspersions of a discontented faction. (3.) They who are most eager to get into the seat of judgment, are often least qualified for the trust: the deserving know the difficulty, and modestly decline it. (4.) They who court popularity by low condescensions are no sooner in power, than they throw off the mask and play the tyrant over a deluded people.

*Ver. 7. After forty years]* Or rather, *after four years.* The Syriac and Arabic, whom Houbigant follows, read *after four years.* As there is no event from which the forty years can be dated, very great has been the distress of the advocates for that reading. But Josephus, Theodoret, the Manuscripts mentioned in the Benedictine edition of Jerome's version, the canon of the Hebrew verity, (supposed to be made about the ninth century, and altered by some correcting hand,) the reading of the famous Latin Bible of Sextus, the Latin manuscript in Exeter college library, marked C. ii. 13. and the ancient Latin manuscript written in Gothic characters, and the variations of which are published in Blanchini's *Vindiciæ*, all have it *four.* See Kennicott's *Dissert.* vol. ii. p. 358. and Houbigant's note.

*Ver. 8. Thy servant vowed a vow]* This vow is conceived exactly in the patriarchal style, and, if true, shews, that however he might have been tempted by his grandfather to serve the gods of Geshur, yet he continued determined against idolatry; which David, we may assure ourselves, was highly delighted to hear, and accordingly gave a ready consent to the performance of his vow.

*Ver. 10. But Absalom sent spies]* Before he left Jerusalem, Absalom took care to send his emissaries throughout all the tribes; doubtless under colour of inviting persons of distinction to the sacrifice, but in reality to carry the watchword and signal before agreed on between them.

*Ver. 11. With Absalom went two hundred men]* But there followed Absalom two hundred men, who, called from Jerusalem, went after him with a simple heart, and who were entirely ignorant of the whole affair. Houbigant.

*Ver.*

12 And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, *even* from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom.

13 ¶ And there came a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom.

14 And David said unto all his servants that were with him at Jerusalem. Arise, and let us flee; for we shall not *else* escape from Absalom: make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword.

15 And the king's servants said unto the king, Behold, thy servants *are ready to do* whatsoever my lord the king shall appoint.

16 And the king went forth, and all his household after him. And the king left ten women, *which were* concubines, to keep the house.

17 And the king went forth, and all the people after him, and tarried in a place that was far off.

18 And all his servants passed on beside him; and all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites, six hundred men which came after him from Gath, passed on before the king.

19 ¶ Then said the king to Ittai the Gittite, Wherefore goest thou also with us? return to thy place, and abide with the king: for thou *art* a stranger, and also an exile.

20 Whereas thou camest *but* yesterday, should I this day make thee go up and down with us? Seeing I go whither I may, return thou, and take back thy brethren: mercy and truth *be* with thee.

21 And Ittai answered the king, and said, *As* the LORD liveth, and *as* my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be.

22 And David said to Ittai, Go and pass over. And Ittai the Gittite passed over, and all his men, and all the little ones that *were* with him.

23 And all the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people passed over: the king also himself passed over the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over, toward the way of the wilderness.

24 ¶ And lo Zadok also, and all the Levites *were* with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God: and they set down the ark of God; and Abiathar went up, until all the people had done passing out of the city.

*Ver. 12. Absalom sent for Ahithophel]* Ahithophel's junction with Absalom seems to have given the finishing stroke to the rebellion. He was too sagacious to discover himself, till he saw all things favourable and prosperous on the part of Absalom; and they both very well judged that his accession to the conspiracy in those circumstances was the likeliest means to secure its success.

*Ver. 13. The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom]* Some reason may be assigned for this. In every nation there are always turbulent and discontented spirits, who promise themselves some benefit from a change. Saul's party was not yet entirely extinct, and Joab, who was David's prime minister, behaved with an insufferable pride and insolence. His crimes, which were very black, and which David was afraid to punish, reflected upon the king himself; and David's other ministers might have grown insolent in times of uninterrupted success. But what gave the fairest pretence of all, was, probably, the obstruction of the civil administration of justice; for had there not been something of this, Absalom, I think, could have had no grounds for making such loud complaints. See ver. 3, 4. and Grotius on the place.

*Ver. 14. Arise, and let us flee]* As the danger was in-

stant, David took his measures accordingly. The city was not in a condition to sustain a siege; and if it were, he did not care to expose a favourite city, built by himself, and the residence of the tabernacle of God, to all the evils incident to sieges, and almost inseparable from them. Nor, perhaps, did he care to trust the inhabitants of a place so long exposed to the taint of Absalom's temptations; see Psalm lv. Well acquainted with the young man's impetuosity, and the madness of the people, David judged it much better to give way to the fury of the flood, than attempt to stem it in the fullness of its overflowing.

*Ver. 19. Ittai the Gittite]* The Jews say, that this Ittai was the son of king Achish, and that, being obliged to quit Gath on account of his attachment to David, he came to offer him his services at the head of the six hundred men mentioned in the foregoing verse, who, as well as himself, had embraced the Jewish religion; an opinion which seems as probable as any other. It is very certain, however, that they came but the day before, ver. 20.; and David, from a principle of generosity, knowing them fatigued with their journey, would have had them turned back, which Ittai gallantly refused to do, vowing that *wherever David was, in death or in life, there would he, his servant, be also*; ver. 21.

*Ver.*

25 And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD he will bring me again, and shew me *both* it, and his habitation:

26 But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, *here am I*, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.

27 The king said also unto Zadok the priest, *Art not* thou a seer? return into the city in peace, and your two sons with you Ahimaaz thy son, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar.

28 See, I will tarry in the plain of the wilderness, until there come word from you to certify me.

29 Zadok therefore and Abiathar carried

the ark of God again to Jerusalem: and they tarried there.

30 ¶ And David went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that *was* with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up.

31 ¶ And *one* told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.

32 ¶ And it came to pass, that *when* David was come to the top of the mount, where he worshipped God, behold, Hushai the Archite came to meet him with his coat rent, and earth upon his head:

*Ver. 25—27. The king said,—Carry back the ark of God*] David sent back the high-priests, as knowing that their character was too sacred to suffer any violence from the usurper, though he knew their fidelity to himself; and for the rest, he wholly submitted himself to the divine disposal. He besought God, as Alexander Severus told his soldiers a generous and a wise man should, praying for the best things, and bearing what should befall. David saw plainly that God had raised this war against him in punishment of his guilt; that God had raised up this evil to him out of his own house: and I imagine that I now hear him taking up the same lamentation which Alphonfus the wise, king of Arragon, afterwards did upon a like occasion: “I wonder not so much at my people’s ingratitude to me, as at my own to GOD.” In this spirit of humiliation, David would not presume to have the ark, the symbol of the divine presence, borne before him in the war: that was an honour of which he deemed himself utterly unworthy; and therefore, referring himself and his affairs with entire resignation to the disposal of the Divine Providence, he remanded Zadok and Abiathar back to the city with the ark. When David had given the reasons relating to himself, why he would not have the ark carried before him into the field, he then adds a reason personal to Zadok, *Art not thou a Seer? Return in peace.* It should seem from hence, that Zadok was a prophet: however, as a priest, he was a teacher; and as such bound to stay with his people in the greatest exigencies, and instruct them in their duty; besides that, by staying to do his duty to his people, he might also do good offices to his prince. And, accordingly, David concerted both with Zadok and Abiathar a method of corresponding with him, and sending him intelligence of all the enemies’ measures by their sons, Ahimaaz the son of Zadok, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar.

*Ver. 30. And David went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, and wept, &c.]* A more memorable event surely was never recorded in history, nor a more moving spectacle ever

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exhibited to mortal eyes: a king, venerable for his years and victories, sacred in the character both of his piety and prophesies, renowned for prowess, and revered for wisdom, reduced to the condition of a fugitive, to a sudden and extreme necessity of flying for his life, and from the presence of his own son, his darling and delight. In this condition he went up the mount, and, when he reached the summit of it, fell down prostrate before God. Josephus tells us, that when he reached the top of the mountain, he took a view of the city, and prayed to God with abundance of tears. It may be thought worth notice, that Josephus should tell us, that David wept and viewed the city in the same spot from which the Evangelist informs us our blessed Saviour wept over it.

*Ver. 32. Behold, Hushai the Archite came]* When David heard that Ahithophel was among the conspirators, he saw his danger in all its strength. A hot-headed young man, high in vanity, extravagant in hope, and easily overset with success, was not an object of much terror to a man of David’s great experience and consummate wisdom; but the prowess, popularity, and numbers of such a man, conducted by the calm skill and prudence of an Ahithophel, was sufficient matter of just fear. David, however, sunk not under it; but had recourse, as usual, to the protection of that God who only could relieve him, and who had never failed him in distress; beseeching Him, *who leadeth counsellors away spoiled, and maketh the judges fools*, to confound and insatiate the counsel of Ahithophel. God, in answer to his prayers, sends him a friend; Hushai met him on the top of the hill, with expressive signs of sympathetic sorrow, willing to join his suffering king: but David has more useful employment for him at Jerusalem; by pretending to serve Absalom, he might defeat the advice of Ahithophel, and, getting into the secrets of the Cabinet, by Zadok’s sons, inform David of them. The dissimulation of Hushai, and the advice of David, in this case, will hardly admit of excuse. Thus far we may say, that David, with respect to Absalom, was not only a king, but a father attacked by his

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33 Unto whom David said, If thou passest on with me, then thou shalt be a burden unto me :

34 But if thou return to the city, and say unto Absalom, I will be thy servant, O king ; as I have been thy father's servant hitherto, so will I now also be thy servant : then mayest thou for me defeat the counsel of Ahithophel.

35 And *hast thou* not there with thee Zadok and Abiathar the priests? therefore it shall be, that what thing soever thou shalt hear out of the king's house, thou shalt tell it to Zadok and Abiathar the priests.

36 Behold, *they have* there with them their two sons, Ahimaaz Zadok's son, and Jonathan Abiathar's son ; and by them ye shall send unto me every thing that ye can hear.

37 So Hushai David's friend came into the city, and Absalom came into Jerusalem.

## CHAP. XVI.

*Ziba, by presents and false suggestions, obtains his master's inheritance. Shimei curseth David; who restrains the sons of Zeruiah from killing him. Hushai comes to Absalom; who takes his father's concubines, by the advice of Ahithophel.*

[Before Christ 1023.]

**A**ND when David was a little past the top of the hill, behold, Ziba the servant of

Mephibosheth met him, with a couple of asses saddled, and upon them two hundred *loaves* of bread, and an hundred bunches of raisins, and an hundred of summer-fruits, and a bottle of wine.

2 And the king said unto Ziba, What meanest thou by these? And Ziba said, The asses be for the king's household to ride on; and the bread and summer-fruit for the young men to eat; and the wine, that such as be faint in the wilderness may drink.

3 And the king said, And where *is* thy master's son? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he abideth at Jerusalem: for he said, To-day shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father.

4 Then said the king to Ziba, Behold, thine are all that *pertained* unto Mephibosheth. And Ziba said, I humbly beseech thee that I may find grace in thy sight, my lord, O king.

5 ¶ And when king David came to Bahurim, behold, thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera: he came forth, and cursed still as he came.

6 And he cast stones at David, and at all the servants of king David: and all the people and

his own son; that he always preserved a great affection for him, and did not design to injure him in the least, but rather proposed to hinder him from doing more mischief, and to bring him to his duty again. But we are to follow no man any farther than as he corresponds with the great copy of all morality given us in the Gospel. Nothing can justify deceit, lying, or treachery.

## CHAP. XVI.

*Ver. 1. And an hundred of summer-fruits*] These *summer-fruits* the LXX suppose were *dates*; but the more common opinion is, that they were *figs*; which, it seems, was that also of the Chaldee paraphrast. Grotius, however, supposes, that the original word קיץ *kaiits*, signifies the fruit of trees in general. The author of the *Observations* seems to shew, that they could not have been any of these. "But when I find," says he, "that *water-melons* grow spontaneously in these hot countries, are made use of by the Arabs of the Holy Land in *summer*, instead of water, to quench their thirst, and are purchased as of the greatest use to travellers in thirsty deserts; and that *cucumbers* are very much used still in that country, to mitigate the heat: I am strongly inclined to believe, that these *summer-fruits* were not the produce of trees, but of this class of *herbs*, which creep along the ground, and produce fruits of a cooling moisture, and very large in

"proportion to the size of the plant." Cucumbers were eaten in Galilee the latter end of May by Dr. Pococke, he having stopped at an Arab tent, where, he tells us, they prepared him eggs and four milk, cutting into it raw cucumbers, as a cooling diet in that season, which he found very hot. Cucumbers continue at Aleppo till the end of July, and are brought again to market in September and October, and are contemporaries with grapes and olives, as well as with beans and lentiles. See Jer. xl. 10. 12. Dr. Russell also tells us, that the squash comes in towards the end of September, and continues all the year; but that the orange-shaped pumpkin is more common in the summer months. Of one or other of these kinds of fruit, I should think the sacred writer designed to be here understood to speak: they are all, more or less, of considerable size, and fit for persons who have to travel through a dry wilderness in the latter part of the spring, when the weather grows hot; as Bishop Pococke found it. If this be allowed, it will appear that they were called *summer-fruits* from their being eaten to allay the summer-heats, and not from their being dried in the summer, as Vatablus imagines; see *Observations*, p. 205.

*Ver. 2. The asses be for the king's household to ride on*] The asses are for the king's household, for carriage; for the carrying their baggage. Houbigant.

all the mighty men *were* on his right hand and on his left.

7 And thus said Shimei when he cursed, Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial:

8 The LORD hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned; and the LORD hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Abfalom thy son: and, behold, thou *art taken* in thy mischief, because thou *art* a bloody man.

9 ¶ Then said Abishai the son of Zeruiah unto the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head.

10 And the king said, What have I to do

with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? so let him curse, because the LORD hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?

11 And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now *may this* Benjamite *do it*? let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him.

12 It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day.

13 And as David and his men went by the way, Shimei went along on the hill's side over against him, and cursed as he went, and threw stones at him, and cast dust.

*Ver. 4. Behold, thine are all that pertained unto Mephibosheth.]* David, too rashly credulous, although of an unsuspected servant against the son of a tried friend, and too hastily resenting his imagined ingratitude, immediately concluded Mephibosheth a traitor, who had forfeited his whole fortune; and accordingly bestowed the forfeiture upon his informer; verifying that fine observation of Seneca, that "kings give many things with covered eyes, especially in time of war." Delaney. *Note;* (1.) Many, like Ziba, affect to be very generous of what is not their own. (2.) A servant's lying tongue is the frequent cause of sad discord in families. (3.) The presents of a knave are to be regarded as snares. (4.) An ill-intended design God can over-rule, to answer a good purpose. (5.) Rash judgment opens a door for after-shame and repentance. (6.) To turn a deaf ear to slander is always wise, and to hear at least both parties before we condemn.

*Ver. 5—12. When king David came to Bahurim, behold, thence came out—Shimei—and cursed.]* This vile and calumnious treatment of Shimei was one of the severest trials of patience that ever human magnanimity endured. The accusation, ver. 8. was notoriously false, and the king for that reason could bear it the better. But his servants saw it not in the light of their master's equanimity, but of his enemy's insolence. Abishai, David's nephew, could not bear it, but begged the king's permission to *take off* the traitor's head that uttered it, ver. 9. which David absolutely refused; adding a rebuke to his refusal, ver. 10. *What have I to do with you, &c.?*—*So let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David.* Here we have, in few words, a clear comment upon all the curses throughout David's Psalms. They are prophetic denunciations of divine vengeance. The king then, turning to Abishai and the rest of his servants who were about them, asks, ver. 11. How it could be surprising to see a Benjamite reviling, when they beheld his own son in rebellion against him, and seeking his life? He adds, ver. 12. *It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, &c.* Although this was a

chastisement from God upon him, yet, if he bore it as became him, it might become a means of mercy to him; his humble submission and resignation might call down the divine commiseration upon his patience and penitence. David's penitence but more inflamed Shimei's insolence; and, as David and his servants marched along, Shimei kept pace with them upon the side of an adjacent hill, and still continued cursing, reviling; and throwing dust and stones, unchastised. David endured it all: *when he was reviled, he reviled not again: when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed his cause to HIM who judgeth righteously.* 1 Pet. ii. 23. How far he was in this instance an emblem of HIS suffering SON, is not, I presume, hard to discern, or adventurous to assert.

*Ver. 13. And as David and his men went by the way, Shimei—cast dust.]* When the Consul whom Dr. Pococke attended entered Cairo, the Doctor tells us, "according to an ancient custom of state, a man went before, and sprinkled water on the ground to lay the dust." Every one knows the convenience of this practice in dry and hot countries; but I do not remember to have met with the mention of it anywhere else, as an eastern way of doing honour; yet if it was not barely a thing thought at that time convenient, but an ancient custom of state, the same causes might occasion it to be used in other countries; and if it had been used in Judea before the time of David, in the days of the judges and of Saul, it will explain Shimei's behaviour, and give it the greatest energy; who, in opposition to it, *threw stones at the king, and dusted him with dust in the day of his affliction.* He had been wont to be honoured by having people go before him to take care that the ground should be moistened, and no dust raised where he was to pass: Shimei did the reverse. This honour is not confined, however, to royalty: an English Consul was thus treated. Private persons were also thus dishonoured; the Jews clamoured against St. Paul in the temple, and *threw dust.* Acts, xxii. 23. *Observations,* p. 287.

14 And the king, and all the people that were with him, came weary, and refreshed themselves there.

15 ¶ And Absalom, and all the people the men of Israel, came to Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him.

16 And it came to pass, when Hushai the Archite, David's friend, was come unto Absalom, that Hushai said unto Absalom, God save the king, God save the king.

17 And Absalom said to Hushai, Is this thy kindness to thy friend? why wentest thou not with thy friend?

18 And Hushai said unto Absalom, Nay; but whom the LORD, and this people, and all the men of Israel, chuse, his will I be, and with him will I abide.

19 And again, whom should I serve? *should* I not serve in the presence of his son? As I

have served in thy father's presence, so will I be in thy presence.

20 ¶ Then said Absalom to Ahithophel, Give counsel among you what we shall do.

21 And Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Go in unto thy father's concubines, which he hath left to keep the house; and all Israel shall hear that thou art abhorred of thy father: then shall the hands of all that are with thee be strong.

22 So they spread Absalom a tent upon the top of the house; and Absalom went in unto his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel.

23 And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, was as if a man had enquired at the oracle of God: so was all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom.

*Ver. 14. Came weary, and refreshed themselves there*] Josephus tells us, that David suffered his people to take no refreshment till they reached the banks of the Jordan; and the 16th, 21st, and 22d verses of the next chapter seem to confirm this reading. Houbigant, instead of *came weary*, renders it, *came to Ephim*, which he supposes to be the proper name of a place. *Note*; (1.) Though impotent malice rage, and shew its will to hurt us, it is a mercy that power is wanting. (2.) God's corrections are often misconstrued into judgments; and when their enemy suffers, wicked men would fain bring in God as patronizing their cause. (3.) If we do ill, we may expect to hear of it, well aggravated in the report of an enemy. (4.) Innocence is no protection from a lying tongue. (5.) The curses of the wicked return upon their own heads. But (6.) we must not avenge ourselves, nor return evil for evil, even under the bitterest provocations. (7.) Though the charge laid against us be false, we may know enough to condemn ourselves for, which should make us patient under it. (8.) To see God's hand in every trial, is the way to be reconciled to bear it. (9.) Patience under reproaches, will not fail of its recompence; God will make our righteousness as the light.

*Ver. 15. The men of Israel*] The Syriac version omits these words; and Dr. Kennicott informs us, that they are not found in any of the manuscripts at Cambridge. See his State of the printed Hebrew Text, p. 464.

*Ver. 18. Nay, but whom the Lord, &c.*] The attentive reader will discern the salutation and whole apology of Hushai to be as evasive, and well calculated to delude, as art could contrive them; for he neither prays personally for Absalom, nor professes allegiance to him: yet the bait took, and Absalom's self-sufficiency, gross as the delusion was, swallowed it whole.

*Ver. 21. Ahithophel said—Go in unto thy father's concubines*] Ahithophel advised this action, because it would prove his

enmity to his father to be irreconcilable, and consequently attach firmly to his interest all those who were disaffected to David, when they once saw that they were out of all danger of being sacrificed to any possible reconciliation between the father and son: an advice for the present, and in appearance, wise, but in reality pernicious. Could not this long-headed, sagacious statesman foresee, that this action (for which some men would now become more attached to Absalom) must one day make him detestable in their eyes, when they reflected upon the horror of it: a guilt made mortal by the law of God, Lev. xx. 11. and not named even among the Gentiles; a guilt, for which they must one day judge him more worthy to lose his crown, than Reuben his birth-right. 1 Chron. v. 1. However, this hellish advice was immediately adopted; for Ahithophel's advice was then deemed as unerring as if the oracle of God had dictated it: ver. 23. Thus was David's adultery (planned, and, it may be, perpetrated in the same place) judicially chastized, and God's vengeance denounced upon him by his prophet signally executed. See ch. xii. 11.

*Reflections respecting David's conduct under the curse of Shimei.*

They who have with very signal patience behaved themselves well under a great persecution, and undergone adversity with proper courage, have not found so great difficulty in any part of it, as when they have met with the contempt of proud standers-by; when they, who have no hand in bringing their afflictions upon them, have, out of the haughtiness of their natures, derided them for being in affliction, and insulted their misfortunes, only because they were unfortunate. We have never more need of the immediate influence of God's Spirit, than in such assaults; when those who oppress us add contempt and scorn to their injustice, and when the spectators of our miseries

## C H A P. XVII.

*Abfalom, consulting what was to be done, neglects the counsel of Ahithophel, and prefers that of Hushai; who informs David secretly of what is doing at Jerusalem. Ahithophel hangs himself.*

[Before Christ 1023.]

**M**OREOVER Ahithophel said unto Abfalom, Let me now chuse out twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David this night;

2 And I will come upon him while he is weary and weak-handed, and will make him afraid: and all the people that are with him shall flee; and I will smite the king only:

miserics take occasion from thence to deride and despise our persons: nor can any thing preserve us in those cases from some unwarrantable conduct, but the casting up our eyes to the hand whence the strokes come, and concluding, that as the weight of the affliction comes from God upon us, so every circumstance that accompanies it, whether in the proud and disdainful smiles of men, or in the louder reproaches of those who are delighted in what we suffer, is sent likewise by him to increase our mortification, and to try whether we can master those lesser unwary passions, as well as conform ourselves in the more weighty and deliberate temptations. *Because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David; who then shall say, Wherefore hast thou done so?* was the recollection of that devout prince, and strong enough to restrain the son of Zeruah from taking vengeance upon Shimei, in the moment of his insolently cursing the king. If in the scoffs and derision of our enemies, who make themselves sport at our calamities, we did but consider, that every insolence of theirs, every unfavoury jest that they break upon us to render us more contemptible to those who behold us, are so many emissaries permitted of God to be sent to visit us, and to manifest how we behave ourselves in those provocations; we should be better prepared for their reception, and drive away all their pride and insolence with a contempt which would both disappoint and incense them, turn the edge and rancour of their own weapons upon themselves, and make them penetrate their own souls, because they could not pierce ours. It is for want only of this recollection, of this diligent attention and submission to the hand of Divine Providence, that our passions too often prevail over us; and, when the power and menaces of our superiors have not been able to terrify us from doing our duty, the scurrilous jests and impudent revilings of our equals or inferiors have made us to be less in love with our innocence, and even to sacrifice that to indecent murmur, or to avowed anger and revenge.

## C H A P. XVII.

*Ver. 1. Moreover, Ahithophel said unto Abfalom]* Ahithophel, aware of the advantages of dispatch, advised an

3 And I will bring back all the people unto thee: the man whom thou seekest is as if all returned: so all the people shall be in peace.

4 And the saying pleased Abfalom well, and all the elders of Israel.

5 Then said Abfalom, Call now Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear likewise what he saith.

6 And when Hushai was come to Abfalom, Abfalom spake unto him, saying, Ahithophel hath spoken after this manner: shall we do after his saying? if not; speak thou.

7 And Hushai said unto Abfalom, The counsel that Ahithophel hath given is not good at this time.

immediate pursuit of David; without suffering him to breathe from the fatigues that he had just gone through; and his advice well justifies the character given of him in the Scripture. It was in its several parts admirably fitted both to the inclinations and the interest of his pupil. He consigned him to his pleasures, ch. xvi. 22. and took all the danger to himself; and at the same time he relieved his little remains of humanity from the necessity of imbruing his own hands in his father's blood. His incest was, for the present, personal guilt enough. That act of outrage would make Abfalom's reconciliation with his father desperate; and whilst he indulged his evil appetite, Ahithophel, with a chosen band, would pursue and surprise David. Nothing could be more worldly-wise, or more hellishly wicked. It was indeed as the advice of an oracle, but very different from that dictated by the Spirit of God: and yet, horrid as it was, it pleased that vile son and his associates.

*Ver. 3. The man whom thou seekest is as if all returned]* That is, David being destroyed, the main business is performed; he is, as it were, the life of the whole body, and when he is taken off, the rest will of course return and submit themselves. Houbigant renders this verse, *and I will cause all the people to return unto thee, as a spouse returneth to her husband; and then all things shall be at peace with the people:* in which he nearly follows the LXX.

*Ver. 6. When Hushai was come to Abfalom, &c.]* Ahithophel proposed all imaginable advantage to the evil cause in which he was engaged, from expedition, upon the principle mentioned by Tacitus, that "nothing determines civil discords so happily as dispatch." Hushai, on the contrary, wholly laid himself out to protract and to delay: for delay would not only ward off David's present danger, but would also, as the same Tacitus observes, give ill men time to repent, and the good to unite. And it is certain, that in all contests of this kind, that remark of Livy will always hold good, that when men have time to think, there will never be wanting those who will be glad to gain the favour of the right side by adhering to the public good. These were the principles of Hushai's advice; and his advice, as being much better suited:



8 For, said Hushai, thou knowest thy father and his men, that they *be* mighty men, and they *be* chafed in their minds, as a bear robbed of her whelps in the field: and thy father *is* a man of war, and will not lodge with the people.

9 Behold, he is hid now in some pit, or in some *other* place: and it will come to pass, when some of them be overthrown at the first, that whosoever heareth it, will say, There is a slaughter among the people that follow Absalom.

10 And he also *that is* valiant, whose heart *is* as the heart of a lion, shall utterly melt: for all Israel knoweth that thy father *is* a mighty man, and *they* which *be* with him *are* valiant men.

11 Therefore I counsel that all Israel be generally gathered unto thee, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, as the sand that *is* by the sea for multitude; and that thou go to battle in thine own person.

12 So shall we come upon him in some place where he shall be found, and we will light upon him as the dew falleth on the ground: and of him and of all the men that *are* with him there shall not be left so much as one.

13 Moreover, if he be gotten into a city, then shall all Israel bring ropes to that city, and we will draw it into the river, until there be not one small stone found there.

14 And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, The counsel of Hushai the Archite *is*

sued to Absalom's cruelty as well as his vanity, and seemingly to the interest of his ambition as well as the safety of his followers, who cared to put nothing to the hazard of a small party, easily prevailed.

*Ver. 8. They be chafed in their minds, as a bear robbed of her whelps*] The curious have, in general, long since remarked the coarseness of the images used in the Eastern writings. I have met with instances of this kind, which may serve to illustrate some passages of Scripture more perfectly than I have yet seen. In particular, Hushai's comparing David and his men, in this place, to a bear robbed of her whelps, appears to us very odd; and it shocks our delicacy much more when we find it applied to the Majesty of heaven, Lam. iii. 10. This, however, is entirely owing to the difference of the taste of the Europeans, from that of the people of the Levant. We in England, when we compare a person to a bear, have something of a disagreeable fierceness, and awkward roughness in view; and therefore these paintings give us pain. But though we do, the Eastern nations do not, blend these ideas with those of strength and terribleness in displeasure: that, therefore, which appears an indecent comparison to us, was none to them: and, accordingly, this image still continues in use among those people. Maillet, in his 11th letter, informs us, that *Saladine* going one day from Cairo up to the castle he had built there, and causing his brother *Sirocoé*, who had accompanied him, to take a view of its works and buildings, said to him, "This castle, and all Egypt, will be one day the possession of your children." *Sirocoé* replying, that it was wrong to talk after that manner, since heaven had given him children to succeed to the crown, *Saladine* rejoined, "My children are born in Egypt, where men degenerate, and lose their spirit and bravery; but *yours* are born in the mountains of *Circassia*, of a man that possesses the fierceness of bears, and their courage." The event justified the prediction, the posterity of *Saladine* reigning but a few years in Egypt after the death of that great prince. Here the reader sees *Sirocoé* compared to bears

by an Eastern prince, when an eulogium was intended, and not the least disrespectful hint designed. See *Observations*, p. 321. and *Scheuchzer*, tom. v. p. 13.

*Ver. 9. Behold, he is hid, &c.*] See the note on 1 Sam. xxvi. 5.

*Ver. 12. We will light upon him, as the dew falleth on the ground*] This is very beautiful and expressive. The dew in Palestine, as in several other climates, falls fast and sudden, and is therefore no unapt emblem of an active expeditious soldiery. It was, perhaps, for this reason, that the Romans called their light-armed forces *rorarii*. The dew falls upon every spot of the earth; not a blade of grass escapes it. A numerous army resembles it in this respect; it is able to search every where.

*Ver. 13. Then shall all Israel bring ropes to that city*] The meaning of this exaggerated threat, which Hushai seems to employ in conformity with the taste of a young and vain prince, appears to be, that they would come before that city into which David would betake himself, with those cranes or hooks which the ancients were wont to throw upon the battlements of walls, and with which, by the help of ropes fastened to them, they used to pull them down piecemeal into the rivers or trenches, filled with water, which encompassed them.

REFLECTIONS.—Absalom, in triumph, being entered into his father's deserted palace, (such changes do these sublunary kingdoms undergo,) consults next how to finish what seemed so happily begun. A council is summoned the same day, after the above-mentioned abomination was over; and David's ruin being resolved, the question is, how to accomplish it.

1. Abithophel speaks according to his place, and with his wonted sagacity; and wiser and more wicked counsel could not be given. He is for an immediate pursuit, falling upon the fugitives, weary and dispirited, and making an easy conquest; he offers himself to be the leader, and asks only twelve thousand men to execute his design, nor doubts but with one stroke to put an end to the contest,

better than the counsel of Ahithophel. For the LORD had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring evil upon Absalom.

15 ¶ Then said Hushai unto Zadok and to Abiathar the priests, Thus and thus did Ahithophel counsel Absalom and the elders of Israel; and thus and thus have I counselled.

16 Now therefore send quickly, and tell David, saying, Lodge not this night in the plains of the wilderness, but speedily pass over; lest the king be swallowed up, and all the people that are with him.

17 Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz stayed by En-rogel; for they might not be seen to come into the city: and a wench went and told them; and they went and told king David.

18 Nevertheless a lad saw them, and told

Absalom: but they went both of them away quickly, and came to a man's house in Bahurim, which had a well in his court; whither they went down.

19 And the woman took and spread a covering over the well's mouth, and spread ground corn thereon; and the thing was not known.

20 And when Absalom's servants came to the woman to the house, they said, Where is Ahimaaz and Jonathan? And the woman said unto them, They be gone over the brook of water. And when they had fought and could not find them, they returned to Jerusalem.

21 And it came to pass, after they were departed, that they came up out of the well, and went and told king David, and said unto David, Arise, and pass quickly over the water: for thus hath Ahithophel counselled against you.

contest, by smiting the king and letting the people go, who would then peaceably submit to Absalom's government. Thus the man (so he calls him, neither king nor father) whom he fought, would be removed, and his throne established without a rival. The scheme is so feasible and desirable, that this bloody son is delighted with it, and astonishing to tell! not one of the elders of Israel expresses his disapprobation, but they advise, according to Ahithophel's counsel, its immediate execution. *Note;* (1.) The best of kings, and best of fathers, may be unhappy enough to find rebellious subjects, and unnatural children. (2.) They who are once involved in sin, are driven deeper and deeper, till the most horrid crimes become necessary, as it were, to insure their own safety. (3.) Delays are dangerous in every cause, while expedition usually ensures success.

2. Before this advice is put in execution, Absalom moves to call for Hushai, and hear his opinion, or rather, have his concurrence in the matter; thus God, by the secret working of his providence, in the critical moment wards off the imminent danger, and, as it seems, inevitable ruin. Hushai appears, and Absalom bids him speak his opinion on Ahithophel's advice, which, with great appearance of argument and zeal for the cause, he gives; he opens with the admission of Ahithophel's wisdom; but though, in general, he must pay submission and deference to his sagacity, he at present is obliged to differ from him, and that on the following plausible reasons: David was not so easily to be smitten as Ahithophel seemed to suggest; he was well known to be a mighty man; and when, if not now, would he exert himself? Nor were his forces so few or despicable as were represented; they were a considerable body, and all men of approved valour, not to be daunted at danger, and much more inured to war than their raw undisciplined troops; and in their present situation, fired with resentment, nay, armed with despair, would fight like bears robbed of their whelps:

nor was it at all probable that David would be surprized; provident against danger, he, with some chosen body acquainted with every cave and hold, was safe from surprize, and ready to fall out as from an ambush. Such an attack might make even Ahithophel's lion-like heart to fail, at least his small body of troops to flee, and the consequence of such a repulse might be fatal to the cause; for should it be noised that Absalom's forces were routed, the people would be dispirited and in danger of deserting him. His advice therefore is, to gather all the forces from Dan to Beersheba, and put himself at the head of them: with such an army, and under such a leader, nothing could be hazarded. If David and his men were in the field, thick as the drops of dew they would light upon him, and not a man could escape; or if he took refuge in a walled city, such a host would in an instant scale the walls, or even with ropes draw the battlements into the ditch, or the adjoining river, as easily as a log of wood. Thus Absalom's pride was flattered, and his success ensured, not without a secret reflection on Ahithophel's rashness; the advice easily took, God having infatuated their minds, and Absalom and his council gave it for Hushai, impolitic and improbable as his suggestions were. *Note;* (1.) They take counsel in vain who aim at the ruin of God's church and people. (2.) God has secret ways of diverting the fatal blows aimed by our spiritual enemies, at our helpless souls.

*Ver. 17. En-rogel*] Or, *The fuller's fountain*, a place near Jerusalem; so called, as we are told, because the fullers trod their cloth there with their feet; deriving the word *rogel* from רגל *regel*, which signifies a foot.

*Ver. 19. And spread ground corn thereon*] See the note on ver. 28.

*Ver. 20. They be gone over the brook of water*] They passed away quickly. Houbigant. According to Josephus and the Vulgate, the meaning is, that they just drank a little water.

22 Then David arose, and all the people that *were* with him, and they passed over Jordan: by the morning light there lacked not one of them that was not gone over Jordan.

23 ¶ And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled *his* ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father.

24 Then David came to Mahanaim. And Absalom passed over Jordan, he and all the men of Israel with him.

25 ¶ And Absalom made Amasa captain of the host instead of Joab: which Amasa *was* a man's son, whose name *was* Ithra an Israelite, that went in to Abigail the daughter of Nahash,

sister to Zeruah Joab's mother.

26 So Israel and Absalom pitched in the land of Gilead.

27 ¶ And it came to pass, when David was come to Mahanaim, that Shobi the son of Nahash of Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and Machir the son of Ammiel of Lo-debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite of Rogelim,

28 Brought beds, and basons, and earthen vessels, and wheat, and barley, and flour, and parched *corn*, and beans, and lentiles, and parched *pulse*,

29 And honey, and butter, and sheep, and cheese of kine, for David, and for the people that *were* with him, to eat: for they said, The people *is* hungry, and weary, and thirsty, in the wilderness.

water and hasted forward. *Note;* (1.) The weakest instruments in God's hand can answer the greatest purposes. (2.) A lie, though told to serve a good cause, ceases not therefore to be a bad thing.

*Ver. 23. When Ahithophel saw, &c.]* Ahithophel had too much penetration and experience not to see what must be the consequence of Absalom's imprudence in preferring Hushai's advice to his own. Piqued therefore with furious jealousy, and not doubting that David would soon be victorious, and punish his perfidy, he determined to prevent that punishment, and therefore *gat him to his home, and hanged himself.* Some of the rabbis give the original *וַיִּתְחַנֵּן* *vaiiechanek* another signification, translating it with the LXX, *he was suffocated;* imagining that Ahithophel, through the violence of his agitation and distress, was suffocated with extreme passion; but the more general opinion is, that he hanged himself with his own hands, as Judas did afterwards when he had betrayed his Divine Master. See Matt. xxvii. 5. Lightfoot thinks, that David composed the 55th Psalm upon the occasion of Ahithophel's perfidy. Thus Ahithophel, when he had contrived, inspired, diffused, and propagated evil through an innumerable multitude, and loaded his soul with all the horrors of complicated guilt, treachery, rebellion, incest, parricide! hurried that soul to all the vengeance due to it from eternal justice: to prevent all possibility of reparation and repentance, he died in the act of self-murder. So perished the great Machiavel of that age, the very wisest of the very wise men of this world; *whose God is their belly, whose glory is their shame, but whose end is destruction!* See C. G. Schwartz, in Thesaur. Novo, Theol. Philol. tom. i. p. 6; 6.

*Ver. 28, 29. Brought beds, and basons, &c.]* Dr. Russell tells us, "that *burgle* is very commonly used among the Christians of Aleppo;" and in a note he informs us, "that this *burgle* is *wheat boiled*, then bruised by "a mill, so as to take the hulk off, then *dried* and "kept for use." The usual way of dressing it, is, either

by boiling it like rice into a pilaw, or making it into balls, with meat and spice, and either fried or boiled. These balls are called *cubby*. Rauwolf and Ockley speak of the like preparation, under the name of *sawik*; but the former mentions it as prepared from barley, and the other from barley and rice, as well as wheat. Mr. Jones, in his account of the diet of the Moors of West Barbary, makes mention of the *flour of parched barley*; which, he says, is the chief provision they make for travelling; and that some of them use it for their diet at home as well as in journeying. He adds, "What is most used by travellers is *zumeet*, *tumect*, "or flour of parched barley for *limercece*. These are not "Arabian, but Shilha names; so that I believe it is of longer "standing than the Mahometans in that part of Africk. "They are all three made of parched barley-flour, which "they carry in a leathern satchel. *Zumeet*, is the flour "mixed with honey, butter, and spice; *tumect*, is the same "flour done up with oil: and *limercece* is only mixed with "water, and so drank. This quenches thirst much better "than water alone, satisfies a hungry appetite, and cools "and refreshes tired and weary spirits, overcoming those "ill effects which a hot sun and fatiguing journey might "well occasion." He says also, that among the mountaineers of Sufa this is used for their diet at home, as well as when they are on a journey. May not one or other of these sorts of food be meant in Scripture by what we render *parched corn*? Russell and Ockley speak of the *sawik* or *burgle* as dried, and Jones expressly calls the chief provision which the Moors of West Barbary used in travelling, *the flour of parched barley*. Jones's account may teach us the propriety of what is added at the close of the list of provisions sent by the nobles on the other side Jordan to king David: *they brought beds, &c.—barley and flour, and parched corn, &c.—for they said the people is hungry, and weary, and thirstily in the wilderness.* Which of all these things was designed to quench their thirst? Jones says, that the flour of parched barley mixed with water, is thought

C H A P. XVIII.

*David commands them, when going to battle, to spare his son Absalom; who is slain by Joab: David very bitterly laments his death.*

[Before Christ 1023.]

**A**ND David numbered the people that were with him, and set captains of thousands and captains of hundreds over them.

2 And David sent forth a third part of the people under the hand of Joab, and a third part under the hand of Abishai the son of Zeruah, Joab's brother, and a third part under the hand of Ittai the Gittite. And the king said unto the people, I will surely go forth with you myself also.

3 But the people answered, Thou shalt not go forth: for if we flee away, they will not care for us; neither if half of us die, will they care for us: but now *thou art* worth ten thou-

sand of us: therefore now *it is* better that thou succour us out of the city.

4 And the king said unto them, What seemeth you best I will do. And the king stood by the gate-side, and all the people came out by hundreds and by thousands.

5 And the king commanded Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Deal gently for my sake with the young man, *even* with Absalom. And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains charge concerning Absalom.

6 ¶ So the people went out into the field against Israel: and the battle was in the wood of Ephraim;

7 Where the people of Israel were slain before the servants of David, and there was there a great slaughter that day of twenty thousand men.

8 For the battle was there scattered over the face of all the country: and the wood

thought to quench thirst better than water alone, to satisfy hunger, and to cool and refresh tired and wearied spirits: it might therefore be sent to David with a view to relieve the people, as *thirsty and tired*, as well as hungry. But if this Jewish *parched corn* is to be understood of the flour of parched barley, it does not follow that *burgle, sawik, or boiled wheat dried*, was unknown among them; and I have been ready to think, that this mode in the management of corn will give light to a remarkable passage in the history of David; I mean the concealment of the two spies in *well*, whose mouth was covered with corn, ver. 19. The exposing of corn in this manner must have been common in Judea, else it would rather have given suspicion than safety. But for what purpose *ground corn* (for so we translate it) should be laid out in the open air, if we suppose it was *meal*, cannot easily be imagined. Bishop Patrick supposes that it was *corn newly threshed out*, which the woman pretended to dry, though no such thing is practised among us in a much moister country; and the word, in Prov. xxvii. 22. is used to signify corn beaten in a very different manner. Sanctius and Mariana have observed, that the word there expresses barley with the hulk taken off; *pearl* or *French barley* as we call it. The accounts above given of the *burgle* and *sawik*, remove the difficulty; and it should seem from this passage, that the preparation of corn after this manner is as ancient as the time of David at least. To this may be added, that quantities of the *sawik* are prepared at once, in order to be laid up in store; whereas corn there is usually ground into meal in small parcels, the people of those countries baking every day, and grinding their corn as they want it: what is more, D'Arvieux, who speaks of this prepared corn under the name of *bourgul*, expressly mentions its being *dried in the sun*, after having spoken of their preparing a whole year's provision of it at once.

VOL. II.

See the *Observations*, p. 146, &c. *Note*; (1.) We often meet with greater kindness from strangers than from our own relations. (2.) The best use we can make of our affluence, is the employment of it in the support of the suffering cause of the Son of David,

C H A P. XVIII.

*Ver. 5. Deal gently for my sake with the young man, &c.]* The king yielded to the affectionate entreaties of the people, that he should not hazard his life in the battle; and, no doubt, he did it with less reluctance, upon a reflection that he must otherwise go against his own subjects, and draw his sword against a rebel son, whom he could not think of but with too much tenderness, in spite of all his crimes: and as a proof of this, he here gives the kindest charge concerning him to all his captains. He begs them to *deal gently* with that *young man*; as if all his faults were more those of his youth than of his nature: but at the same time that his people could not but discern in these words the excess of his weakness for that profligate son, they could not but observe also in them a calm presage and assurance of their success against their enemies.

*Ver. 6. And the battle was in the wood of Ephraim.]* It is supposed that this wood, which was in Gilead, not far from Maanaim, took its name either from the victory which Gideon gained over Oreb and Zeeb, kings of the Midianites, by the assistance of the Ephraimites, Judg. vii. 25. or from the great slaughter of the Ephraimites here by Jephthah, Judg. xii. 5, 6. The expression in the eighth verse, *the wood devoured more people that day than the sword devoured*, signifies that more perished in the wood than in the field of battle: their flight, as Josephus well expresses it, was more fatal to them than the combat.

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Ver.

devoured more people that day than the sword devoured.

9 ¶ And Absalom met the servants of David. And Absalom rode upon a mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth; and the mule that *was* under him went away.

10 And a certain man saw *it*, and told Joab, and said, Behold, I saw Absalom hanged in an oak.

11 And Joab said unto the man that told him, And, behold, thou sawest *him*, and why didst thou not smite him there to the ground? and I would have given thee ten *shekels* of silver, and a girdle.

12 And the man said unto Joab, Though I should receive a thousand *shekels* of silver in mine hand, yet would I not put forth mine hand against the king's son: for in our hearing the king charged thee and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Beware that none *touch* the young man Absalom.

13 Otherwise I should have wrought false-

hood against mine own life: for there is no matter hid from the king, and thou thyself wouldest have set thyself against *me*.

14 Then said Joab, I may not tarry thus with thee. And he took three darts in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom, while he *was* yet alive in the midst of the oak.

15 And ten young men that bare Joab's armour compassed about and smote Absalom, and slew him.

16 And Joab blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing after Israel: for Joab held back the people.

17 And they took Absalom, and cast him into a great pit in the wood, and laid a very great heap of stones upon him: and all Israel fled every one to his tent.

18 ¶ Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and reared up for himself a pillar, which *is* in the king's dale: for he said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance: and he called the pillar after his own name: and it is called unto this day, Absalom's place.

19 ¶ Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok,

*Ver. 9. The mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, &c.]* Several commentators suppose, that Absalom was suspended by the long hair of his head; while others, imagining that he had a helmet on, think that his neck was so wedged in between the boughs, that he was not able to disengage himself. It is not easy to believe that he could have lived long in such a posture; and Joab, we are told in the 14th verse, found him *yet alive*, which would lead one rather to think that he was suspended by his hair.

*Ver. 14. And he took three darts, &c.]* Joab's killing Absalom was a direct, deliberate, cowardly murder, and a treasonable murder too against the express orders of the king, and in open defiance and contempt of him.

*Ver. 17. They took Absalom—and laid a very great heap of stones upon him]* Bishop Patrick here observes, that thus he was, after a sort, stoned, as the law ordered a rebellious son should be. Adricomius, in his description of the Holy Land, says, that this *heap* remained to his days; and that all travellers, as they went by it, were wont to throw a stone to add to the heap, in detestation of his rebellion against his father. Thus this eastern custom seems commonly understood: but if that be true which Egmont and Heyman tell us, that all the Mohammedans who go in pilgrimage to Mount Sinai, never fail to visit the place where there is the print of a camel's foot on the rock, supposed to be that of Mohammed's, on which account they, by way of respect, bring with them a stone, which has occasioned a great heap of stones near

that spot, it is evident that these heaps are considered by the eastern people merely as monuments to keep up the memory of certain events, whether *good* or *bad*; and that the adding a stone to them by every one who approaches them, is in truth only intended to prevent the dissipation of these uncemented materials. The first raising of this heap of stones over Absalom was, in like manner, intended merely as a memorial of this battle, and of the place in which he lay buried; and by no means as a kind of executing the law relating to rebellious sons upon him, like the hanging of people in effigy; as we may conclude from their being wont then, as well as now, to have heaps of stones for the preserving of agreeable things in remembrance, as well as facts that deserved detestation; which plainly appears from Gen. xxxi. 46. 52. and Josh. iv. 3. 6. See the *Observations*, p. 443.

*Ver. 18. Now Absalom in his life time had—reared—a pillar]* The sacred writer mentions this particular, not only to shew the vanity of Absalom, but, we may reasonably conclude, still further to shew the vanity of human life in general. Absalom having lost his sons; (ch. xiv. 27.) and being desirous to perpetuate his memory, had erected a pillar, which, no doubt, he designed as a mausoleum or burying-place, and which we may reasonably conclude was equally magnificent with the ambition of him who reared it. But see how short-sighted are mortals! This same Absalom, so far from being buried in this proud monument which he had erected, was killed and buried like

Let me now run, and bear the king tidings, how that the LORD hath avenged him of his enemies.

20 And Joab said unto him, Thou shalt not bear tidings this day, but thou shalt bear tidings another day: but this day thou shalt bear no tidings, because the king's son is dead.

21 Then said Joab to Cush, Go tell the king what thou hast seen. And Cush bowed himself unto Joab, and ran.

22 Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok yet again to Joab, But howsoever, let me, I pray thee, also run after Cush. And Joab said, Wherefore wilt thou run, my son, seeing that thou hast no tidings ready?

23 But howsoever, *said he*, let me run. And he said unto him, Run. Then Ahimaaz ran by the way of the plain, and over-ran Cush.

24 And David sat between the two gates: and the watchman went up to the roof over the gate unto the wall, and lifted up his eyes, and looked; and behold a man running alone.

25 And the watchman cried, and told the king. And the king said, If he be alone, *there is* tidings in his mouth. And he came apace, and drew near.

26 And the watchman saw another man running: and the watchman called unto the porter, and said, Behold *another* man running alone.

And the king said, He also bringeth tidings.

27 And the watchman said, Methinketh the running of the foremost is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok. And the king said, He is a good man, and cometh with good tidings.

28 And Ahimaaz called, and said unto the king, All is well. And he fell down to the earth upon his face before the king, and said, Blessed be the LORD thy God, which hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my lord the king.

29 And the king said, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Ahimaaz answered, When Joab sent the king's servant, and *me* thy servant, I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what *it was*.

30 And the king said *unto him*, Turn aside, and stand here. And he turned aside, and stood still.

31 And, behold, Cush came; and Cush said, Tidings, my lord the king: for the LORD hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee.

32 And the king said unto Cush, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Cush answered, The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do *thee* hurt, be as *that* young man is.

like a traitor, thrown into a pit, and a great heap of stones laid upon him. The *king's dale* (mentioned also in Gen. xiv. 17.) was near Jerusalem; and to this day there is a monument shewn to travellers, called *Absalom's pillar*; but it is evidently of modern structure. In the time of Josephus, it was nothing more than a single marble pillar. See Doughty, *Analect.* p. 1. Exerc. xcvi.

REFLECTIONS.—We have here Absalom among the fugitives, no longer exulting in confidence of success, but seeking by flight to escape the devouring sword. Divine vengeance, however, suffereth him not to live; for, though David's servants, whom he met, offered not to molest him, and his swift beast would quickly carry him out of danger; yet,

1. He is arrested in his flight by the thick boughs of an oak, under which he furiously drove; and his flying locks caught hold of the branches, whilst his mule, on full speed, left him thus hanging. *Note;* (1.) They who fly from God's arm only rush into the toil. (2.) If his hair was his halter, we see that what was his pride proved at last his shame. (3.) Let disobedient children look to this rebellious son, and tremble at God's vengeance.

2. Joab is informed of the accident, and chides the messenger for not immediately dispatching Absalom; but

the man pleads the king's commandment, which, for a thousand shekels, he would not transgress. Joab does not controvert the man's assertion, but, in haste to be gone, inquires the place, and takes his attendants with him; there, beholding the fair mark exposed, with three darts he strikes him through his heart, as he was yet alive, though hung; and, to make sure work, his ten attendants pierce him with many a mortal wound, and leave him dead on the spot. *Note;* Many find fault with others for not doing that, for which, had they done it, they would have been the first to condemn them.

3. The arch-rebel being dispatched, a retreat is sounded, as the rest would return to their allegiance; and enough of blood had been spilt, so that there needed no prisoners to be executed. *Note;* In rebellion, severity must be tempered with clemency; every subject that bleeds is a loss to the state itself.

4. Absalom's body is cast into a pit, and covered with a heap of stones, disgraced even in the dust; and thus terminates his aspiring course in the deepest ignominy. Alas! he had erected near Jerusalem a noble sepulchral monument to perpetuate his memory! *Note;* (1.) To be solicitous about a tomb for our bodies, while we are living in neglect of our souls, is the height of folly. (2.) To perpetuate the remembrance of a great wicked name,

33 And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!

C H A P. XIX.

*Joab blames David, on account of his immoderate grief for Absalom. The tribe of Judah go to meet the king at Gilgal. David spares Shimei, and restores to Mehibobeth the half of his land. The ten tribes dispute with the tribe of Judah.*

[Before Christ 1023.]

**A**ND it was told Joab, Behold, the king weepeth and mourneth for Absalom.

2 And the victory that day was *turned* into mourning unto all the people: for the people heard say that day how the king was grieved for his son.

3 And the people gat them by stealth that day into the city, as people being ashamed steal away when they flee in battle.

4 But the king covered his face, and the king cried with a loud voice, O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!

5 And Joab came into the house to the king, and said, Thou hast shamed this day the faces of all thy servants, which this day have saved thy life, and the lives of thy sons and

of thy daughters, and the lives of thy wives, and the lives of thy concubines;

6 In that thou lovest thine enemies, and hatest thy friends. For thou hast declared this day, that thou regardest neither princes nor servants; for this day I perceive, that if Absalom had lived, and all we had died this day, then it had pleased thee well:

7 Now therefore arise, go forth, and speak comfortably unto thy servants: for I swear by the LORD, if thou go not forth, there will not tarry one with thee this night: and that will be worse unto thee than all the evil that befel thee from thy youth until now.

8 Then the king arose, and sat in the gate. And they told unto all the people, saying, Behold, the king doth sit in the gate. And all the people came before the king: for Israel had fled every man to his tent.

9 ¶ And all the people were at strife throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, The king saved us out of the hand of our enemies, and he delivered us out of the hand of the Philistines; and now he is fled out of the land for Absalom.

10 And Absalom, whom we anointed over us, is dead in battle. Now therefore why speak ye not a word of bringing the king back?

C H A P. XIX.

is only to perpetuate infamy. (3.) Of all characters, a disobedient child is among the most abhorred.

*Ver. 33. O my son Absalom! &c.]* There certainly cannot be produced from any writer a more striking instance of the true pathetic than the present. See Dr. Lowth's 22d Prælection. It is, however, extremely difficult to reconcile this degree of sorrow with David's usual piety and resignation. The king's command to spare Absalom, was indeed an extraordinary instance of mercy, exceeded only by HIM, who, dying, prayed for his murderers; yet it is to be accounted for from his fatherly fondness. But there is something astonishing in this excess of grief for such a reprobate; and I confess, it is to me, says Dr. Delaney, utterly unaccountable, from any other principle than the sad and shocking reflection of his having died with all his sins upon his head, and gone down quick to perdition. The affection of parents is, doubtless, extremely strong. The sins, nay the ingratitude of children cannot root it from their hearts; and they who fear God, are then most reasonably inconsolable, when their children are engaged in a course of sin, and they see them die in a state of condemnation.

*Ver. 10. Why speak ye not a word of bringing the king back?]* David, now victorious over a rebel army, had it in his power to take ample revenge of all those whose treachery and infidelity well deserved to be severely chastised; and it is evident, that if he had had any thing revengeful and sanguinary in his nature, he could now want no pretext either of justice or of policy to indulge it to the full: but he was governed by very different principles, and saw the whole affair of his son's rebellion and his own conquest in another light. He knew the first to be the effect of his guilt, and the last the fruit of his penitence and humiliation before God; and therefore made no other change in his conduct, than from prayer and penitence, to gratitude and thanksgiving, and a patient humble expectation of His providential disposal of the event. Nor did he fail of his reward; for now it seemed good to the Great Governor of the world, who at his pleasure *stilleth the raging of the sea, and the madness of the people*, to turn the hearts of David's subjects, as it were, in one instant in his favour; inasmuch that they now returned to their duty with as much and as eager zeal,

as

11 ¶ And king David sent to Zadok and to Abiathar the priests, saying, Speak unto the elders of Judah, saying, Why are ye the last to bring the king back to his house? seeing the speech of all Israel is come to the king, *even* to his house.

12 Ye *are* my brethren, ye *are* my bones and my flesh: wherefore then are ye the last to bring back the king?

13 And say ye to Amasa, *Art* thou not of my bone, and of my flesh? God do so to me,

and more also, if thou be not captain of the host before me continually in the room of Joab.

14 And he bowed the heart of all the men of Judah, even as *the heart of one man*; so that they sent *this word* unto the king, Return thou, and all thy servants.

15 So the king returned, and came to Jordan. And Judah came to Gilgal, to go to meet the king, to conduct the king over Jordan.

as they had but a few days before rushed into rebellion against him.

*Ver. 11, 12. Speak unto the elders of Judah, &c.]* The authors of the Universal History charge this message with partiality, and with being, on that account, the cause of jealousy and revolt among the other ten tribes: but I see nothing in the history to justify this reflection. Instead of "inviting the elders of Judah to come foremost to relieve him," as these writers suppose, he only gently reproved them for being the *last*; urging his being of their own tribe as a reason why they should return to their loyalty, and immediately come to receive him: in all which there appears no sign of partiality.

*Ver. 13—15. Say ye to Amasa, &c.]* David did not suffer himself to be conducted home by a deputation from the tribe of Judah; for it appears from ver. 17. 40. *that there were a thousand men of the tribe of Benjamin under Shimei, and also half the people of Israel.* All the tribes in general, except that of Judah, were in motion to bring the king back to his capital: but as this tribe had not yet declared in his favour, as they were in possession of Jerusalem, and as Amasa himself was there present, and had a great interest in the affections of the people, it became absolutely necessary to David's restoration, to gain over that city, and secure the friendship of Amasa.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Deep was the gloom which obscured this day of victory.

1. The king's unutterable distress was noised in the camp, and damped the joy of the returning conquerors; with his face covered, he refuses to see his generals; and, with the most passionate exclamations bewailing his son, seems insensible to every other emotion than inconsolable grief. Discouraged by such a reception, the soldiers, instead of a triumphant entry, steal into the city as if from a defeat, and seem ready to desert a cause where they met so ill a reception for having hazarded their lives.

2. Joab, vexed at the king's indiscreet behaviour, with an unbecoming disrespect goes in to expostulate with him on the error and danger of his conduct; he remonstrates how ungrateful it was to shew such neglect of those who, at the hazard of their own, had saved his life and the lives of all his family, whom Abshalom would have murdered; that it appeared as if he had so loved the traitor, as to hate his best friends for his sake, and could

have been pleased if they had all perished so. Abshalom had lived. He therefore urges him to appear in public instantly, and speak comfortably to the people, thanking them for their fidelity, and congratulating their victory; with a solemn oath declaring, that if he did not, every soldier would desert him, himself give him up, and a worse rebellion arise than had just been suppressed. *Note;* If by our own folly we bring ourselves into danger, we shall justly be upbraided with it.

3. David is convinced of the necessity of submitting to the advice, and, restraining his anguish, washes, anoints, and sits in public, to the great joy of his army, who approach his throne, and congratulate him on the success of his arms. *Note;* Good counsel, though bluntly given, should be thankfully received.

2dly, David, with a victorious army at his beck, had no more to do than to march and seize the capital, and execute condign punishment on all who had appeared in arms against him; but as he chose to rule by love, not force, he waited to return amidst the congratulations of his subjects, rather than amidst the shouts of his warriors.

1. The tribes of Israel, before in rebellion, now cast the blame of their ill conduct one upon another, and mutually upbraid each other that they are not more eager in returning to their allegiance, and in bringing back their king. His former high deserts are now remembered, and their folly in trusting to Abshalom evidenced by the event; therefore, though there were perhaps some rebellious spirits averse to it, his restoration is resolved, and notice given him of their resolution. *Note;* (1.) When we have done ill, we cannot too soon seek to amend it. (2.) We naturally desire to exculpate ourselves, by casting the blame on our neighbour.

2. The people of Judah, who might be expected the first, are the last in their application, fearing perhaps, as deepest involved in guilt, that they should suffer for it. But David, to silence their fears, and engage them in his cause, sends to Zadok and Abiathar a very kind message, for them to report to the elders, that he looked upon himself as their brother, hoped for a like affection from them, and thought that it was highly unbecoming them to be the last; and to Amasa he sends a particularly gracious message, with the promise not only of pardon but the best preferment, even to be his captain in Joab's room, whose haughtiness was no longer to be borne.

Such



16 ¶ And Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite, which *was* of Bahurim, hasted and came down with the men of Judah to meet king David.

17 And *there were* a thousand men of Benjamin with him, and Ziba the servant of the house of Saul, and his fifteen sons and his twenty servants with him; and they went over Jordan before the king.

18 And there went over a ferry-boat to carry over the king's household, and to do what he thought good. And Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king, as he was come over Jordan;

19 And said unto the king, Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me, neither do thou remember that which thy servant did perversely the day that my lord the king went out of Jerusalem, that the king should take it to his heart.

20 For thy servant doth know that I have sinned: therefore, behold, I am come the first this day of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet my lord the king.

21 But Abishai the son of Zeruah answered and said, Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the LORD's anointed?

22 And David said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruah, that ye should this day be adversaries unto me? shall there any

man be put to death this day in Israel? for do not I know that I *am* this day king over Israel?

23 Therefore the king said unto Shimei, Thou shalt not die. And the king sware unto him.

24 ¶ And Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king, and had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came *again* in peace.

25 And it came to pass, when he was come to Jerusalem to meet the king, that the king said unto him, Wherefore wentest not thou with me, Mephibosheth?

26 And he answered, My lord, O king, my servant deceived me: for thy servant said, I will saddle me an ass, that I may ride thereon, and go to the king; because thy servant *is* lame.

27 And he hath slandered thy servant unto my lord the king; but my lord the king *is* as an angel of God: do therefore *what is* good in thine eyes.

28 For all *of* my father's house were but dead men before my lord the king: yet didst thou set thy servant among them that did eat at thine own table. What right therefore have I yet to cry any more unto the king?

Such a kind message, or Amasa's influence, who exerted himself on this occasion, gain him the unanimous suffrage; and messengers are instantly dispatched, with an invitation to him to return, whilst in a body the elders and people come to Gilgal to welcome him. *Note;* (1.) The ministers of Christ should be preachers of loyalty. (2.) When we are backward to a good work, we need being stirred up. (3.) Christ chooses to reign over a willing people, and, when he bows our hearts, expects we should invite him to come and make his abode with us. (4.) No argument so effectual to gain the sinner's heart, as the love of his Lord. He is become our bone and our flesh.

*Ver. 20. First—of all the house of Joseph*] By the house of Joseph we may very well understand, all the tribes, in opposition to that of Judah, the rights of primogeniture having been divided betwixt Judah and Joseph, 1 Chron. v. 1. Indeed, when the separation of the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel took place, Benjamin made a part of the former; but before that time, this tribe was rather ranked under that of Joseph, together with those of Ephraim and Manasseh, Ps. lxxx. 2. because it belonged to

the same standard. Numb. ii. 18—22. The LXX translate, *I am come before any of the house of Joseph*; i. e. before any other.

*Ver. 23. The king said unto Shimei, Thou shalt not die*] Shimei was of the house and family of Saul, and a person of great power and influence in the tribe of Benjamin, of whom he had a thousand in his train, when he made his submission to David upon his restoration. The manner in which he accosted David, chap. xvi. 13. when flying from Jerusalem, discovered the inward rancour of his heart, and his readiness to join in any measures to distress and disturb his government, and cause the crown to revert to the house of Saul. Though Abishai advised the king to put him to death, yet David, as illustrious for forgiveness, as for his piety in the Psalms, having refused before to put him to death, when he was actually cursing and stoning him, preserved the same dignity of mind, and, on his making his submission, ratified his pardon with an oath. *Note;* (1.) Clemency is one of the noblest qualities of a prince. (2.) When rebel sinners appear at the feet of Divine Mercy, though Satan stand to accuse them, there shall be no condemnation.

*Ver.*

29 And the king said unto him, Why speakest thou any more of thy matters? I have said, Thou and Ziba divide the land.

30 And Mephibosheth said unto the king, Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house.

31 ¶ And Barzillai the Gileadite came down from Rogelim, and went over Jordan with the king, to conduct him over Jordan.

32 Now Barzillai was a very aged man, even fourscore years old: and he had provided the king of sustenance while he lay at Mahanaim; for he *was* a very great man.

33 And the king said unto Barzillai, Come thou over with me, and I will feed thee with me in Jerusalem.

34 And Barzillai said unto the king, How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem?

35 *I am* this day fourscore years old: *and* can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can

I hear any more the voice of singing-men and singing-women? wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden unto my lord the king?

36 Thy servant will go a little way over Jordan with the king: and why should the king recompense it me with such a reward?

37 Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, *and be buried* by the grave of my father and of my mother. But behold thy servant Chimham; let him go over with my lord the king; and do to him what shall seem good unto thee.

38 And the king answered, Chimham shall go over with me, and I will do to him that which shall seem good unto thee: and whatsoever thou shalt require of me, *that* will I do for thee.

39 And all the people went over Jordan. And when the king was come over, the king kissed Barzillai, and blessed him; and he returned unto his own place.

40 Then the king went on to Gilgal, and

*Ver. 29. I have said, Thou and Ziba divide the land*] He first gave the whole in property to Mephibosheth, and afterwards to Ziba: and yet, *I have said, Thou and Ziba divide the land*, must refer to some former determination of David with respect to the estate. But no such determination is to be found, except that original one, ch. ix. 10. in which the estate was divided between Mephibosheth and Ziba, the whole to Mephibosheth in property; and to Ziba, for taking care of it, sufficient to maintain himself and family out of the profits it produced: so that this was in reality confirming the original grant, and restoring Mephibosheth to the possession of the whole, upon the same terms on which the possession was at first granted him. It was certainly a revocation of the grant to Ziba, who therefore could claim no part of the estate by that grant, nor by any other; for there was no other than that by which he was allowed a proper maintenance out of it: so that, if David was too hasty in giving Mephibosheth's estate to Ziba, he did, upon being undeceived, immediately restore it to Mephibosheth, and thereby discovered his great regard to truth and equity, and the firmness of his affection and friendship to Jonathan and his family: and though he confirmed the original grant, thereby leaving to Ziba and his family a maintenance out of the estate, it was out of respect even to Saul, of whose house Ziba was, and as a recompense for that seasonable supply which he brought him when he was forced, by the unnatural rebellion of Absalom his son, to abandon the capital. Houbigant interprets the passage in the same manner. Dr. Delaney is of opinion, that the 37th Psalm was written by David for Mephibosheth's consolation under Ziba's calumny.

REFLECTIONS.—David now enters Jerusalem in triumph, and there Mephibosheth comes to congratulate him, who, during the king's exile, had spent his time in mourning, neglecting his person, and neither trimming nor dressing himself for so long a time. David, who, from Ziba's misrepresentation, suspected Mephibosheth not only of great ingratitude, but of base designs, is surpris'd, in answer to his inquiry why he had not followed him, to find how blameless he was, and how vilely he had been imposed upon; yet Mephibosheth is so sensible of David's goodness in his past favours towards him, and so rejoiced in his present return, that he presumes not to controvert the royal grant to Ziba, but refers the matter wholly to the king's wisdom. David hereupon settles the estate on the former footing; not punishing Ziba as he deserved, because that was a day of mercy, or in return for the real service done him, though with so wicked a purpose; and thus Mephibosheth is again reinstated in his inheritance. *Note*, (1.) In times of public distress, we are called to weeping and mourning. (2.) Wicked servants do their masters unutterable injuries. (3.) A good man sits loose to his own interest, compared with the interests of God's church and people.

*Ver. 37. Behold thy servant Chimham*] Chimham, it is generally supposed, was Barzillai's son; see 1 Kings, ii. 7. In Jerem. xli. 17. there is mention of *the habitation of Chimham*, which was near Bethlehem; and it is a very reasonable conjecture of Grotius, that David, having a patrimony in the field of Bethlehem, bestowed it upon this son of Barzillai, whence the place took the name of Chimham.

*Ver.*

Chimham went on with him: and all the people of Judah conducted the king, and also half the people of Israel.

41 ¶ And, behold, all the men of Israel came to the king, and said unto the king, Why have our brethren the men of Judah stolen thee away, and have brought the king, and his household, and all David's men with him, over Jordan?

42 And all the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, Because the king *is* near of kin to us: wherefore then be ye angry for this matter? have we eaten at all of the king's *cost*? or hath he given us any gift?

43 And the men of Israel answered the men of Judah, and said, We have ten parts in the king, and we have also more *right* in David

than ye: why then did ye despise us, that our advice should not be first had in bringing back our king? And the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel.

## CHAP. XX.

*Sheba makes a party in Israel: Joab kills Amasa, and afterwards besieges the city of Abel, whither Sheba had fled. A wise woman treats with Joab from the wall. The head of Sheba is thrown out to Joab.*

[Before Christ 1022.]

AND there happened to be there a man of Belial, whose name *was* Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite: and he blew a trumpet, and said, We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to his tents, O Israel.

*Ver. 43. The words of the men of Judah were fiercer, &c.]* It was a natural contest between greater power and nearer relationship; both claim a preference which both cannot have; and which those of nearer relationship in this case should have yielded, both in point of prudence and affection for their friend; which the men of Judah did not.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The aged and good Barzillai, after all the kindnesses he had shewed to the king at Mahanaim, comes to pay his last respects to him, and accompany him as far as Jordan on his return.

1. David had been greatly indebted to him during his exile; for, being a man of vast estate, and generous as he was great, he had liberally ministered to the wants of the king and his servants during their encampment at Mahanaim. *Note;* Riches are then truly blessings when possessed by men of generous minds, and liberally ministered to the support of oppressed innocence, and the deserving indigent.

2. David, sensible of his kindness, resolves now to make him ample amends, invites him with him to Jerusalem, with the kindest assurances that he should want no comfort which his palace could afford, and be a constant and welcome guest at his table. *Note;* A grateful heart is happy to have it in its power to recompense its kind friends.

3. Barzillai professes the deepest acknowledgments for the king's generous offer, a recompense so far exceeding his poor services: but, sinking now under age and infirmities, begs the king to excuse his not accepting the kind invitation; he should be but an useless burden on the king; the time for relishing the delights of a court was past with him; at fourscore, dainties had lost their flavour, and the songs of melody were no longer enchanting: it became him now not to set out in life, but prepare for death, and to be gathered to the sepulchre of his fathers. But not to slight the king's favours, if he chooses that his son Chimham shall attend his majesty to court, he will commend him to his regard. *Note;* (1.) Noble minds count all they do to serve their friends but little. (2.) In the day when the Son of David shall appear in his kingdom, his saints will be

filled with wonder at the surpassing recompense bestowed on their worthless services. (3.) It is time for the aged to have done with courts, and the delights of sense; they who are so near the grave have but one proper business, which is, to retire and provide for it.

4. David embraces the proposal gladly, and assures his aged friend, that he can ask nothing which he will not do for him; then with a kiss of affection dismisses him with his blessing, thanking him for past kindness, and praying that God would be with him. On which the good Barzillai returns to his happy retirement at Rogelim.

2dly, David now is peacefully advancing to take possession of his kingdom, when an unexpected incident interrupts and damps his comfort.

1. The men of Judah and part of the men of Israel were advanced to Gilgal, when the rest of the tribes met them; thinking themselves slighted, and jealous withal that they intended to engross the king's favour, they angrily objected to their conduct. *Note;* Only from pride cometh contention.

2. The men of Judah answer with warmth to the charge, that as the king was near of kin to them, and his home in their tribe, they were especially bound to conduct him: and, far from the insinuation of self-seeking being true, they had neither eaten at the king's cost, nor received any present from him. *Note;* True patriots detest a mercenary spirit.

3. The men of Israel reply to this vindication, that they had ten parts in the king, Simeon being reckoned with Judah; that, as being more numerous, they had more right to be consulted, and looked upon it as a marked contempt thus to be neglected. The men of Judah, exasperated, rejoin, and one high word brings on another; but the men of Judah were fiercest, and the end of their hot dispute proved a new rebellion. *Note;* (1.) Even when we are in the right, we should rather yield than contend. (2.) Leave off meddling betimes, lest mischief ensue. (3.) They who are in a passion, are sure to speak wrong, even though they have truth on their side.

2 So every man of Israel went up from after David, and followed Sheba the son of Bichri: but the men of Judah clave unto their king, from Jordan even to Jerusalem.

3 ¶ And David came to his house at Jerusalem; and the king took the ten women his concubines, whom he had left to keep the house, and put them in ward, and fed them, but went not in unto them. So they were shut up unto the day of their death, living in widowhood.

4 ¶ Then said the king to Amasa, Assemble me the men of Judah within three days, and be thou here present.

5 So Amasa went to assemble the men of Judah: but he tarried longer than the set time which he had appointed him.

6 And David said to Abishai, Now shall

Sheba the son of Bichri do us more harm than did Absalom: take thou thy lord's servants, and pursue after him, lest he get him into some cities, and escape us.

7 And there went out after him Joab's men, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, and all the mighty men: and they went out of Jerusalem, to pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri.

8 When they were at the great stone which is in Gibeon, Amasa went before them. And Joab's garment that he had put on was girded unto him, and upon it a girdle with a sword fastened upon his loins in the sheath thereof; and as he went forth it fell out.

9 And Joab said to Amasa, Art thou in health, my brother? And Joab took Amasa by the beard with the right hand, to kiss him.

CHAP. XX.

*Ver. 1. We have no part in David, &c.]* The propensity of the children of Israel to rebellion is here very obvious to remark. There needs but a single match to light the fire of discord. The ten tribes disputing with that of Judah, their contest ran so high, that a wicked man, Sheba, a Benjamite, most probably a relation of Saul, found it sufficient to occasion a revolt. Instead of the son of Bichri, it might be rendered, one of the princes, or of the chiefs of the tribe of Benjamin: and it has been thought that Sheba, after Amasa, was one of the principal commanders in Absalom's army.

*Ver. 3. The king took the ten women his concubines, &c.]* As soon as David arrived at Jerusalem, one of his first cares was to remove those concubines, or secondary wives, whom Absalom had so scandalously abused. He ordered them, therefore, to be separated from the palace, and maintained in a proper place of seclusion and retirement, where they ended their lives as widows. The Jews say, that the widows of their kings could never marry again. David treated them as widows, and allowed them not to appear again in public, that there might be as little renewal as possible in the minds of men of the opprobrious infamy of his son. Mahomet, who borrowed a variety of his laws from the Jews, forbade his wives to marry again after his death. See Selden, Uxor. Heb. lib. i. cap. 10.

REFLECTIONS.—When men's spirits are exasperated in popular tumults, some crafty and ambitious head fails not to improve the circumstances for his own advancement.

1. Sheba the son of Bichri, a Benjamite, a man of Belial, thinking that he might now step into the throne, widens the breach into rebellion. Since Judah seemed to engross the king, he advises the men of Israel to renounce the ten parts they claimed, and to have no part in David. The trumpet is blown, and Sheba now is their leader.

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*Note:* (1.) We must not promise ourselves long peace here below. Whilst the old enmity reigns in the heart of the sinner, new storms will arise. (2.) Foolish quarrels have dangerous consequences. (3.) We are apt to be swinging to extremes; and those who seemed the most zealous friends sometimes turn the bitterest enemies.

2. David proceeds to Jerusalem, and his first care is to shut up his concubines, whom Absalom had defiled. *Note:* Obscure retirement is the fittest place for those who have made themselves publicly scandalous.

*Ver. 9. Joab took Amasa by the beard—to kiss him]* Those, among the Arabs, who are more intimately acquainted, or of equal age and dignity, mutually kiss the hand, the head, or shoulder of each other, says Dr. Shaw; but he makes no mention of their taking hold of the beard in order to kiss. Thevenot, however, assures us, that among the Turks it is a great affront to take one by the beard, unless it be to kiss him, in which case they often do it. Whether he means by kissing him, kissing his beard, or not, I cannot tell; but Joab's taking Amasa by the beard to kiss him, seems designed to express his taking his beard to kiss it; at least this is agreeable to the customs of those who now live in that country; for D'Arvieux, describing the assembling together of several of the petty Arab princes at an entertainment, tells us, that "all the Emirs came together a little time after, accompanied by their friends and attendants; and after the usual civilities, caressings, kissings of the beard, and of the hand, which every one gave and received, according to his rank and dignity, they sat down upon mats." He elsewhere speaks of the women's kissing their husbands' beards, and children those of their fathers, and reciprocally saluting each other in this manner; but the doing it by their Emirs more exactly answers this account of Joab and Amasa; and in this stooping posture he could much better see to direct the blow, than if he had only held his beard, and raised himself to kiss his face. *Observations*, p. 260.

X x.

Vtr.

10 But Amasa took no heed to the sword that *was* in Joab's hand; so he smote him ~~merewith~~ in the fifth rib, and shed out his bowels to the ground, and struck him not again; and he died. So Joab and Abishai his brother pursued after Sheba the son of Bichri.

11 And one of Joab's men stood by him, and said, He that favoureth Joab, and he that *is* for David, *let him go* after Joab.

12 And Amasa wallowed in blood in the midst of the highway. And when the man saw that all the people stood still, he removed Amasa out of the highway into the field, and cast a cloth upon him, when he saw that every one that came by him stood still.

13 When he was removed out of the highway, all the people went on after Joab, to pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri.

14 ¶ And he went through all the tribes of Israel unto Abel, and to Bethmaachah, and all the Berites: and they were gathered together, and went also after him.

15 And they came and besieged him in Abel of Beth-maachah, and they cast up a bank against the city, and it stood in the trench: and all the people that *were* with Joab battered the wall, to throw it down.

16 ¶ Then cried a wise woman out of the city, Hear, hear; say, I pray you, unto Joab, Come near hither, that I may speak with thee.

*Ver. 10—13. He smote him*] This action was attended with the highest perfidy and insolence. Many reasons concurred to prevent David's calling him to an account now; particularly his power, authority, and interest with the army: but it is plain that he never forgot this outrage of Joab's. That he highly repented it, we find in his last charge to Solomon, where he recommends and gives it in charge to his son to do justice on that bloody assassin. He was not now in a capacity to do it. Joab was too powerful a subject to be brought to account. After Absalom's death, he had the insolence to tell the king with an oath, that he would make every one of his subjects desert him; and after this assassination of Amasa, he resumed, contrary to his master's will, the command of all the forces, who had an affection for him as their own general, because he had restored the quiet of the land by quelling the insurrection of Sheba. Joab's being continued captain-general of all the forces, was not from David's inclination, but contrary to it, and by force.

*Ver. 14. Unto Abel, and to Beth-maachah, and all the Berites*] To Abel Beth-maachah, whither all the Berites were gathered together to him. Houbigant. See the next verse. Abel Beth-maachah was a city between Libanus and Antilibanus, north of Damascus. The Berites were probably the inhabitants of Beeroth, who were Benjamites.

*Ver. 15. They cast up a bank against the city*] The LXX render it, *they levelled the bank, or glacis, of the city*; which receives some countenance from the words immediately following, *and it stood in the trench*. The Vulgate reads, *and they surrounded the city with fortifications*. But some learned persons have imagined, that the word סֶלֶל solelah, rendered a bank, signifies an engine of war, used in casting stones, or other heavy bodies, against the walls of a city. Parkhurst is of this opinion, who says, that it signifies a balista, a battering engine, anciently made use of to shoot stones against the wall of a besieged city, in order to beat them down. That this is the true meaning of the word, rather than a bank heaped up of stones or earth, seems evident from the present passage, and Jer. vi. 6. xxxii. 24. xxxiii. 4. One of the Greek versions in the Hexapla renders it, Ezek. xxvi. 8. by *εὐροσάρις balistas*.

But should any one in some places prefer the other meaning, which the ancient versions generally favour, it will be best to render it *battery*, which will preserve the idea of the word. Dr. Delaney observes, that from the accounts we have of Joab's digging a trench round this city, and battering the walls, critics have fairly concluded, that the science of besieging cities with lines of circumvallation and contravallation, as they call them, and battering engines, was much older than any account left us of this practice in the history of the heathen world: though Herodotus, in his first book, gives Harpagus, Cyrus's general, the credit of having invented the lines now mentioned, and taken the city of Phocœa (the first city, according to him, so taken) by that invention; whereas the sacred writer speaks of one of those lines on occasion of the siege of Abel, as of a thing familiar and well known to his readers. See Scheuchzer on the place.

*Ver. 16—20. Then cried a wise woman, &c.*] As Joab pressed the siege with all earnestness, a *wise woman*, who probably was governess of the city, (an office, though generally filled by men, yet sometimes administered by women, such as Deborah, Athaliah, Judith, &c.) This wise woman from within called out over the walls, and desired to speak with him, in all the modesty and decency of language then in use: prefacing what she had to say with a short account of the reputation of wisdom (ver. 18.) in which that city anciently stood; she covertly, as the text, ver. 19. is generally understood, expostulated with him upon the iniquity of going about to destroy an ancient and venerable city of his nation, without proposing terms of submission to it, and offering peace upon acceptance of those terms, as the law of God expressly directed to be done, even to an hostile and heathen city. Deut. xx. She urges, that her city *was faithful and peaceable* in Israel: upon what pretence, then, could he engage in destroying a city of that character? Was not this to destroy *another city*, and to *swallow up the inheritance of the Lord*? Her speech is marked with all the characters of wisdom; close, clear, and cogent; singularly emphatical and moving, and such as well supported the reputation of her city. It is scarcely to be supposed, that she undertook this

17 And when he was come near unto her, the woman said, *Art thou Joab? And he answered, I am he.* Then she said unto him, Hear the words of thine handmaid. And he answered, I do hear.

18 Then she spake, saying, They were wont to speak in old time, saying. They shall surely ask *counsel* at Abel: and so they ended *the matter.*

19 *I am one of them that are peaceable and faithful in Israel: thou seekest to destroy a city and a mother in Israel: why wilt thou swallow up the inheritance of the LORD?*

20 And Joab answered and said, Far be it, far be it from me, that I should swallow up or destroy.

21 The matter *is* not so: but a man of mount Ephraim, Sheba the son of Bichri by name, hath lifted up his hand against the king, *even* against David: deliver him only, and I will depart from the city. And the woman said unto Joab, Behold, his head shall be thrown to thee over the wall.

22 Then the woman went unto all the people in her wisdom. And they cut off the

head of Sheba the son of Bichri, and cast *it* out to Joab. And he blew a trumpet, and they retired from the city, every man to his tent. And Joab returned to Jerusalem unto the king.

23 ¶ Now Joab *was* over all the host of Israel: and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada *was* over the Cherethites and over the Pelethites:

24 And Adoram *was* over the tribute: and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud *was* recorder:

25 And Sheva *was* scribe: and Zadok and Abiathar *were* the priests:

26 And Ira also the Jairite was a chief ruler about David.

C H A P. XXI.

*A famine raging for the slaughter of the Gibeonites made by Saul; seven of Saul's sons are delivered to them, whom they hang. David buries the bones of Saul and Jonathan in the sepulchre of their father.*

[Before Christ 1019.]

**T**HEN there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David enquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, *It is* for Saul, and for *his* bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites.

this parley otherwise than in concert with the chief persons of her city; and if so, nothing surely could be managed with more address than their choosing out a wife and venerable woman to plead their cause. In the first place, her sex and character intitled her to attention and respect, which possibly could not have been so well secured to any rebel of the other sex, with a man of Joab's rough and haughty spirit. In the next place, they knew that ancient and honourable cities were wont to be considered under the character of matrons, revered for virtue and a numerous well-educated offspring, a way of speaking familiar to all languages; and indeed we frequently find both cities and countries in distress, represented under the character of complaining matrons, both in the writings and on the medals of the ancients. Who then could be so proper a representative of a city in distress, as a complaining matron?

*Ver. 23. Now Joab was over all the host of Israel*] Joab, having successfully put an end to the rebellion of Sheba, returned to Jerusalem to the king, and returned with such a weight of popularity, as effectually to shield his atrocious murder of Amasa from all attempts of inquiry or chastisement. "The crime," as Florus expresses it, "was within the glory:" and not only so, but reinstated him likewise in the supreme command over the army. Thus did it seem good to the divine wisdom to permit Joab's unruly and impetuous ambition, at one time separate from all sense of duty, and at another joined to it, to punish

the guilt of four notorious rebels in succession, Abner, Absalom, Amasa, and Sheba, with dreadful deaths; two of them, indeed, treacherous and sudden; but all, in the retributions of Providence, judicial and just. Dr. Delaney thinks, that David published at this time the 133d Psalm, entirely to compose all contests and disagreements among the tribes.

C H A P. XXI.

*Ver. 1. Three years, year after year*] Houbigant reads it, *for three successive years.* The crime for which the three years of famine were sent, was the murder of many of the Gibeonites by Saul, with a determined purpose utterly to destroy the remainder; and this contrary to the public oath and faith, which had been given them for their security, in cold blood, in time of peace, when the Gibeonites were unarmed and destitute of assistance, only to shew how zealous he was to oblige the people. This crime was therefore enormous, and highly aggravated; a crime which, if any could be so, was worthy the peculiar interposition of a just God; and which, though the punishment was long deferred, through a train of intervening occurrences, was nevertheless worthy to be retaliated by Providence, upon the first opportunity that was favourable for the purpose. The persons employed with Saul in perpetrating these murders, were those of his own house. He thought the destruction of these Gibeonites so popular a thing, that he was resolved that himself, his family, and

2 And the king called the Gibeonites, and said unto them; (now the Gibeonites *were* not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; and the children of Israel had sworn unto them: and Saul sought to slay them in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah.)

3 Wherefore David said unto the Gibeonites, What shall I do for you? and wherewith shall I make the atonement, that ye may bless the inheritance of the LORD?

4 And the Gibeonites said unto him, We will have no silver nor gold of Saul, nor of his house; neither for us shalt thou kill any man in Israel. And he said, What ye shall say, *that* will I do for you.

5 And they answered the king, The man that consumed us, and that devised against us *that* we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the coasts of Israel.

6 Let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them up unto the LORD in Gibeah of Saul, *whom* the LORD did choose. And the king said, I will give *them*.

7 But the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, because of the LORD's oath that *was* between them, between David and Jonathan the son of Saul.

8 But the king took the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, whom she bare unto Saul, Armoni, and Mephibosheth; and the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul, whom she brought up for Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite:

9 And he delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them in the hill before the LORD: and they fell *all* seven together, and were put to death in the days of harvest, in the first *days*, in the beginning of barley-harvest.

relations, should have the whole credit of it. *It was for Saul and his bloody house; ver. 1. for which reason the Gibeonites justly said, for us thou shalt not kill any man in Israel; but demanded seven of the sons of Saul, who was the man that consumed them, to be delivered up to them; ver. 4-6.* And it is probable, from the choice David made, that the very persons whom he gave up were employed in this butchery, and enriched by the spoils of the Gibeonites, and that for this reason David selected them as a sacrifice to the public justice. The circumstance of Saul's death could be no reason against bringing to justice those of his *bloody house* who had been the instruments of his cruelty in the destruction of the poor Gibeonites, if any of them were alive after his death, whatever might be the number of years between the commission of the crime, and the inflicting of the vengeance it deserved. The reason why the oracle expressly dictated no act of expiation, was because David only inquired for what reason the famine was sent. When this was known, it was also as well known, that the Gibeonites were to have some proper satisfaction made to them; so that though the oracular response did not dictate in express words any act of expiation, yet it was of such a nature as that David was immediately led to think of an expiation; for he knew, that the *shedding of blood* was only to be atoned for by the *shedding of his or their blood* on whom the murder was chargeable; so that the oracle did really dictate, though not in words, the necessity of an expiation, by pointing out the crime for which the famine was sent. See Gen. ix. 6. It is not easy to say when the slaughter of the Gibeonites was committed: the Jews indeed pretend, that Saul had taken it into his head, in one of his phrenetic fits of zeal, to cut them all off; but they give us no authority for it. It is therefore generally, and with greater probability, believed to have happened when he

flew all the priests and inhabitants of Nob. For the Gibeonites, as we have seen elsewhere, were a kind of servants to the priests, employed in some of the lowest and most laborious offices. See the Univ. Hist.

*Ver. 6. In Gibeah of Saul, whom the Lord did choose]* Whom the Lord had chosen, says Houbigant; or, according to the word of the Lord: for when David asks the Gibeonites, ver. 3. *What shall I do for you?* it seems, God had commanded that the wickedness of Saul should be expiated with that blood which the Gibeonites should require; otherwise David would have consulted God only, and would not have gone to the Gibeonites to inquire of them what they would choose.

*Ver. 8. And the five sons of Michal]* Or, *Merab*. From the parallel passage, 1 Sam. xviii. 19. it appears that *Merab*, not *Michal*, was married to Adriel; and therefore, as Houbigant has very fully shewn, we should read *Merab* in this place, instead of *Michal*.

*Ver. 9. And he delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites]* David had given Saul his oath, that "he would not cut off his seed after him, nor destroy his name out of his father's house." Had Saul's family committed crimes worthy of death, David's oath would have been no reason against punishing them according to their deserts; and such punishment, if deserved, had been no breach of his oath. If David did not cut off his seed after him, so as to destroy his name out of his father's house, he did not violate his oath to Saul. Now David did not cut off one single person of Saul's family, whose death had a tendency to destroy his name out of his father's house. The seed is always reckoned by the males, and not the females of a family; and the name in a father's house could only be preserved by the male descendants. But David gave up only two bastards, the sons of Rizpah, Saul's concubine, who were not the legal seed of Saul; and

10 ¶ And Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them out of heaven, and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night.

11 And it was told David what Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done.

12 ¶ And David went and took the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from the men of Jabesh-gilead, which had stolen them

from the street of Beth-shan, where the Philistines had hanged them, when the Philistines had slain Saul in Gilboa :

13 And he brought up from thence the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son ; and they gathered the bones of them that were hanged.

14 And the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son buried they in the country of Benjamin in Zelah, in the sepulchre of Kish his father : and they performed all that the king commanded. And after that, God was intreated for the land.

and five of the sons of his eldest daughter by Adriel, (who could only keep up Adriel's name, and not Saul's;) and hereby observed, without the least violation, his oath to Saul. Not one of the persons whom he surrendered was capable of succeeding Saul, especially whilst any of the male branches were alive. Now at this time he spared Mephibosheth, who had a son named *Micha*, that was now old enough to have children, and had four sons, from whom descended a numerous posterity, amounting to about one hundred and fifty, sons and grandsons. This is a second proof, that David did not violate his oath to Saul in his treaty with the Gibeonites. Those who are inclined to enter more fully into a discussion of this difficult question, will find ample satisfaction in Dr. Waterland's *Scripture Vindicated*, part ii. page 102.

REFLECTIONS.—We have here,

1. The cause of this famine; namely, the sin of Saul. Three years the famine had continued, before David inquired of the Lord. At last, the continuance of it awakens his solicitude to examine into the cause, and God informs him. *Note*; (1.) Sin soon makes a fruitful land barren. (2.) God's judgments should bring us to our knees, that we may find why he contendeth with us. (3.) Sins are not forgotten of God, because they are old: though not immediately visited, the time of recompence will come, if pardon be not obtained.

2. The methods taken to give the Gibeonites satisfaction, and to turn away wrath from the land. *Note*; (1.) Though the poor oppressed may be without power to relieve themselves, God will plead their injured cause. (2.) Satisfaction must be made them, before we can hope for a blessing from God. (3.) The sin of parents often entails misery on their posterity. (4.) No execution must be pursued under the spirit of private revenge; for then, though the sentence be just on the offender, it would be murder in the prosecutor. (5.) They who maliciously design the ruin of others, often bring themselves and families into the pit that they have digged. (6.) A murderer, though of the blood royal, ought not to be spared. (7.) Severe executions for the public good, are sometimes a needful severity.

*Ver. 10—14. And Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, &c.]* Commentators have justly observed from hence, that

the hanging of these carcases for so long a time in the open air, could not be in consequence of any command from David, because it was an open violation of the law of God, Deut. xxi. 22, 23. which commanded that the carcases of all those who were hanged should not remain even one night upon the tree; and the reason of the law, namely, *lest the land be defiled*, held strong in the present case, inasmuch as the stench of so many carcases for so long a time in a malignant drought, and at the hottest season of the year, might have added a pestilence to the famine; a danger, which it is impossible to imagine that David would deliberately devise both against his people and himself, and consequently demonstrates itself imposed upon him by a superior power; confuting all the little cavils of mean men against the conduct of David upon this occasion; cavils, which are further confuted by the account of Rizpah's memorable maternal affection for these unhappy victims; which when David heard, did he resent this conduct, which might have been a natural means of propagating a pestilence? He rather emulated it; for he immediately went (ver. 12.) to *Jabesh Gilead*, and caused the bones of Saul and Jonathan to be removed from thence, and deposited, together with the bones of Saul's seven sons now interred, in the sepulchre of Kish; himself attending them in person to the grave, as if Rizpah's kindness to the remains of these unhappy victims reproached his own neglect of doing honour to those of so excellent a man, and so valuable a friend as Jonathan. By a passage in La Roque's Travels through Syria, says the author of the *Observations*, it appears, that if the usual rains have failed in the spring, it is of great benefit to have a copious shower, though very late; for he tells us, that when he arrived at Sidon in the end of June, it had not rained there for many months, and that the earth was so extremely dry, that the cotton-plants and mulberry-trees, which make the principal riches of that country, were in a sad condition; and all other things suffered in proportion, so that a famine was feared, which is generally followed by a pestilence. However, after public prayers for rain had been put up by all the sects that lived there, he adds, the rain descended in great abundance, continuing all that day and part of the night. He does not exactly specify the day; but it could not be before the end of June, *new style*; for he did not arrive at Sidon till



15 ¶ Moreover the Philistines had yet war again with Israel; and David went down, and his servants with him, and fought against the Philistines: and David waxed faint.

16 And Ishbi-benob, which *was* of the sons of the giant, the weight of whose spear *weighed* three hundred *shekels* of brass in weight, he being girded with a new *sword*, thought to

have slain David.

17 But Abishai the son of Zeruiah succoured him, and smote the Philistine, and killed him. Then the men of David swore unto him, saying, Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel.

18 And it came to pass after this, that there

till then; and it could not be so late as the usual time of the descent of the autumnal rains, for the cotton is ripe in *September*, till the middle of which month those rains seldom fall; often later; and this rain is supposed to be of great service to the growing cotton; consequently this account refers not to autumnal showers, but a late spring rain, which probably happened soon after his arrival, or about the *beginning of July, old style*; and though the harvest must have been over at Sidon by the time that this gentleman arrived there, and they had nothing to hope or fear as to that; yet, as the people of those countries depend so much on garden-stuff, the inspissated juice of *grapes, olives, &c.* they might notwithstanding be apprehensive of a scarcity, which they might hope this late rain would prevent. For the like reasons, such a rain must have been extremely acceptable in the days of David; the more so, if it came much earlier, though we must believe it to have been after all expectations of it in the common way were over: and such a one, I suppose, was granted. Dr. Delaney, indeed, tells us, that the Rabbins suppose the descendants of Saul to have hanged from *March*, from the very first days of barley harvest, till the following *October*; and he seems to approve their sentiments. Dr. Shaw mentions this affair but cursorily; however, he appears to have imagined that they hanged till the rainy season came in course. But surely we may much better suppose that it was such a rain as La Roque speaks of, or one rather earlier. Dr. Delaney founds his opinion on a supposition, that the bodies which were *hanged up before the Lord*, hung till the flesh was wasted from the bones, which he thinks is affirmed in the 13th verse. But no such thing appears to me to be there affirmed. The bodies of Saul and his sons, it is certain, hanged but a very little while on the wall of *Beth-shan* before the men of Jabesh Gilead removed them, which yet are called *bones*. 1 Sam. xxxi. 13. The seven sons of Saul therefore might hang a very little time in the days of king David. And if it should be imagined, that the flesh of Saul was consumed by fire, (ver. 12 of that chapter,) and that so the word *bones* came to be used in the account of their interment; can any reason be assigned why we should not suppose that these bodies were treated in the same manner? Besides, it appears, that the word *bones* frequently means the same thing with *corpse*, which circumstance also totally invalidates this way of reasoning. See Gen. i. 25, 26. Exod. xiii. 19. 1 Kings, xiii. 31.—Such a late spring rain as is above mentioned would have been attended, as the rain at *Sidon* was, with many advantages; and coming after all hope of common rain was over, and presently following the death of these persons, would be a much more merciful management of Providence,

and a much nobler proof that the execution was the appointment of God, and not a political stratagem of David, than the passing of six months over without any rain at all, and then its falling only in the common course of things. This explanation also throws light on the last clause of the history, *And after that, God was entreated for the land*. Dr. Delaney seems to suppose, that the performing of these funeral rites was requisite to the appeasing of God: but could that be the meaning of the clause? Were the ignominy of a death which the law of Moses pronounced *accursed*, and the honour of a royal funeral, both necessary mediums of appeasing the Almighty? Is it not a much easier interpretation of this clause, that the rain which *dropped on these bodies* was a great mercy to the country; and the return of the rains in due quantities afterwards in their season, proved that God had been entreated for the land? See the *Observations*, p. 31. Dr. Delaney observes, that the 65th Psalm was written upon this occasion, the five last verses of which, says he, are the most rapturous, truly poetic, and natural image of joy, that fancy can form. On reading them we shall discern, that when the divine poet had seen these desirable and refreshing showers falling from heaven, and the Jordan overflowing his banks, all the consequent blessings were that moment present to his quick poetic sight, and he paints them accordingly.

REFLECTIONS.—1. The bodies, contrary to the law of Moses, were left hanging on the tree. The case was extraordinary; and as it was a national crime, thus to violate the solemn oath made to the Gibeonites, it was, no doubt, by Divine command enjoined for the expiation of it, till the long withheld rain should be sent. 2. Thus was the Son of God crucified for sins not his own, suffering for the curse which lay upon our sinful souls; and having by an ignominious death expiated our guilt, the wrath of God was appeased, and he was taken down from the tree.

Ver. 15. *Moreover the Philistines had yet war again with Israel*] It appears from chap. xv. 18, 19. that Ittai, an exile from Gath, arrived at Jerusalem with all his men on the very eve of David's flight before his son Absalom; whence it is probable, that the Philistines, hearing of Absalom's rebellion, took that opportunity to shake off the Israelite yoke; and to that purpose drove out all the friends and favourers of David's government over them; and among the rest Ittai and his followers, who arrived very providentially at Jerusalem, to support David in the extremity of his distress. And as this revolt of the Philistines was succeeded by a long famine in David's

was again a battle with the Philistines at Gob : then Sibbechai the Hushathite slew Saph, which was of the sons of the giant.

19 And there was again a battle in Gob with the Philistines, where Elhanan the son of Jaare-oregim, a Beth-lehemite, slew the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the staff of whose spear was like a weaver's beam.

20 And there was yet a battle in Gath, where was a man of great stature, that had on every hand six fingers, and on every foot six toes, four and twenty in number; and he also was born to the giant.

21 And when he defied Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimeah the brother of David slew him.

22 These four were born to the giant in Gath, and fell by the hand of David, and by the hand of his servants.

## C H A P. XXII.

*A psalm of thanksgiving, for God's powerful deliverance and manifold blessings.*

[Before Christ 1018.]

AND David spake unto the LORD the words of this song in the day that the LORD had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul :

2 And he said, The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer;

3 The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence.

4 I will call on the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.

David's dominions, we could not reasonably expect to hear of any measures taken by the king to chastise that revolt, till after the ceasing of this calamity; and then we immediately hear of the wars now recounted.

*Ver. 19. A battle in Gob with the Philistines]* Houbigant, with whom Calmet agrees, observes, that both here and in the next verse, the reading of the parallel place, 1 Chron. xx. 4, 5. is to be preferred. It is there read, in *Gezur*, a city on the borders of Israel, near the Philistines; and as David slew Goliath, our translators, ver. 19. have inserted the words, *the brother of*. There can be no question, we think, that the text must be corrected from the parallel place in Chronicles. Houbigant reads it, *where Elhanan, the son of Jaar, a Beth-lehemite, slew Lahmi, the brother of Goliath, a Gittite, &c.* Commentators have collected various instances of men, who, like the giant mentioned in ver. 20. have had six fingers on their hands, and six toes on their feet. Tavernier, in his relation of the Grand Seigneur's Seraglio, p. 95. tells us, that the eldest son of the emperor of Java, who reigned in the year 1648, when he was in that island, had six fingers on each hand, and as many toes on each foot, all of equal length: and, not to be tediously prolix in recounting such instances, M. Maupertuis, in his 17th Letter tells us, that he met with two families at Berlin, where *six-digitism*, as he calls it, was equally transmitted both on the side of father and mother.

REFLECTIONS.—The Philistines, though subdued for a season, yet now, towards the latter end of David's reign, attempt to shake off their yoke and recover their liberty, emboldened in the attempt by those giants whose fall is here recorded.

1. David, though old, would himself lead his troops to battle. Being singled out by Ishbi-benob the giant, and not now, as in the days of youth and vigour, able to wield the shield and spear, he is in imminent danger of being slain, when Abishai bravely succours him, and enables him to slay the giant, or smites him himself (for the text will bear either sense). Struck with the danger that their king had escaped, the great officers and people about David resolve that he shall no more expose a life so valuable, lest, by any accident, this light of Israel should be extinguished. *Note;* (1.) Age creeps upon us so silently that we do not perceive it, till experience proves us unequal to our former undertakings. (2.) The enemies of God's people, confident of their power, think nothing can resist them; but they learn, to their cost, that it is in vain to fight against God. (3.) When we are ready to faint in our spiritual conflicts, Jesus, our captain, is near to succour us; and through his help we shall come off conquerors.

2. Three other battles soon followed, the Philistines making a desperate push to recover their losses: but in each they are defeated, and the mighty warriors who led them slain. And thus the race of the sons of Anak was rooted out by David and his servants. *Note;* (1.) While we are in this world, we must expect continual conflicts with the enemies of our souls. (2.) The giant-like corruptions of our heart will fall before the victorious grace of Jesus.

## C H A P. XXII.

*Ver. 1. And David spake unto the Lord—this song]* As this fine poem of David's occurs in the book of Psalms, we shall not make any remark upon it till we come to its proper place. See Psalm xviii.

5 When the waves of death compassed me, the floods of ungodly men made me afraid ;

6 The sorrows of hell compassed me about ; the snares of death prevented me ;

7 In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried to my God: and he did hear my voice out of his temple, and my cry *did enter* into his ears.

8 Then the earth shook and trembled ; the foundations of heaven moved and shook, because he was wroth.

9 There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured : coals were kindled by it.

10 He bowed the heavens also, and came down ; and darkness *was* under his feet.

11 And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly : and he was seen upon the wings of the wind.

12 And he made darkness pavilions round about him, dark waters, *and* thick clouds of the skies.

13 Through the brightness before him were coals of fire kindled.

14 The LORD thundered from heaven, and the most High uttered his voice.

15 And he sent out arrows, and scattered them ; lightning, and discomfited them.

16 And the channels of the sea appeared, the foundations of the world were discovered, at the rebuking of the LORD, at the blast of the breath of his nostrils.

17 He sent from above, he took me ; he drew me out of many waters ;

18 He delivered me from my strong enemy, *and* from them that hated me : for they were too strong for me.

19 They prevented me in the day of my calamity : but the LORD was my stay.

20 He brought me forth also into a large place : he delivered me, because he delighted in me.

21 The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness: according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.

22 For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God.

23 For all his judgments *were* before me : and *as for* his statutes, I did not depart from them.

24 I was also upright before him, and have kept myself from mine iniquity.

25 Therefore the LORD hath recompensed me according to my righteousness ; according to my cleanness in his eyesight.

26 With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful, *and* with the upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright.

27 With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure ; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself unfavoury.

28 And the afflicted people thou wilt save : but thine eyes *are* upon the haughty, *that* thou mayest bring *them* down.

29 For thou *art* my lamp, O LORD : and the LORD will lighten my darkness.

30 For by thee I have run through a troop : by my God have I leaped over a wall.

31 *As for* God, his way *is* perfect ; the word of the LORD *is* tried : he *is* a buckler to all them that trust in him.

32 For who *is* God, save the LORD ? and who *is* a rock, save our God ?

33 God *is* my strength *and* power : and he maketh my way perfect.

34 He maketh my feet like hinds' feet : and setteth me upon my high places.

35 He teacheth my hands to war ; so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.

36 Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation : and thy gentleness hath made me great.

37 Thou hast enlarged my steps under me ; so that my feet did not slip.

38 I have pursued mine enemies, and destroyed them ; and turned not again until I had consumed them.

39 And I have consumed them, and wounded them, that they could not arise : yea, they are fallen under my feet.

40 For thou hast girded me with strength to battle : them that rose up against me hast thou subdued under me.

41 Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies, that I might destroy them that hate me.

42 They looked, but *there was* none to save ; *even* unto the LORD, but he answered them not.

43 Then

43 Then did I beat them as small as the dust of the earth, I did stamp them as the mire of the street, and did spread them abroad.

44 Thou also hast delivered me from the strivings of my people, thou hast kept me to be head of the heathen: a people *which* I knew not shall serve me.

45 Strangers shall submit themselves unto me: as soon as they hear, they shall be obedient unto me.

46 Strangers shall fade away, and they shall be afraid out of their close places.

47 The LORD liveth; and blessed be my rock; and exalted be the God of the rock of my salvation.

48 It is God that avengeth me, and that bringeth down the people under me,

49 And that bringeth me forth from mine enemies: thou also hast lifted me up on high

above them that rose up against me: thou hast delivered me from the violent man.

50 Therefore I will give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and I will sing praises unto thy name.

51 *He is* the tower of salvation for his king: and sheweth mercy to his anointed, unto David, and to his seed for evermore.

C H A P. XXIII.

*The last words of David. The names and deeds of his mighty men.*

[Before Christ 1018.]

**N**OW these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man *who was* raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel, said,

2 The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word *was* in my tongue.

C H A P. XXIII.

*Ver. 1. Now these be the last words, &c.*] It is supposed that these are called *the last words of David*, as being the last which he pronounced by the inspiration of the Spirit of God. Dr. Grey, who has taken great pains to explain this passage of Scripture, observes, that it is a point in which the learned seem now to be universally agreed, that this illustrious prophesy, introduced in so magnificent and awful a manner, is to be understood of *Christ's* spiritual kingdom, and his final triumph over the enemies of it. The beginning of its accomplishment may properly be dated from his entrance upon his mediatorial office; but when the time shall be of its perfect completion, is yet a secret in the hand of God. The royal Psalmist, immediately (as is probable) before his death, when the spirit of prophesy was most strongly upon him, as it had been upon Jacob and Moses in the like circumstances, being favoured by God with a clearer and more distinct revelation of this great and wonderful event, begins first with expressing the deep sense he had of the divine goodness in this gracious and comfortable communication to him, and of the certainty and powerfulness of the inspiration he was under. In the four first lines [see the following translation] this peculiar grace and favour is heightened from a consideration,—*Of the person inspired; one whom, from obscure parentage and a low condition, God had exalted to be king over his chosen people, and made an instrument of establishing, or at least of considerably improving, the most delightful part of his religious worship.* In the four next,—*Of the author of the inspiration: the Lord Jehovah, the God and rock of Israel; whose powerful impulse is expressed by repetition of the words, He hath said, He hath spoken, and His word is upon my tongue.* After this magnificent introduction, he breaks out

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into a kind of transport of joy and admiration at the prospect before him: ver. 3.

“The Just One ruleth over men!”

In the four following lines he describes the spiritual nature and glorious effects of this dominion; at line 14. his firm assurance of its perpetuity, and of the designation of it to a person of his own house and lineage; with a lively declaration of the delight and comfort which this assurance gave him, line 17. From hence to the conclusion, is a short but dreadful representation of the condition of the wicked, and of the everlasting vengeance which awaits them at that terrible day, *when the wheat shall be gathered into the garner, and the chaff shall be burned with unquenchable fire.* Dr. Grey observes further, that this beautiful piece of poetry consists of an agreeable mixture of iambics and trochaics, which he has reduced to metre, and given us the following translation of it:

Line 1. David the son of Jesse hath said,  
Even the man who was raised on high hath said,  
The anointed of the God of Jacob,  
And the sweet Psalmist of Israel.

5. The Spirit of the Lord hath spoken by me,  
And his word is upon my tongue.  
The God of Israel hath said,  
Even to me hath the rock of Israel spoken.

The Just One ruleth over \* men! [\* or among]  
10. He ruleth in the fear of God!

As the light of the morning a sun shall rise,  
A morning without clouds for brightness,  
When the tender grass after rain springeth out of the earth.

¶

For

3 The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men *must be just*, ruling in the fear of God.

4 And *he shall be* as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, *even* a morning with-

out clouds; *as* the tender grass *springing* out of the earth by clear shining after rain.

5 Although my house *be* not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all *things*, and sure: for *this*

- For is not my house established with God?
15. Yea, he hath made an everlasting covenant with me, Ordered in all things, and preserved: Surely in him is all my salvation, and all my desire!

- Doubtless the wicked shall not flourish: They are like thorns thrust away.
20. Which shall not be taken by the hand: But the man who shall lay hold of them, Shall be armed with iron, and the staff of a spear; And they shall be utterly burnt with fire.

*The sweet Psalmist of Israel*] This title seems most eminently to belong to David, as he was the person who had brought to perfection the music of the Jewish service; and this not only as he was the author of most of the Psalms, but as composer of the music they were set to; as prescribing to the performers their several parts; as having invented the instruments which accompanied them, and as bearing himself a part in the performance. Grey.

*Ver. 3. He that ruleth over men must be just*] We prefer Dr. Grey's translation of this verse, which appears most agreeable to the whole tenor of the prophecy. He observes, that this is the first time that we meet with the Messiah, or great expected Deliverer of the Jews, under this title of *the Just One*. He is so called, not so much for having fulfilled all righteousness in his own person, and performed an unflinching obedience to the will of God, as because by his righteousness we are justified or accounted righteous before God upon the terms of the Gospel. The prophet Isaiah, chap. liii. 11. is more explicit upon this point: *By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many: for he shall bear their iniquities; i. e. the punishment of them: and Zech. ix. 9. He is just, and bringing or causing [not, as in the English translation, having] salvation, as all the ancient versions agree.* Hence it was, that, as the time of his appearance drew nearer, we find the Messiah was frequently spoken of, and expected by the Jews under that name; (see Acts, iii. 14. vii. 52. xxii. 14. 1 Pet. iii. 18.) inasmuch that even the Centurion is by some supposed to have applied to him upon the cross; Luke, xxiii. 47. *Certainly this man was [not a righteous man, but] the Just One, or expected Messiah.* The construction of the latter part of this verse in the original is remarkable. It is not in the fear of God, which would rather have expressed the religious character of the ruler, than the spiritual nature of his kingdom; but *ruling the fear of God*; that is, his rule and dominion should be such as was founded in the fear of God, by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just.

*Ver. 4. And he shall be as the light, &c.*] Bishop Sherlock suggested that interpretation of this verse which Dr. Grey has given; according to which, says the Bishop, taking the sun to be an image or character of *the Just One*, the sense will be, "This sun shall be like the kind gentle light of

"the morning free from clouds, and when the earth, "refreshed by kind showers, is putting forth fresh "verdure." The passage is beautiful, and gives an idea of a sun that never scorches, but is ever gentle, and shining with a genial heat; *a sun with healing under his wings.* Dr. Keenicot, in the first volume of his Dissertation, has confirmed this interpretation of the Bishop. He observes, that this song will certainly be determined to contain a prophecy of the Messiah, if a various reading in one of the oldest manuscripts, respecting the words above quoted, should appear to be genuine. It is said in our translation, that *he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth.* Now is not the sun the light of the morning? Or is not the morning light the certain effect of the sun-rising? And can any thing be compared to itself, or the cause to its effect? The various reading which, if true, not only frees us from this difficulty, but proves this passage to be prophetic, stands thus: *and as the light of the morning, Jehovah, the sun shall arise.* This word *Jehovah* is regularly written in the oldest manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, as here expressed, and seems to have been omitted on account of the similitude between the adjoining words *יִזְרַח* *iizrach*, *shall arise*, and *יְהוָה* *iehovah*, *Jehovah* in the original. It is impossible to read these words without recollecting the allusion to them in Malachi (iv. 2.) *Shall the sun of righteousness arise, &c.* which words in the original farther confirm the reading in the manuscript; for in Malachi we have the same verb, and the same noun as in this place. Here we read,—*shall Jehovah the sun arise:*—in Malachi—*shall the sun of righteousness arise:*—in Jeremiah (xxiii. 6. xxxiii. 16.)—*Jehovah, our righteousness:*—in Isaiah, ix. 1. *Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of JEHOVAH is risen upon thee.* Ver. 2. *For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people:* but *יִזְרַח יְהוָה* *iizrach iehovah, JEHOVAH SHALL ARISE upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.* Ver. 3. *And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.* I leave the inference to the reader. It should be observed, that the two principal characters of Christ's kingdom are represented to us in the fine image contained in this verse: the first, *that light* or knowledge, which, when the sun of righteousness should arise, was to fill the earth, and to dispel the clouds of ignorance under which the world had so long sat: the other, *that reviving consolation, or peace of mind*, which a deliverance from the dominion of sin and death would afford true believers under the Gospel dispensation: a state, which cannot be more fitly represented than by that of the tender grass, when, after rain, it is cherished and invigorated by the kind and genial influence of the sun.

*Ver. 5. Although my house be not so with God, &c.*] This passage is universally allowed to be extremely difficult and obscure. I have not met with any interpretation which appears preferable to that given by Dr. Grey. But to those,

is all my salvation, and all *my* desire, although he make *it* not to grow.

6 But *the sons* of Belial *shall be* all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands :

7 But the man *that* shall touch them must be fenced with iron and the staff of a spear; and they shall be utterly burned with fire in the *same* place.

8 ¶ These *be* the names of the mighty men whom David had: The Tachmonite that sat in the seat, chief among the captains; the same *was* Adino the Eznite: *he lift up his spear* against eight hundred, whom he slew at one time.

9 And after him *was* Eleazar the son of

Dodo the Ahohite, *one* of the three mighty men with David, when they defied the Philistines *that* were there gathered together to battle, and the men of Israel were gone away :

10 He arose, and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clave unto the sword: and the LORD wrought a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to spoil.

11 And after him *was* Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite. And the Philistines were gathered together into a troop, where was a piece of ground full of lentiles: and the people fled from the Philistines.

12 But he stood in the midst of the ground,

those, says he, who prefer the common way of pointing, (for I make no alteration in the words of the text,) perhaps the following explanation may not appear unnatural: "Although the present situation of myself and family, and of the people of God, falls so much short of these glorious characters; yet I am fully assured, that such a time will come, according to the covenant he hath renewed with me, and his promise since the world began."

Ver. 7. *They shall be utterly burned with fire*] The Chaldee paraphrase gives us the following exposition of the first words of this song: "These are the words of the prophecy of David, which he prophesied concerning the consummation of all things, in the day of consolation which is to come." And it expounds the last words thus: "Their punishment is in the hand of man, but they shall be burnt up utterly, when the house of the great judgment appears, that they may sit on the throne of judgment to judge the world." It may be proper just to observe, that several commentators understand these words primarily of David, and secondarily only as referring to the Messiah. But we have followed that interpretation of them which seems most consistent with the text, and, for the better understanding of the whole, subjoin the following paraphrase: "Thus spake the Lord, the God of the son of Jesse, the Lord mighty and powerful, who took me from the dust, to lift me up to a throne! Thus spake the Spirit of the Lord, which animateth David, and dictateth to him those harmonious songs, so pleasing to his nation! It is He, it is the divine Spirit who openeth my mouth, the Spirit of that God whose protection is my happiness and my glory, who inspireth me with new accents. I declare, as the monarch of the universe, the JUST ONE, by way of eminence; a king whose spiritual government will subject the nations to him, only to cause the fear of God to flourish among them. As we behold the bright morning dispel the clouds by its splendour, and recal nature into joy, causing heat to spring up in it with the day; as a gentle shower, by opening the womb

"of the earth, fertilizes the fields, and causes the plant to shoot, and the green herb to spring forth; so shall be the rising of the *Sun of righteousness*: so shall Christ bring from heaven salvation to the world, and by illuminating mortals with his light, and vivifying them by the influence of his Spirit, cause the faithful to walk surely under his laws, in the path of perfection and immortality. By promising me that this great king shall issue from one of my descendants, what hath not the great God done for my house? What a covenant is that which he hath condescended to make with me, to assure the glory of my family, and to make it flourish for ever! A covenant immutable and eternal; a covenant, in which his promises, being gradually accomplished, will from age to age have their full effect exactly at the time appointed; a covenant, which is the sure basis of my salvation, the support of my hopes, the source of all my happiness, even in the hour of death. But how different will be the fate of the wicked, obstinately bent to reject or to break the yoke of Christ! Like thorns, which are good for nothing but to tear those who touch them, they shall be approached only to be destroyed. With a destructive sword and a sure hand, they shall most terribly be smitten, shall be crushed, shall be extirpated, and utterly burned in an eternal fire."

Ver. 8. *These be the names of the mighty men*] As there are variations between this list of David's mighty men, and that in 1 Chron. xi. 10. we shall omit our remarks upon those variations till we come to that chapter of the Chronicles; referring our reader, in the mean time to the first volume of Kennicott's Dissertation. Note, Every faithful believer is one of the worthies of Israel, fighting under the banners of Jesus, strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, victorious over the powers of sin and Satan; and written great, not in the annals of time indeed, but in the annals of eternity, in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Lord, may my name be found written there!

and defended it, and slew the Philistines: and the LORD wrought a great victory.

13 And three of the thirty chief went down, and came to David in the harvest-time unto the cave of Adullam: and the troop of the Philistines pitched in the valley of Rephaim.

14 And David *was* then in an hold, and the garrison of the Philistines *was* then in Beth-lehem.

15 And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Beth-lehem, which *is* by the gate!

16 And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Beth-lehem, that *was* by the gate, and took *it*, and brought *it* to David: nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the LORD.

17 And he said, Be it far from me, O LORD, that I should do this: *is not this* the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mighty men.

18 And Abishai, the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruiah, was chief among three. And he lifted up his spear against three hundred, and slew *them*, and had the name among three.

19 Was he not most honourable of three? therefore he was their captain: howbeit he attained not unto the *first* three.

20 And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man, of Kabzeel, who had done many acts, he slew two lion-like men of Moab: he went down also and slew a lion in the midst of a pit in time of snow:

21 And he slew an Egyptian, a goodly man: and the Egyptian had a spear in his hand; but he went down to him with a staff, and plucked the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and slew him with his own spear.

22 These *things* did Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and had the name among three mighty men.

23 He was more honourable than the thirty,

but he attained not to the *first* three. And David set him over his guard.

24 Afahel the brother of Joab *was* one of the thirty; Elhanan the son of Dodo of Beth-lehem,

25 Shammah the Harodite, Elika the Harodite,

26 Helez the Paltite, Ira the son of Ikkezh the Tekoite,

27 Abiezer the Anethothite, Mebunnai the Hushathite,

28 Zalmon the Ahohite, Maharai the Netophathite,

29 Heleb the son of Baanah, a Netophathite, Ittai the son of Ribai out of Gibeah of the children of Benjamin,

30 Benaiah the Pirathonite, Hiddai of the brooks of Gaash,

31 Abi-albon the Arbathite, Azmaveth the Barhumite,

32 Eliahba the Shaalbonite, of the sons of Jashen, Jonathan,

33 Shammah the Hararite, Ahiam the son of Sharar the Hararite,

34 Eliphelet the son of Ahasbai the son of the Maachathite, Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite,

35 Hezrai the Carmelite, Paarai the Arbite,

36 Igal the son of Nathan of Zobah, Bani the Gadite,

37 Zelek the Ammonite, Nahari the Beerothite, armour-bearer to Joab the son of Zeruiah,

38 Ira an Ithrite, Gareb an Ithrite,

39 Uriah the Hittite: thirty and seven in all.

## CHAP. XXIV.

*David commands the people to be numbered; which is done by Joab: David repents, and his kingdom is punished with a three days pestilence, in which seventy thousand men die.*

[Before Christ 1017.]

**A**ND again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah.

## CHAP. XXIV.

*Ver. 1. He moved David against them, to say, Go, number]*  
This verse may be rendered thus, *And again the anger*

6

*of the Lord was kindled against Israel; for he moved David, or, David was moved against them, to say, Go, number, &c. active verbs in the third person being frequently to be rendered.*

2 For the king said to Joab the captain of the host, which *was* with him, Go now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, and number ye the people, that I may know the number of the people.

3 And Joab said unto the king, Now the LORD thy God add unto the people, how many soever they be, an hundredfold, and that the eyes of my lord the king may see it : but why doth my lord the king delight in this thing ?

4 Notwithstanding the king's word prevailed against Joab, and against the captains of the host. And Joab and the captains of the host went out from the presence of the king, to number the people of Israel.

5 ¶ And they passed over Jordan, and pitched in Aroer, on the right side of the city

that *lieth* in the midst of the river of Gad, and toward Jazer :

6 Then they came to Gilead, and to the land of Tahtim-hodshi ; and they came to Dan-jaan, and about to Zidon,

7 And came to the strong hold of Tyre, and to all the cities of the Hivites, and of the Canaanites : and they went out to the south of Judah, *even* to Beer-sheba.

8 So when they had gone through all the land, they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days.

9 And Joab gave up the sum of the number of the people unto the king : and there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men that drew the sword ; and the men of Judah *were* five hundred thousand men.

10 ¶ And David's heart smote him, after

rendered as impersonals, and not to be referred to the nouns immediately foregoing: and thus the text will be fully reconcilable with that in Chronicles, which says, that *Satan* moved him to number the people. Gen. xvi. 13, 14. is exactly parallel with this; where it is said of Hagar, "She called the name of the Lord, who spake to her, Thou, God, seest me; for she said, Have I here looked after him? therefore he called the well, the well Labai-roi." Who called it so? Not that God who saw her; and therefore the words must be rendered, as in our version, *the well was called*. But there is another way of rendering and understanding this passage, viz. *For he moved David*, or, *David was moved against them*, not as in our version, to say, but by saying, *Go, number*; which last will then be, not David's words to his officers, which follow in the next verse, but his who counselled David to this action: and thus David's numbering the people will be neither by the inspiration of God, nor immediately by the instigation of *Satan*, as that word means *the Devil*. See the parallel passage, 1 Chron. xxi. 1. And yet somebody actually said to him, *Go, number the people*; and this person seems to have been one of his courtiers, or attendants; one who, to give David a higher notion of his grandeur, and of the number and strength of his forces, put it into his head, and persuaded him to take the account of them; and in Chronicles is therefore called *Satan*, or an *adversary*, either designedly or consequentially both to David and his people. And this will exactly agree with what the author of the book of Chronicles says, *An adversary stood up against Israel, and provoked*, or, as the word is rendered here, *moved him against them*. The word שטן, *Satan*, properly signifies an *adversary*, whether to a bad or a good cause. In the former sense it is used Num. xxii. 23. where the angel of the Lord is said to stand in the way לו שטן לו *lesatan lo, as an adversary*, a *Satan*, to Balaam. In a bad sense it is used ch. xix. 22. where David calls the *sens of Zeruiab his Satan or adversary*; and thus in the

place before us: "An *adversary* to the peace of David and Israel, stood up and excited him to number the people; " *וַיַּשְׁמֵט* *vaiiaset*, excited him by his persuasion and advice; " actually saying to him, *Go, number, &c.*" Thus "Jezebel, *הַסְתָּה* *hesattab*, stirred up her husband Ahab " to work wickedness;" was continually solliciting and urging him to it. 1 Kings, xxi. 25. See also Job, ii. 3: Deut. xiii. 6. Houbigant is of opinion, that this passage is to be supplied from the Chronicles, and accordingly he translates it the same as in that place.

Ver. 3. *Joab said unto the king*] It is evident, that this action of David was thought a very wrong step, even by Joab himself, who remonstrated against it, as apprehensive of the bad consequences which might attend it: and therefore *Joab counted not Levi and Benjamin*, 1 Chron. xxi. 6. *because the king's word was abominable to him*. Probably, we do not understand all the circumstances of this affair; but Joab's sense of it, who was no scrupulous man, shews that David's conduct in it was extremely imprudent; and might subject his people to very bad consequences.

Ver. 9. *In Israel eight hundred thousand—of Judah five hundred thousand*] There are two returns left us of this numbering; the present, and that in 1 Chron. xxi. 5: which differ considerably from each other, especially in relation to the men of Israel, who, in the first, are returned but 800,000, but in the last 1,100,000; but, I think, a careful attention to both the texts, and to the nature of the thing, will easily reconcile them. The matter appears to me thus: Joab, who resolved from the beginning not to number the people, but who at the same time wished to shew his own tribe in the best light, and make their number as considerable as he could, numbered every man among them, from twenty years old and upwards, and so returned them to be 500,000. But in Israel he only made a return of such men as were exercised and proved in arms; and therefore the number of persons above twenty years old is less in his return here than in Chronicles. In a word,



that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee,

O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly.

11 For when David was up in the morning,

a word, in the present text the whole of *Judah* is returned, and only the men of approved valour in *Israel*. In *Chronicles*, the whole of *Israel* is expressly returned; but the particle *all* is not prefixed to those of *Judah*; probably, therefore, the men of tried valour in that tribe only are included in that return; and if so, the returns must of necessity be very different. Mr. Maundrell observes, that "in travelling from Kane-leban to Beer, the country presented nothing to the view, in most places, but naked rocks, mountains, and precipices; at sight of which pilgrims are apt to be much astonished and baulked in their expectations, finding that country in such an inhospitable condition, concerning whose pleasantness and plenty they had before formed in their minds such high ideas, from the description given of it in the word of God; insomuch that it almost startles their faith, when they reflect how it could be possible for a land like this to supply food for so prodigious a number of inhabitants as are here said to have been polled in the twelve tribes at one time; the sum given in by Joab amounting to no less than 1,300,000 fighting men, besides women and children. But it is certain, that any man, who is not a little biassed to infidelity before, may see, as he passes along, arguments enough to support his faith against such scruples. For it is easy for any one to observe, that these rocks and hills must have been anciently covered with earth, and cultivated, and made to contribute to the maintenance of the inhabitants no less than if the country had been all plain; nay, perhaps, much more: forasmuch as such a mountainous and uneven surface affords a larger space of ground for cultivation than this country would amount to, if it were all reduced to a perfect level. For the husbanding of these mountains, their manner was, to gather up the stones, and place them in several lines along the sides of the hills, in form of a wall. By such borders they supported the mould from tumbling or being washed down, and formed many beds of excellent soil, rising gradually one above another, from the bottom to the top of the mountains. Of this form of culture you see evident footsteps wherever you go in all the mountains of Palestine. Thus the very rocks were made fruitful: and, perhaps, there is no spot of ground in *this* whole land which was not formerly improved, to the production of something or other, ministering to the sustenance of human life. For, than the plain countries nothing can be more fruitful, whether for the production of corn or cattle, and consequently of milk. The hills, though improper for all cattle except goats, yet being disposed into such beds as are afore-described, served very well to bear corn, melons, gourds, cucumbers, and such like garden-stuff, which makes the principal food of these countries for several months in the year. The most rocky parts of all, which could not well be adjusted in that manner for the production of corn, might yet serve for the plantation of vines and olive trees; which

"delight to extract, the one their fatness, the other their sprightly juice, chiefly out of such dry and stony places: and the great plain adjoining to the Dead Sea, which, by reason of its saltness, might be thought unserviceable both for cattle, corn, olives, and vines, hath yet its proper usefulness for the nourishment of bees, and for the fabrick of honey; of which Josephus gives us his testimony, *De Bell. Jud. l. v. c. 4.* and I have reason to believe it, because when I was there, I perceived in many places a smell of honey and wax as strong as if one had been in an apiary. Why, then, might not this country very well maintain the vast number of its inhabitants, being in every part so productive of either milk, corn, wine, oil, or honey, which are the principal food of those eastern nations? The constitution of their bodies, and the nature of their climate, inclining them to a more abstemious diet than we use in England, and other colder regions." *Journey from Aleppo, p. 65.* See a curious Dissertation of Professor Michaelis on this subject: in which, not to mention his judicious observations upon the abundance which commerce procured to Palestine, in this respect pretty similar to Holland, and upon the causes which concurred to render hot countries more proper than ours to feed and clothe innumerable multitudes of inhabitants, the celebrated author shews, that by virtue of the conquests of David, and even long before, the Israelites had obtained a right of feeding their flocks freely, after the manner of the Nomades, throughout all Arabia, as far as the banks of the Euphrates.

*Ver. 10. David said,—I have sinned*] The specific nature of his sin may be easily determined and understood, though it has embarrassed many of the commentators; for, among other commands which were given by Moses, was that recorded *Exod. xxx. 12, 13.* to which the reader is referred. David, either not thinking of this command, or thinking himself, as king of *Israel*, exempt from it, ordered the people to be numbered without exacting the ransom from each of them. This was one of the highest stretches of power, assuming a prerogative which God reserved to himself, and a violation of one of the standing laws of the kingdom. But God, to support the dignity of his own constitution; and to put David in mind, that, though king, he was still to limit the exercise of his power by the precepts of the law, gives him by the prophet the option of three punishments, of which David chose the plague, recollecting probably, at last, that this was the very punishment threatened by God for the violation of this statute concerning the numbering of the people, as well as for the reason he himself alleged; *ver. 14. Let us fall now into the hand of the Lord, for his mercies are great.* Dr. Delaney observes, that had he chosen either war or famine, his wealth and his power had easily secured himself and family from any imminent danger of either. But in this consisted his heroism [and, may I add, his piety], that he chose that evil which he himself risked in common with his meanest subject.

*Ver. 11. For when David*] There is an error here in our

the word of the LORD came unto the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying,

12 Go and say unto David, Thus saith the LORD, I offer thee three *things*; chuse thee one of them, that I may *do it* unto thee.

13 So Gad came to David, and told him, and said unto him, Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days' pestilence in thy land? Now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me.

14 And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the LORD; for his mercies *are* great: and let me not fall into the hand of man.

15 ¶ So the LORD sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan even to Beer-sheba seventy thousand men.

16 And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed the people, It is enough: stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD was by the threshing-place of Araunah the Jebusite.

17 And David spake unto the LORD when he saw the angel that smote the people, and said, Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house.

our translation, which gives us to apprehend that David's penitence was the effect of Gad's threat: *for*, says the text, *when David was up*, whereas the word which is translated *for*, should be rendered *and*; it being not a casual, but a connective particle. Houbigant renders it *deinde, afterwards*.

Ver. 13. *Seven years of famine*] In 1 Chron. xxi. 12. it is *three years*, which is the reading of the LXX; a reading, says Houbigant, which I prefer in this place, because the *three years* answer to the *three months* and the *three days*.

Ver. 15. *Even to the time appointed*] There seems nothing difficult in this passage, as some have supposed: the plain meaning appears to be, that the pestilence, commencing in the morning, continued *even to the time appointed*; i. e. even to the third day; when God, moved with the repentance of the king and his subjects, commanded the angel, ver. 16. *to stay his hand*, without continuing to destroy till the evening.

Ver. 16. *The threshing place of Araunah the Jebusite*] This was on mount Moriah, where the temple of Solomon was afterwards built.

Ver. 17. *But these sheep, what have they done?*] To those who object to the people's being involved in David's punishment as inconsistent with the divine justice, we reply, that the reader ought to be put in mind, that kings may be punished in their regal capacities, for the errors of their administration, by public calamities; by famine, pestilence, foreign wars, domestic convulsions, or some other like distresses, which affect their people: and if it be right at all for God to animadvert on the conduct of princes, *as such*, or to shew his displeasure against them for the public errors of their administration, it must be right and fit for him to afflict their people; indeed, this is nothing more than what continually happens in the common course of Providence. And if this be a difficulty, it affects natural religion as well as revealed; and the same considerations which will obviate the difficulty in one case, will solve it also in the other. Besides, in this case the people were themselves very culpable, as they knew, or might have

known, that upon being numbered they were to pay the prescribed ransom, which yet they neglected or refused to do; and therefore, as partners in the offence, they justly shared in the penalty inflicted. David, indeed, takes the guilt upon himself, and declares his people innocent of it: *These sheep, what have they done?* And it is true, that the order to number the people was David's, of which his people were wholly innocent: but they should have remonstrated against it to the king, or voluntarily have paid the capitation tax required of them; and as they did neither, they could not plead innocence as a reason for their exemption from punishment. Even supposing that they were free from all blame in this affair, can we conceive that they were so entirely free from all other transgressions, as that it was injustice in God to visit them with a pestilence? Were not many of them concerned in the rebellion of Absalom? Is it not expressly said in the first verse, that *the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel?* And can we suppose, that the righteous Lord, whose mercy is over all his works, could be angry with the people if innocent?—If not, God did them no injustice by sending the pestilence; and therefore none by sending it at that time, and as an immediate punishment of David's sin. God, by virtue of his supreme authority over mankind, may resume life whenever he pleases. If there be no sin, the immediate resumption of life will be no punishment; if there be, a resumption of life will not be unjust, though the immediate reason of that resumption may be for the punishment of another; especially as all such instances have a real tendency to promote the public good, and to preserve alive, in the minds both of princes and people, that reverence for the Deity, without which neither public nor private virtue can subsist, nor the prosperity of kingdoms ever be secured and established upon solid and lasting foundations. Chandler. We would just add to what this learned writer has observed, that it is very plain from the first verse, that the men of Israel and Judah were punished, not so much because David numbered the people,

18 ¶ And Gad came that day to David, and said unto him, Go up, rear an altar unto the LORD in the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

19 And David, according to the saying of Gad, went up as the LORD commanded.

20 And Araunah looked, and saw the king and his servants coming on toward him: and Araunah went out, and bowed himself before the king on his face upon the ground.

21 And Araunah said, Wherefore is my lord the king come to his servant? And David said,

To buy the threshing-floor of thee, to build an altar unto the LORD, that the plague may be stayed from the people.

22 And Araunah said unto David, Let my lord the king take and offer up what *seemeth* good unto him: behold, *here be* oxen for burnt-sacrifice, and threshing-instruments and *other* instruments of the oxen for wood.

23 All these *things* did Araunah, as a king, give unto the king. And Araunah said unto the king, The LORD thy God accept thee.

as because they had offended the Lord, and called down by their vices this punishment upon them: nor can we, upon a review of what is past, want proofs of their criminality. Can we conceive any thing more shameful and sinful, than the rebellions which we have read of in the preceding chapter; rebellions against a good and pious king, established over them by the immediate choice of God himself. Doubtless, such conduct well merited chastisement from the hand of God; and it may, perhaps, be thought not unworthy of observation, that other nations, after rebellions against their lawful monarchs, have suffered the like punishment with the Israelites in the present case. The latter clause of this verse, *let thine hand—be against me*, &c. is a noble instance of David's generous concern for the welfare of his people. The language is tender and pathetic; it is the real language and spirit of a genuine, a true shepherd of the people, devoting himself and family as a sacrifice to God for the preservation of his subjects. See Dr. Waterland's Scripture Vindicated, part ii. p. 108. and Dr. Leland's answer to "Christianity as old as the Creation," vol. ii. p. 425.

REFLECTIONS.—During nine months David waited for the gratification of his pride; and now he no sooner receives the return, than conviction of his sin dashes the sweet draught that he was lifting to his lips. So often are the pleasures of sin turned into the poison of asps!

1. His heart smites him: reflecting in the evening on what he had done, the good Spirit opens his eyes to a sense of his guilt, and awakens his conscience to a sensibility of his danger. Instantly his penitent confessions speak his contrite spirit, and he begs earnestly the forgiveness of his great sin and folly. *Note;* (1.) Though we have played the fool, and sinned exceedingly, yet, if our heart smite us, and we are brought to our tears and our knees, there is yet hope. (2.) A sense of guilt upon the conscience, will put an edge on the importunity of our prayers; and the groanings which cannot be uttered, God can hear. (3.) It is the greatest folly, to incur, for a momentary pleasure, never-ending pain.

2. When David arose in the morning, expecting from the bitter night he had past to meet no glad tidings, God the seer is sent to him with his sentence: three things are proposed to his choice; famine, pestilence, or war. He shall rue his folly, and the people suffer for their sins.

*Note;* (1.) God often severely chastises, when he does not mean utterly to destroy. (2.) All his judgments are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to abase, by smiting their idol, or laying their honour in the dust.

3. David is in a dreadful strait: yet, since it must be so, he chooses rather to fall into the hands of God than of man; and to stand on a level with the meanest subject, as the mark of the devouring pestilence: knowing the greatness of the mercies of God, he casts himself upon them, hoping that the stroke in his hand would be lightened, or the time of suffering shortened. *Note;* Those mercies which we must for ever despair of obtaining from men whom we have highly offended, we may hope (though so much more aggravated our guilt) to find with God, *for he is God, and not man.*

4. Instantly as the choice is made, the sword is drawn; and Israel's land, (so changed is the scene!) instead of peace and joy, resounds with the shrieks of the mourners, and the groans of the dying. Seventy thousand fell before the destroying angel; such dreadful havock can these glorious spirits make when sent to execute God's judgments! The time was short, but the slaughter was prodigious. Then God repented of his fierce anger; he looked upon their desolations, and remembered the ark of his covenant; he therefore bids the angel sheath the sword; it is enough. *Note;* (1.) God mingles mercy still with judgment, else would the sons of Jacob be utterly consumed. (2.) While we tremble at his visitations, let us fear to provoke them by our sins.

5. David's eyes were now opened, to behold this mighty angel, as he stood with the sword of vengeance yet unsheathed. Then David fell down before the angel; and, directing his prayer to God, confessed his guilt, and opened his bosom to receive the stroke that he had provoked, begging that he might bleed, as the author of the judgment; and that his people, whom as a good shepherd he loved, might escape, though at the expence of his own blood. His prayer is accepted, and himself also spared. *Note;* (1.) Thus the son of David not only offered, but actually laid down his life for his sheep. (2.) Real penitents cannot bear that others should smart for their sins; and care not what *themselves* suffer, so they may go free.

*Ver. 23. All these things did Araunah, as a king, give unto the king, &c.] All these things did Araunah give to the king,*

24 And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy *it* of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt-offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshing-floor

and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.

25 And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings. So the LORD was intreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel.

*king.* Houbigant; who observes, that the words *as a king* are not read in many of the ancient versions.

*Ver. 24.* So David bought the threshing-floor, and the oxen, &c.] Much difficulty has been raised upon the articles of this sale, in a case (to me) sufficiently plain. The author here tells us, that *David bought the threshing-floor*, but does not say for what; and then immediately adds, *and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver*. Now it is but supposing such a stop placed after the word *floor*, as shews it to be a sentence distinct from what follows, or supposing the following clause to be included in a parenthesis, (a construction which must be supposed in all other writings in a thousand instances,) and the matter is clear of all difficulty. And that one or both of these must be the case is sufficiently

evident to me, from 1 Chron. xxi. 25. where the price paid for the place is expressly set down to be *six hundred shekels of gold*, without mentioning any price paid for the oxen. Delancy remarks, that the 91st Psalm seems evidently to have been written by David in commemoration of his deliverance from this public calamity. *Note;* (1.) But for the blood of Jesus, the destroying angel would utterly consume this guilty world. (2.) The sacrifice of praise is the bounden duty of the pardoned sinner. (3.) They who desire to serve God without expence, have little of David's spirit. (4.) Christ, the living altar, and the acceptable sacrifice, having once offered himself for a propitiation, we may rejoice in the returning favour of a reconciled God, and fear no more either danger or death.

THE  
FIRST BOOK of the KINGS,

OTHERWISE CALLED THE

THIRD BOOK of the KINGS.

THE author of the following two books of Kings is unknown; but they are generally supposed to have been compiled by Ezra, from the public records of the Jews. They are evidently the work of one author. Le Clerc is of opinion, that they were written after the captivity; and that though we find in them the remainder of ancient memoirs, upon which they were formed, yet it can never be certainly known who was the author that compiled them. Calmet observes judiciously, that he was in all probability a priest, as he does not seem so much concerned to write a political history, as to describe what concerns the temple and religion. The first book of the Kings comprizes a history of one hundred and nineteen years, from the year of the world 2989 to 3108, containing an account of the death of David, the reign of Solomon, his building of the temple, his wisdom, magnificence, and fall: the division of the kingdom under Rehoboam; together with a summary of the reigns of four kings of Judah, and eight kings of Israel. See Le Clerc's *Sentimens de quelques Theol. sur la Critique du P. Simon*, Let. vii. and our Introduction to the first book of Samuel.

CHAP. I.

David in his old age is cherished by Abishag. Adonijah, affecting the kingdom, conspires with Joab and Abiathar. Solomon, by David's appointment, is anointed king by Zadok and Nathan. Adonijah, terrified, flies to the horns of the altar, and is spared by Solomon.

[Before Christ 1015.]

NOW king David was old and stricken in years; and they covered him with clothes, but he gat no heat.

2 Wherefore his fervants said unto him, Let there be sought for my lord the king a young virgin: and let her stand before the king, and let her cherish him, and let her lie in thy bosom, that my lord the king may get heat.

3 So they sought for a fair damsel throughout all the coasts of Israel, and found Abishag a Shunammite, and brought her to the king.

4 And the damsel was very fair, and che-

CHAP. I.

Ver. 1—4. Now King David was old, &c.] It appears from 2 Sam. v. 4, 5. that he was seventy years old. The strength of nature was so far abated in him, that clothes could not keep him warm in his bed. His physicians therefore advised, that a fair and youthful virgin should be sought for, who might cherish his vital heat; the natural warmth of a young healthful human body being, as the physicians observe, best fitted for that end, both in kind and degree. If it be asked, how the beauty of the

person to be employed for this purpose was concerned in David's health; I answer, that the beauty here required, is evidently beauty of complexion, which, as it indicates the health and temperament of the body, might be of importance in this case. Possibly too, as David was very beautiful himself, they sought for some person of complexion and constitution likest to his own, and, of consequence, best suited, and most congenial to it. Scheuchzer, on the place, has entered philosophically into the subject; to him, therefore, we refer. We should remark, however, that concubinage was not at that time deemed criminal;

rished the king, and ministered to him: but the king knew her not.

5 ¶ Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, I will be king: and he prepared him chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him.

6 And his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so? and he also *was a very goodly man*; and *his mother* bare him after Absalom.

7 And he conferred with Joab the son of Zeruah, and with Abiathar the priest: and they following Adonijah helped *him*.

8 But Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and Nathan the prophet, and Shimei, and Rei, and the mighty men which *belonged* to David, were not with Adonijah.

9 And Adonijah slew sheep and oxen and fat cattle by the stone of Zoheleth, which *is* by En-rogel, and called all his brethren the king's sons, and all the men of Judah the king's servants:

10 But Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah, and the mighty men, and Solomon his brother, he called not.

11 Wherefore Nathan spake unto Bathsheba the mother of Solomon, saying, Hast thou not heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith doth reign, and David our lord knoweth *it* not?

12 Now therefore come, let me, I pray thee, give thee counsel, that thou mayest save thine own life, and the life of thy son Solomon.

13 Go and get thee in unto king David, and say unto him, Didst not thou, my lord, O king,

swear unto thine handmaid, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne? why then doth Adonijah reign?

14 Behold, while thou yet talkest there with the king, I will also come in after thee, and confirm thy words.

15 ¶ And Bath-sheba went in unto the king, into the chamber: and the king was very old; and Abishag the Shunammite ministered unto the king.

16 And Bath-sheba bowed, and did obeisance unto the king. And the king said, What wouldst thou?

17 And she said unto him, My lord, thou swarest by the LORD thy God unto thine handmaid, *saying*, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne.

18 And now, behold, Adonijah reigneth; and now, my lord the king, thou knowest *it* not:

19 And he hath slain oxen and fat cattle and sheep in abundance, and hath called all the sons of the king, and Abiathar the priest, and Joab the captain of the host: but Solomon thy servant hath he not called.

20 And thou, my lord, O king, the eyes of all Israel *are* upon thee, that thou shouldest tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him.

21 Otherwise it shall come to pass, when my lord the king shall sleep with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon shall be counted offenders.

criminal; and it will I hope, says Dr. Delaney, be thought no wild paradox, to venture to surmise, that a man can with less reluctance suffer his infirmities to be relieved by a wife, than by any other mortal.

*Note*; (1.) They who come to old age, must expect the burden of infirmities which attend it. (2.) Though the candle of life escape the furious blasts of disease or accident, it must shortly burn out of itself. (3.) The view of approaching old age and death should enliven our diligence to work for God, whilst life and strength are with us.

*Ver. 6.* And his father had not displeased him at any time] Strange weakness in parents and cruelty to their children, to suffer them to become incorrigible in error, or inveterate in vice, rather than restrain and correct them while correction is kindness! An extreme indulgence to his

children, seems to have been one of David's greatest failings. Houbigant renders the last clause of the verse, *and he was born to, or begotten by David after Absalom*: for not Haggith, but Maacab, was the mother of Absalom. 2 Sam. iii. 3.

*Ver. 12.* That thou mayest save thine own life, &c.] Both Solomon and Bath-sheba would have been an immediate sacrifice, if Adonijah had succeeded in his treasonable usurpation, that he might have rid himself of a dangerous rival to the throne. Bath-sheba herself foresaw this, as appears from her address to the king, ver. 21. There is not any other mention of the oath of David which Bath-sheba speaks of in the 13th verse. But there can be no reason to doubt that he had given her such an oath, as he well knew of God's immediate appointment of Solomon to the throne. See 2 Sam. vii. 12.

22 ¶ And, lo, while she yet talked with the king, Nathan the prophet also came in.

23 And they told the king, saying, Behold Nathan the prophet. And when he was come in before the king, he bowed himself before the king with his face to the ground.

24 And Nathan said, My lord, O king, hast thou said, Adonijah shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne?

25 For he is gone down this day, and hath slain oxen and fat cattle and sheep in abundance, and hath called all the king's sons, and the captains of the host, and Abiathar the priest; and, behold, they eat and drink before him, and say, God save king Adonijah.

26 But me, *even* me thy servant, and Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and thy servant Solomon, hath he not called.

27 Is this thing done by my lord the king, and thou hast not shewed *it* unto thy servant,

who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him?

28 Then king David answered and said, Call me Bath-sheba. And she came into the king's presence, and stood before the king.

29 And the king swore, and said, *As* the LORD liveth, that hath redeemed my soul out of all distress,

30 Even as I swear unto thee by the LORD God of Israel, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne in my stead; even so will I certainly do this day.

31 Then Bath-sheba bowed with *her* face to the earth, and did reverence to the king, and said, Let my lord king David live for ever.

32 ¶ And king David said, Call me Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada. And they came before the king.

*Ver. 22. While she yet talked with the king, Nathan the prophet also came in.]* It appears from ver. 28. that when Nathan came into the king's presence, Bath-sheba retired; as Pliny tells us Cœcilius Rufus's wife did upon the admission of an intimate friend to her husband, although well fitted to share in all his secrets.

REFLECTIONS.—An attempt so dangerous to them, if it succeeded, alarmed Nathan the prophet and Bath-sheba.

1. Nathan hears of the assembly of Adonijah, and carries the news to the queen, that she might impart it to the king, who knew nothing of these proceedings, so contrary to his will, and to the appointment of God. No time was to be lost, as her life and her son's were in danger, since Adonijah, to secure his throne, would be sure to dispatch his rival, and those who cleaved to him. Nathan engages to second her petition by dropping in as it were undesignedly, just at the time when she had spoken to the king of his oath to her, in behalf of Solomon for his successor. *Note;* (1.) In times of danger, every prudent means is to be used for our own security. (2.) They who know God's will, should be zealously affected to comply with it.

2. Bath-sheba without delay goes to the king in his chamber, where Abishag ministered to him, as he lay decrepit on his bed; and approaching with all respect, in answer to the king's enquiry what she wished, reminds him of his oath to her, to leave his crown to Solomon; informs him of the ambitious project of Adonijah, with which she knew he was unacquainted; the avowed dislike expressed to Solomon, whom he had not invited to his feast; the danger that she and her son would be exposed to, who would be regarded as traitors, if David did not immediately interpose to confirm the succession according to his promise; and expresses her confidence, that as

the eyes of all Israel were upon him, such deference would be paid to his public proclamation, that none would dare dispute his appointment. *Note;* (1.) Kings are often kept in ignorance of matters which most nearly relate to their kingdom and interest. A faithful friend in a palace is rare. (2.) He who usurps a throne, will stop at no cruelty to secure himself in it.

3. Nathan, who probably went with Bath-sheba, and waited without till she had done speaking, is introduced to the king, and having made his due obeisance, as one surprised at the late event, expresses his astonishment, by a pointed interrogation, whether this deed of Adonijah's was with the king's privity or consent; which Nathan conceives impossible, considering both David's oath, and God's designation of Solomon, as well as his never mentioning it to so faithful a servant as himself. He therefore execrates the daring insolence of Adonijah, thus even in David's life-time, to usurp the throne; and shews the necessity of immediately placing Solomon thereon, who, with himself, Zadok, and Benaiah, had not been invited to Adonijah's feast, because their well-known fidelity to the king would not suffer them to be companions with traitors. *Note;* (1.) When the enemies of God's people are so alert and vigorous, shall their friends be less active and vigilant? (2.) They who, though well-meaning, are weak through infirmity, should be stirred up and encouraged for the duty to which they are called.

4. Bath-sheba having retired when Nathan came, David bids her return, and with an oath confirms his former solemn appointment of Solomon for his successor; and that very day his reign should begin, as sure as the Lord lived, who had redeemed his soul out of all distress; the remembrance of which mercy would engage him to adhere to the divine appointment of his successor. Bath-sheba, perfectly satisfied in the king's declaration, expresses her

her

33 The king also said unto them, Take with you the servants of your lord, and cause Solomon my son to ride upon mine own mule, and bring him down to Gihon :

34 And let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there king over Israel : and blow ye with the trumpet, and say, God save king Solomon.

35 Then ye shall come up after him, that he may come and sit upon my throne ; for he shall be king in my stead : and I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and over Judah.

36 And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada answered the king, and said, Amen : the LORD God of my lord the king say so too.

37 As the LORD hath been with my lord the king, even so be he with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my

lord king David.

38 ¶ So Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, went down, and caused Solomon to ride upon king David's mule, and brought him to Gihon.

39 And Zadok the priest took an horn of oil out of the tabernacle, and anointed Solomon. And they blew the trumpet ; and all the people said, God save king Solomon.

40 And all the people came up after him, and the people piped with pipes, and rejoiced with great joy, so that the earth rent with the found of them.

41 ¶ And Adonijah and all the guests that were with him heard it as they had made an end of eating. And when Joab heard the found of the trumpet, he said, Wherefore is this noise of the city being in an uproar ?

her thankfulness, and with low obeisance adds, May the king live for ever ! Though she solicited the succession for her son, the king's life and happiness had her warmest wishes. *Note*; (1.) Our oaths should ever be remembered, and bind our consciences to fulfil them. (2.) A grateful heart never forgets the divine mercies, or misses an opportunity to make thankful mention of them. (3.) Good children desire not, for the sake of their estates, the death of their aged parents, but wish that they may live long and happily to enjoy them.

*Ver. 33.* Cause Solomon—to ride upon mine own mule] See *ver. 44.* Maimonides tells us, that it was a capital offence to ride upon the king's ass or mule, to sit upon his throne, or to handle his sceptre, without his order ; and, on the contrary, to have the honour to ride on the king's beast by his appointment, was accounted the highest dignity among the Persians, as appears from the history of Mordecai, in the 6th chapter of Esther. *Gihon* was a little river or brook near Jerusalem, which discharged itself into the brook Kidron, and in the Chaldee is called by its modern name *Silva*; it was afterwards rendered famous by the noble work of Hezekiah, 2 Chron. xxxii. 30. Maimonides and other rabbis assert, that the kings of the house of David were all obliged to be anointed by the side of a fountain or river ; which, they say, was the reason why David commanded his servants to bring his son down to Gihon, and anoint him there. At this place, without the walls of Jerusalem, not in the city, Zadok and Nathan anointed Solomon ; that is, one of them poured out the oil, and the other anointed his head ; drawing a circle round about it with oil, according to the maxim, that their kings were anointed in the form of a crown, to denote their delegation to the royal dignity. We shall add another reason, assigned by the Jews, for choosing such a situation for anointing their kings ; namely, to

shew the perpetuity of their kingdom, because rivers run always, though the cities which they wash are continually decaying, and liable to destruction. Probably *Gihon* was more particularly chosen on this occasion, as being near Jerusalem, the most public place of resort in the whole kingdom. Hence, from the principles of the Jews themselves, we are able to draw the reason why our blessed Saviour was anointed by the Holy Ghost as he came out of the waters of Jordan ; and we may hence infer, that Jordan was preferred to any other place, to shew that HE was not only the king of Israel, who should sit on the throne of his father David, but likewise, as the angel adds, should sit upon it for ever ; Luke, i. 33. See Bishop Patrick's Witnesses, and Schickhard Jus Regium, cap. i. theor. 4. Concerning the anointing of Solomon, the oil, &c. the reader who may be curious in these matters will find full satisfaction in the *Mirothec.* of Schacchus.

*Note*; (1.) The King of Peace, whom Solomon represented, was anointed (not with the oil of the Jewish sanctuary, but) with the oil of gladness above his fellows, and appointed and qualified for the administration of that kingdom which is an everlasting kingdom, by the Spirit, which the Father gave not by measure unto him. (2.) They are kings indeed, who reign in the affections of their subjects. (3.) When the believer shall ascend to his throne of glory, it shall be amidst the joyful acclamations of angels, and with the trump of God.

*Ver. 42.* For thou art a valiant man] His being a valiant man was no great argument of recommendation in the present case. The original word is rendered *virtuous* in Prov. xii. 4. and would be so rendered with much greater propriety here. The Targum has it, *thou art a man who fearest to sin.* The marginal reference confirms this interpretation.

*Ver.*



42 And while he yet spake, behold, Jonathan the son of Abiathar the priest came: and Adonijah said unto him, Come in; for thou art a valiant man, and bringest good tidings.

43 And Jonathan answered and said to Adonijah, Verily our lord king David hath made Solomon king.

44 And the king hath sent with him Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, and they have caused him to ride upon the king's mule:

45 And Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet have anointed him king in Gihon: and they are come up from thence rejoicing, so that the city rang again. This is the noise that ye have heard.

46 And also Solomon sitteth on the throne of the kingdom.

47 And moreover the king's servants came to bless our lord king David, saying, God make the name of Solomon better than thy name, and make his throne greater than thy throne. And the king bowed himself upon the bed.

48 And also thus said the king, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which hath given one to sit on my throne this day, mine eyes even seeing it.

49 And all the guests that were with Adonijah were afraid, and rose up, and went every man his way.

50 ¶ And Adonijah feared because of Solomon, and arose, and went, and caught hold on the horns of the altar.

51 And it was told Solomon, saying, Behold, Adonijah feareth king Solomon: for, lo, he hath caught hold on the horns of the altar, saying, Let king Solomon swear unto me to day that he will not slay his servant with the sword.

52 And Solomon said, If he will shew himself a worthy man, there shall not an hair of him fall to the earth: but if wickedness shall be found in him, he shall die.

53 So king Solomon sent, and they brought him down from the altar. And he came and bowed himself to king Solomon: and Solomon said unto him, Go to thine house.

*Ver. 50. And Adonijah—went, and caught hold on the horns of the altar*] Conscious that he had committed a crime worthy of death, in usurping the kingdom without his father's consent, and against the known design of God, (chap. ii. 15.) he fled for safety and protection to the altar, which was a privileged place, not by the appointment of the law, but in conformity to the custom of all nations. It is a question, to what altar Adonijah fled: but, as the horns of the altar are mentioned, it was probably the same with that in the tabernacle, to which Job fled also. See the next chapter, ver. 28.

**REFLECTIONS.**—When sin spreads the table of riotous feasting, the end of that mirth will be heaviness.

1. Tidings are brought to Adonijah and his guests, in the midst of their entertainment, of what had passed in Jerusalem. At first he promises himself good news for his party; but he is quickly undeceived. They who do ill, must not expect messages of peace. Jonathan, who had been present at what had passed, relates the coronation of Solomon, the persons employed in it, the zeal of the king's servants for him, the universal satisfaction of the people, and especially David's own great joy and thankfulness at seeing his son on his throne, and his hearty consent and approbation of the loyal wishes of his servants, that Solomon's throne might be greater than his own. *Note;* The greatest satisfaction that an aged Christian knows, is

to see the peace of God's Israel established, and his own children happily settled, and walking in the fear of God.

2. Adonijah and his company are thunderstruck with the news: every man instantly shifts for himself, afraid to be caught in so treasonable an assembly; and Adonijah, who just now sat as a king, flies to the horns of the altar to secure his life, which was forfeited by his treason. *Note;* (1.) There is yet hope for the sinner, even after his deepest provocation, if he flies to Jesus Christ for refuge, who is the true altar, on the horns of which that atoning blood is sprinkled, which cleanseth from all sin. (2.) Traitors are generally cowards, from the consciousness of a bad cause.

3. He humbly sues to Solomon, as his king, for pardon, which he as graciously grants; and, requiring an oath for his security, Solomon assures him, if he approves himself for the future a loyal subject, his past attempt shall not be his death; but if he should be found turbulent or seditious, then he must no longer expect the clemency that he had abused. *Note;* (1.) They who cry earnestly to the Prince of Peace for pardon, may hope to find an answer of peace. (2.) We are, by our loyalty to our king, to prove the reality of our subjection to him. If we still retain the love of sin in our hearts, or indulge it in our practice, it is not saying Lord, Lord, that will secure us from eternal death.

## CHAP. II.

*David gives his last charge to his son Solomon. Adonijah, Joab, and Shimei, are put to death, and Abiathar deprived of the priesthood.*

[Before Christ 1015.]

**N**OW the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying,

2 I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man;

3 And keep the charge of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself:

4 That the LORD may continue his word which he spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before

me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (said he) a man on the throne of Israel.

5 Moreover thou knowest also what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, and what he did to the two captains of the hosts of Israel, unto Abner the son of Ner, and unto Amasa the son of Jether, whom he slew, and shed the blood of war in peace, and put the blood of war upon his girdle that *was* about his loins, and in his shoes that *were* on his feet.

6 Do therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace.

7 But shew kindness unto the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be of those that eat at thy table: for so they came to me when I fled because of Absalom thy brother.

8 And, behold, *thou hast* with thee Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite of Bahurim, which cursed me with a grievous curse in the

## CHAP. II.

*Ver. 6. Let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace]* David's dying order was an order worthy of a good king, and fit to be given in the last moments of his life. The crimes which drew down this punishment upon Joab, have already been expiated upon in the course of these notes. Many reasons concurred to prevent David's calling him to an account; but it is plain, that he could not, consistently with the law, have forgiven him, if he had been so inclined. His deferring his punishment so long, was no reason why he should always do it. Reasons of state prevented its being inflicted before, and reasons of state required its being put in execution at this juncture. In time of war it was dangerous to attempt it, on account of the power, influence, and military skill of Joab; in a time of peace it was safe, because Joab's power was then upon the decline. Joab was ambitious, enterprising, and restless, and, not having proved very loyal to the father, might have practised the same perfidy against the son; who, being young, and scarcely settled in his throne, might have suffered from his treachery, his want of fidelity, and his ambitious views, which were insatiable. We may consider this transaction in another light: we may consider Joab as relative to David in his public capacity. Now David, in his public capacity, was king of Israel: Joab, in his public capacity, stood related to him as his general, and assisted him, and adhered to him in his extremities. David therefore, in his public capacity, was obliged by the laws of God and man to punish assassinations and murders; and Joab in his public capacity too, as general, was an assassin and murderer; and therefore, David in his public capacity, as king, was obliged to punish Joab with death in his

public capacity as general, assassin, and murderer. Though Joab had been his faithful general, and frequently assisted David in his extremities, private obligations are in their nature inferior, and ought to give way to public ones; and the yielding up of such an offender to public justice, when personal obligations might have been pleaded in his favour, was a nobler sacrifice in its nature, and renders David's character as a prince the more illustrious. In this light we must commend the master, who died meditating and ordering the punishment of a servant, who, by basely stabbing two worthier men than himself, forfeited the protection of his king and country, and cancelled all the obligations which could arise from his former services. It should be added, that whatever Joab's past services were to David, and however faithfully he had formerly been attached to him, yet he had now been engaged in a conspiracy to depose him, and to set aside the intended succession to the crown, and had actually proclaimed Adonijah king, during his father's life. This was adding rebellion to murder. What was David to do? Was he to have forgiven him at his last hours, in order to manifest his own charity? No! For if a prince's charity influences him, living or dying, to pardon repeated offences, inconsistent with the public safety, it is folly and weakness, and not virtuous charity; it is cruelty to his people, instead of real generosity and goodness. David had not this charity, and it heightens his character that he had not. His last charge to Solomon shews his inviolable regard to justice, by positively ordering the execution of a murderer too powerful for himself to punish; and he would neither have been a wise nor a righteous prince had he forgotten or failed to do it.

*Ver. 8, 9. Thou hast—Shimei—his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood]* The reader will not forget who

day when I went to Mahanaim: but he came down to meet me at Jordan, and I swore to him by the LORD, saying, I will not put thee to death with the sword.

9 Now therefore hold him not guiltless: for thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him; but his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood.

who Shimei was; see 2 Sam. xvi. 5. xix. 16. It appears by the expression, *Behold, thou hast with thee*, that he was now in Jerusalem; and therefore David thought this a proper opportunity for confining him, that he might not spread disaffection to Solomon's government among those of his own tribe, or of any of the other tribes of Israel: a precaution the more necessary in the infancy of Solomon's reign, as some of his brethren were inclined to dispute with him the succession to the crown; and it is far from being improbable, that he was in the party with Adonijah against Solomon, as he was in that of Absalom against David: and this is the true reason of those words, *But do not thou hold him guiltless*; i. e. "Though I forgave him, and swore to him that he should not die, do not thou look on him as an innocent man, that is reconciled to my family, and thy succession to the throne of Israel: he is Shimei still, and wants nothing but a fair opportunity to shew it. Clear him not, therefore, as I did, if thou findest him guilty of any malpractices; but his hoar head bring down, &c. Cut him off as an old offender, and dangerous enemy, to secure thy own peace, and the safety of thy government." In this sense Josephus understands the words: "He then," says he, "obtained a promise of security from me; but do thou, when thou canst find a just cause, punish him." Farther, David telling Solomon that he swore to Shimei, that he would not put him to death for his outrage and treason, is a demonstrative proof that he did not advise Solomon to put him to death for the crime which he himself had solemnly forgiven: for, can any one imagine that David would tell Solomon he had sworn not to put Shimei to death, and in the same breath order him, in defiance of his oath, to be put to death? If he intended that Solomon should have immediately put him to death, there would be neither reason nor sense in the words, *thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him*. Now to what purpose was it to tell Solomon that he knew how to behave to Shimei, if David's command was immediately to cut him off, and Solomon understood him in that sense? But it is certain, that Solomon did not understand his father in this sense, by his ordering him to build a house for himself in Jerusalem, (ver. 36.) as well as from the different manner in which he treated Shimei and Joab. By the way, let it be observed, that after Shimei's confession of his fault, Abishai asked, *shall not Shimei be put to death, because he cursed the Lord's anointed?* meaning "be put to death instantly," as appears from David's answer, *shall there any man be put to death this day in Israel? Do not I know that I am this day king over Israel? Therefore the king said to Shimei, Thou shalt not die; and the king swore to him; viz. that he should not then, or that day, or at that time, be put to the sword*. And it is observable, that the Arabic version expressly mentions this circumstance: "*Thou shalt not die this day*." This was certainly all that the king declared to Abishai,

that as he was that day restored to the exercise of his regal power, no man should that day be put to death; and therefore he swore to Shimei, that he should not then die. So again, in David's direction to Solomon, the same version has the same word: "*I swear to him by God, I will not put thee to the sword this day*." And indeed nothing farther can certainly be collected from the words, as they stand connected, but that David reprieved Shimei from immediate execution, and left himself at liberty at any other time to call him to an account for the outrage and treason he had been guilty of; and therefore David violated no oath, if he actually ordered Solomon to put him to death as a dangerous enemy to his person and government; and much less still if, for the same reason, he advised him to keep a strict watch over Shimei, and put him to death only if, on any new offence, he should again forfeit his life: and this I hope has been made appear to be the truth of the case. How is this inconsistent with piety, or the advice of a prince on his death-bed? It is true, forgiveness of enemies is a duty: but no man is obliged by any law so to forgive an enemy, continuing such, as not to take the proper methods to guard against the effects of his enmity. Much less is a prince obliged to forgive an implacable enemy to his crown and government, and one who is likely to disturb the settlement of the crown in his successor, as not to order the successor to be upon his guard against him, and punish him, when guilty, according to his demerits. Such a caution and order is what he owes to his people; and he may die, as a private person, in charity with all mankind, and forgive every private injury against himself; and yet as a prince advise what is necessary to the public good after his decease, and even the execution of particular persons, if, by abusing the lenity and respite they once received, they should be guilty of new and capital offences. Dr. Delaney thinks this verse should be rendered, *Now therefore, neither hold him guiltless, (for thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him) NOR his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood*. See Waterland's Script. Vind. part i. p. 100. Le Clerc and Calmet.

REFLECTIONS.—David, the great, the good, now feels the approaches of death, and improves the moment which remains by giving instructions to his son.

1. He prefaces his charge to him with the mortality of his condition; and, while he mentions his own death, reminds him that it was the way of all flesh. Kings must die, and after death is judgment, where they must answer for their administration before the King of kings.

2. He urges him to a strict adherence to God and his blessed service, and not to be discouraged by any difficulties, but approve himself a man of God, faithful and true, and then he might be assured of prosperity, and the continuance of the Divine blessing upon himself and his posterity, according to the promise that God had made him.

10 ¶ So David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David.

11 And the days that David reigned over Israel were forty years: seven years reigned he in Hebron, and thirty and three years reigned he in Jerusalem.

12 ¶ Then sat Solomon upon the throne of David his father; and his kingdom was established greatly.

13 ¶ And Adonijah the son of Haggith came to Bath-sheba the mother of Solomon. And she said, Comest thou peaceably? And he said, Peaceably.

14 He said moreover, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And she said, Say on.

15 And he said, Thou knowest that the kingdom was mine, and that all Israel set their faces on me, that I should reign: howbeit the kingdom is turned about, and is become my brother's: for it was his from the LORD.

16 And now I ask one petition of thee, deny me not. And she said unto him, Say on.

17 And he said, Speak, I pray thee, unto Solomon the king, (for he will not say thee

may,) that he give me Abishag the Shunammite to wife.

18 And Bath-sheba said, Well; I will speak for thee unto the king.

19 Bath-sheba therefore went unto king Solomon, to speak unto him for Adonijah. And the king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king's mother; and she sat on his right hand.

20 Then she said, I desire one small petition of thee; I pray thee, say me not nay. And the king said unto her, Ask on, my mother: for I will not say thee nay.

21 And she said, Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to Adonijah thy brother to wife.

22 And king Solomon answered and said unto his mother, And why dost thou ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? ask for him the kingdom also; for he is mine elder brother; even for him, and for Abiathar the priest, and for Joab the son of Zeruah.

23 Then king Solomon swore by the LORD,

him. *Note;* (1.) They who would be faithful to God, have need of courage; and a king who would be a man of God, needs a tenfold portion of strength and grace. (2.) If we are obedient to God's commands, we may confidently expect the fulfilment of his promises. (3.) The best advice that dying parents can give their children, and the surest to promote their happiness, is, to charge them to walk in God's ways, the end of which will be peace and joy.

3. He gives him particular directions concerning Joab, Barzillai's sons, and Shimei. Joab, though too great for David to punish, is referred to Solomon's wisdom and justice. His treacherous murders ought not to be forgotten. Shimei's crime also, though during David's life, for his oath's sake, passed by, must not be forgotten. His very grievous curse shewed what spirit he was of, and his turbulent spirit would probably again provoke the judgment that he had once escaped. The death that he had deserved would then overtake him, and his grey locks must be no protection for his guilt. *Note;* (1.) Though long impunity may make the sinner vainly think that the bitterness of death is past, yet the day of recompence is at hand. (2.) The cry of blood, though long stifled, after many years strangely breaks out at last.—Barzillai's kindness is never to be forgotten, and his son must study to make his children an ample return, and place them among his best friends at his table. *Note;* A grateful heart never forgets old kindnesses: even the children of our friends, for their sakes, should share our regard.

4. When he had finished his charge, David closed

his eyes, and slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city where he dwelt, after a reign of forty years, the odd six months not being reckoned. He died, according to Bishop Usher, A. M. 2990, and before Christ's birth 1014. *Note;* (1.) The sweetest sleep of a good man is the sleep of death, where all his troubles are forever forgotten. (2.) Kings who build palaces, should not forget their tombs; a small space must shortly contain all their greatness.

*Ver. 19. And she sat on his right hand]* Nothing can be more respectful than the behaviour of Solomon to his mother; nor could he have shewn her more honour than to seat her on his right hand: for in those times to seat a person on the right hand, was to equal them with one's self, and to make them partakers of the same rank, dignity, and power. See Psalm cx. 1.

*Ver. 22. Ask for him the kingdom also]* That is, "Ask, I say, the kingdom for him; for Abiathar the priest, and for Joab the son of Zeruah, by whose counsel he endeavours to invade the kingdom?" which is as much as to say, "If Abishag be given to him, all the people will conclude that the kingdom belongs to him." The Hebrews say, it is not lawful for any man to take a woman who has belonged to a king, unless he be a king. It is evident from the 28th verse, (where we are told that Joab had turned after Adonijah, though he turned not after Absalom,) that he was privy to this counsel, and therefore as conscious of his guilt, he fled to the horns of the altar; and as Solomon, doubtless, very well knew the

saying, God do so to me, and more also, if Adonijah have not spoken this word against his own life.

24 Now therefore, as the LORD liveth, which hath established me, and set me on the throne of David my father, and who hath made me an house, as he promised, Adonijah shall be put to death this day.

25 And king Solomon sent by the hand of Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; and he fell upon him that he died.

26 ¶ And unto Abiathar the priest said the king, Get thee to Anathoth, unto thine own fields; for thou art worthy of death: but I will not at this time put thee to death, because thou barest the ark of the Lord God before David my father, and because thou hast been afflicted in all wherein my father was afflicted.

27 So Solomon thrust out Abiathar from being priest unto the LORD; that he might fulfil the word of the LORD, which he spake concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh.

evil purposes of Adonijah and his brother conspirators, no imputation of cruelty can be laid against him for taking off an incorrigible rebel. Adonijah indeed, had he lived under our constitution, would have had a fair hearing before conviction. But we should remember, that in the kingdoms of the East, the government was absolute, and the power of life or death entirely in the prince; so that Solomon, without the formality of any process, could pronounce his brother dead: and because he conceived that, in cases of this nature, delays were dangerous, he might send immediately and have him dispatched; though we cannot but say, that it had been more to his commendation, had he shewed more clemency, and spared his life.

Ver. 25. Solomon sent by the hand of Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada] It was formerly very customary among princes to employ their officers, or greatest confidants, in such executions. Among the Romans, the soldiers were always the persons who carried to prison, to torture, or to execution, such as were found guilty of any offence; and this Tertullian makes an argument to dissuade Christians from engaging in the wars, lest thereby they should be obliged to imprison, punish, or execute malefactors. In Dan. ii. 24. we read, that Nebuchadnezzar sent Arioch, who was chief commander of his troops, to destroy the wise men of Babylon, because they could not interpret his dream; and therefore we need less wonder, that we find Solomon employing Benaiah, the captain of the guard, on the like office: but whether he did not first drag Joab (ver. 34.) from the altar, before he slew him, for fear of polluting the holy place with blood, or whether Solomon did not rather think fit to have him killed even at the altar, and let all men see that no place, though never so sacred, should secure any man from the hand of justice, commentators have not agreed. See Exod. xxi. 14.

Ver. 26. And unto Abiathar—said the king, Get thee to Anathoth, &c.] How far the high-priest Abiathar was concerned in the plot against Solomon, the sacred history does not particularly inform us: but such was the reverence paid to the sacerdotal character, that Solomon would have hardly dared to have deposed such a one, had not the constitution of the nation authorized him to do so. When Abiathar, by his conspiracy, had merited severe punishment, Solomon might lawfully take from him all the revenues of his place, as well as the liberty of officiating in it: but the sacerdotal office, which he received from God,

and to which he was anointed, he could not alienate; and therefore we may observe, that after his deprivation, and even when Zadok was in possession of his place, he is nevertheless still mentioned under the style and title of the priest; ch. iv. 4. The truth is, there is a great deal of difference between depriving a man of the dignity and of the exercise of his function in such a determinate place, and taking from him an authority which was given him by God, and the profits and emoluments of which were the gifts of the crown or the nation. The former of these Solomon could not do; and the latter, it is probable, he was the rather incited to do, out of regard to the prophecy of Samuel, wherein he foretold Eli, from whom Abiathar was descended, that the Lord would translate the priesthood from his to another family; as he now did in the person of Zadok, who was of the house of Eleazar, as Eli was of that of Ithamar; so that in this way did the priesthood revert to its ancient channel. See Calmet and Stackhouse.

REFLECTIONS.—1. Abiathar is degraded, though indeed he deserved death, for his treason and opposition to the declared will of that God at whose altar he served: and thus at last was the threatening against the house of Eli fulfilled, and the priesthood translated from his family into the line of Eleazar. Note; (1.) God's word will be fulfilled in its season, though sometimes he endures long. (2.) Rebellion in a priest, who should teach loyalty, is doubly criminal.

2. Joab is executed. Justly expecting that his lot would fall next, he seeks to save his life by flying to the horns of the altar. Thither Benaiah is ordered to follow him, and (because Joab refused to depart thence) to slay him there. Such an exemplary piece of justice, Solomon well concludes would be the removal of the guilt of blood from his own house, which, if unpunished, would cry against the negligent sword of the magistrate; and the removal of so turbulent a spirit as Joab's would conduce also to the peace of the kingdom. Thus fell Joab, according to David's orders, and was buried at his country-seat, which lay in the wilderness. Note; (1.) Nothing can appease the cries of innocent blood, but the blood of the murderer. (2.) Wicked men entail a curse on their posterity. (3.) A negligent magistrate will bear the sin of the blood that he is not careful to avenge. (4.) Though human laws cannot be satisfied with any thing less than blood.

28 ¶ Then tidings came to Joab: for Joab had turned after Adonijah, though he turned not after Absalom. And Joab fled unto the tabernacle of the LORD, and caught hold on the horns of the altar.

29 And it was told king Solomon that Joab was fled unto the tabernacle of the LORD; and, behold, *he is* by the altar. Then Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, saying, Go, fall upon him.

30 And Benaiah came to the tabernacle of the LORD, and said unto him, Thus saith the king, Come forth. And he said, Nay; but I will die here. And Benaiah brought the king word again, saying, Thus said Joab, and thus he answered me.

31 And the king said unto him, Do as he hath said, and fall upon him, and bury him; that thou mayest take away the innocent blood, which Joab shed, from me, and from the house of my father.

32 And the LORD shall return his blood upon his own head, who fell upon two men more righteous and better than he, and slew them with the sword, my father David not knowing *thereof, to wit*, Abner the son of Ner, captain of the host of Israel, and Amasa the son of Jether, captain of the host of Judah.

33 Their blood shall therefore return upon the head of Joab, and upon the head of his seed for ever: but upon David, and upon his seed, and upon his house, and upon his throne, shall there be peace for ever from the LORD.

34 So Benaiah the son of Jehoiada went up, and fell upon him, and slew him: and he was buried in his own house in the wilderness.

35 ¶ And the king put Benaiah the son of Jehoiada in his room over the host: and Zadok the priest did the king put in the room of Abiathar.

36 ¶ And the king sent and called for Shimei, and said unto him, Build thee an house in Jerusalem, and dwell there, and go not forth thence any whither.

37 For it shall be, *that* on the day thou goest out, and passest over the brook Kidron, thou shalt know for certain that thou shalt surely die: thy blood shall be upon thine own head.

38 And Shimei said unto the king, The saying *is* good: as my lord the king hath said, so will thy servant do. And Shimei dwelt in Jerusalem many days.

39 And it came to pass at the end of three years, that two of the servants of Shimei ran away unto Achish son of Maachah king of Gath. And they told Shimei, saying, Behold, thy servants *be* in Gath.

40 And Shimei arose, and saddled his ass, and went to Gath to Achish to seek his servants: and Shimei went, and brought his servants from Gath.

41 And it was told Solomon that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath, and was come again.

42 And the king sent and called for Shimei, and said unto him, Did I not make thee to swear by the LORD, and protested unto thee, saying, Know for a certain, *that* on the day thou goest out, and walkest abroad any whither, that thou shalt surely die? and thou saidst unto me, The word *that* I have heard *is* good.

43 Why then hast thou not kept the oath of the LORD, and the commandment that I have charged thee with?

44 The king said moreover to Shimei, Thou knowest all the wickedness which thine heart is privy to, that thou didst to David my father: therefore the LORD shall return thy wickedness upon thine own head;

45 And king Solomon *shall be* blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before the LORD for ever.

46 So the king commanded Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; which went out, and fell upon him, that he died. And the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon.

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blood for blood, yet if the greatest sinner, if even a murderer, fly to the horns of the true altar, to the atoning blood of the bleeding Lamb of God, he shall never be dragged thence.

*Ver. 46. Went out, and fell upon him*] The reader is desired to recur to the defence of David's charge relating to Joab and Shimei, as given above. It is there asserted, that the charge was different, as it respected each of them.

## CHAP. III.

*Solomon marries Pharaoh's daughter: he asks wisdom from God; who promises him moreover riches and honour. His judgment between the two barlots.*

[Before Christ 1012.]

**A**ND Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter, and brought her into the city of David, until he had made an end of building his own house and the house of the LORD,

This difference is farther evident from the different manner in which Solomon treated them. If the charge had been the same in respect to Shimei, as it was as to Joab, what should have prevented Solomon from immediately executing Shimei as well as Joab? But this Solomon, in his wisdom, knew that he could not do; for David told him, that he had pardoned Shimei to prevent his execution; because his offence was personal, and David had a right to forgive it. But he had never pardoned Joab, nor in justice could do it, because he was deserving of death for repeated murders, by the laws of God and man. Solomon, therefore, acted wisely and justly in reference to Shimei by sparing him, but honourably confining him, that he might have the proper security for his future good behaviour. Shimei, sensible of the king's kindness, tells him, ver. 38. *The saying is good, &c.* And when, upon breaking his oath, he was sent for by Solomon, the king reproached him with his perjury, in acting contrary to the condition of life which he himself had owned to be just and equitable, and for the wickedness which his heart was privy to, in his conduct to his father David; the mercy which had been shewed him in the pardon of that offence aggravating his fresh crime in violating his oath, and in transgressing the king's command; a crime which shewed that he was of a restless spirit, and incapable of being restrained within due bounds by the most solemn oaths, or any sense of interest, gratitude, or duty whatsoever. Solomon adds, ver. 44, 45. *The Lord shall return thy wickedness, &c.* plainly intimating, that Solomon now cut him off, as an act of prudence and justice to a restless implacable enemy to his person and government, and saw it necessary for establishing the throne of David before the Lord. *Note;* (1.) Perjury is a crime for which the avenging God will visit. (2.) The heart is privy to much more wickedness than ever appeared without. (3.) God knoweth the secrets of the heart, and will call men to account for their secret sins. (4.) The execution of the wicked is the establishment of the king's throne. (5.) When the Lord Jesus Christ shall arise to judgment, he will remember the hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against himself, his cause, and people, and their own tongues shall fall on them to their eternal ruin.

## CHAP. III.

*Ver. 1. And Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh*] There are many who blame this action of Solomon's; observing,

and the wall of Jerusalem round about.

2 ¶ Only the people sacrificed in high places, because there was no house built unto the name of the LORD, until those days.

3 And Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father: only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places.

4 And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there; for that was the great high place: a thousand burnt-offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar.

that whatever augmentation of power he might promise himself from this alliance, he certainly ran the hazard of having his religion corrupted. Others, however, have observed, that as the sacred Scriptures commend the beginning of Solomon's reign, in all other respects except the people's sacrificing in high places, which might be the rather tolerated *because there was no house built unto the name of the Lord in those days*, ver. 2. and as they gave him this character, that *he loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father*, ver. 2. he would never have done an act so directly contrary to the laws of God as marrying an idolatrous princess, had she not been first profelyted to the Jewish faith. The Scriptures, indeed, take notice of the gods of the Moabites, Ammonites, and Sidonians, for whom Solomon, in compliance with his strange wives, built places of worship. See chap. xi. But as there is no mention made of any Gods of the Egyptians, it seems very likely that this princess, when she was espoused to Solomon, quitted the religion of her ancestors, to which Psalm xlv. 10, 11. is thought to allude in its primary sense. However this be, it is certain that no where in Scripture do we find Solomon reprov'd for this match; nor can we think that his book of Canticles, which is supposed to be in its primary sense his Epithalamium, would have found a place in the sacred canon, had the spouse, whom it all along celebrates, been at that time an idolatress. It may seem somewhat strange, that in all the history of the Jews, from the time of Moses to that of Solomon, no mention should be made of the kings of Egypt, as if they had no concern in the affairs of Canaan, but were wholly diverted some other way: but for this their own historians account, when they tell us, that during this space of time the "Egyptian Kings" did nothing worthy recording." Diodor. Biblioth. lib. i. p. 29. Clemens Alexandrinus, in a passage taken from Alexander Polyhistor, tells us, that the proper name of this Egyptian king, whose daughter Solomon married, was *Vaphres*. See Calmet.

*Ver. 4. To Gibeon—for that was the great high place*] Of all the high places where the people sacrificed, Gibeon was the great and celebrated one, because the tabernacle and brazen altar were there. See 2 Chron. i. 3. There is no reason to suppose, that the thousand sacrifices which Solomon is said to have made here, were offered in one day. The king, we may imagine, upon one of the great festivals, went in procession with his nobles to pay his

5 ¶ In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, Ask what I shall give thee.

6 And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as *it is* this day.

7 And now, O LORD my God, thou hast

made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I *am but* a little child: I know not *how* to go out or come in.

8 And thy servant *is* in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude.

9 Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?

his devotion in Gibeon. Each of the great festivals lasted for seven days: but Solomon might stay much longer at Gibeon, until, by the daily oblations, a thousand burnt-offerings were consumed; and at the conclusion of this course of devotion, he might offer up his ardent prayer to God for wisdom, as recorded in the next verses. See 2 Chron. i. 7.

*Ver. 5. The Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream.]* Sleep is like a state of death to the soul; wherein the senses are locked up, and the understanding and will deprived of the free exercise of their functions. And yet this is no impediment to God in communicating his will to mankind: for, no doubt, he has power not only to awaken our intellectual faculties, but to advance them above their ordinary measure of perception, even while the body is asleep. See Job, xxxiii. 14. In a word, we cannot but allow, that God can approach the soul in many different ways, when the body is in a state of rest and inactivity; can move and actuate it just as he pleases; and when he is inclined to make a discovery of any thing, can set such a lively representation of it before the understanding, as shall prevent a man's doubting the reality of the vision. See Calmet.

*Ver. 7—9. I am but a little child, &c.]* It is plain that Solomon means here, that he was only a little child, a mere infant, in understanding and abilities, to guide and govern so great a people. See Psalm cxxxi. 2. Houbigant observes, that the phrase, *אני כנער* *tsib wabo*, to go out or come in, is not only a Hebraism frequent in the sacred writings, but also a similitude taken from a little child, yet unable to walk firmly, and ignorant of all things; such as Solomon professes himself to be, as the ruler of so great a people. It is generally agreed, that he was about twenty years of age when he began to reign. Though Solomon, in his great modesty, might request of God no more than the gift of government, or, as he expresses it, *ver. 9. an understanding heart, to judge the people, and to discern between good and evil;* yet God, out of his abundant grace, gave him a general knowledge of all other things, as the succeeding history informs us; and that, whereas other men gather their knowledge from study and observation, Solomon had his by an immediate *inspiration* from God; inasmuch that he who went to bed as ignorant as other men, awaked in the morning as an angel of God. But though his knowledge of things was in a great measure infused, yet he did not therefore neglect his

study: *he gave his heart to seek, and search out by his wisdom, concerning all things under the sun;* in which search, as himself testifies, Eccles. i. 13. he took no small pains: so that his gifts extraordinary did not supersede the use of other means in the acquisition of knowledge; but, by application and experience, he perfected what he had so advantageously received from the hands of God.

REFLECTIONS.—Solomon having waited upon God, he mercifully visits him in return.

1. The same night after he had spent his day with him, in a vision, by a supernatural dream, God reveals himself to him, and makes him a gracious offer to grant whatever he should request. *Note;* (1.) They who wait upon God in prayer and praise, will find him speedy in his returns of benediction. (2.) When the outward senses are locked up in sleep, the souls of God's people are still capable of divine manifestations, and may, and sometimes do, receive gracious communications from him. (3.) God still says to every praying believer, What is thy request, and it shall be given thee?

2. Solomon's pious choice is recorded. Though asleep to the eyes of men, yet awake to God, he pours out his grateful acknowledgements, and puts up his fervent prayer. *Note;* That which engages us most when we are awake, will even in sleep still be our employment. Many a fervent prayer the spirit has breathed, when the body has been wrapped in slumbers. He mentions with deep gratitude God's mercy to his father David whilst alive, and now after his death, in bringing himself, his son, to the throne. His father's piety he honourably speaks of, as what he wished to imitate; his own insufficiency for the high station in which God had placed him, he humbly confesses, being but a child in his own eyes in wisdom and understanding, and his vast kingdom requiring the deepest judgment to govern it aright; therefore he requests an understanding heart, that he might be enabled to administer impartial justice, and to reign in uprightness to God's glory, and for his people's good. *Note;* (1.) A good child will remember his father's excellencies to imitate them, and draw a veil over his sins. (2.) The wisest men are most sensible of their own ignorance. (3.) They who feel most the weight and difficulty of their office, will be best enabled to fulfil it, because they will be looking for strength and wisdom from above. (4.) An understanding heart is the gift of God.

3. God



10 And the speech pleased the LORD, that Solomon had asked this thing.

11 And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment;

12 Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wife and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee.

13 And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days.

14 And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days.

15 And Solomon awoke; and, behold, *it was* a dream. And he came to Jerusalem, and stood before the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and offered up burnt-offerings, and offered peace-offerings, and made a feast to all his servants.

16 ¶ Then came there two women, *that were* harlots, unto the king, and stood before him.

17 And the one woman said, O my lord, I and this woman dwell in one house; and I was delivered of a child with her in the house.

18 And it came to pass the third day after that I was delivered, that this woman was delivered also: and we *were* together; *there was* no stranger with us in the house, save we two in the house.

19 And this woman's child died in the night; because she overlaid it.

20 And she arose at midnight, and took my son from beside me, while thine handmaid slept, and laid it in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom.

21 And when I rose in the morning to give my child suck, behold, it was dead: but when I had considered it in the morning, behold, it was not my son, which I did bear.

22 And the other woman said, Nay; but the living *is* my son, and the dead *is* thy son. And this said, No; but the dead *is* thy son, and the living *is* my son. Thus they spake before the king.

23 Then said the king, The one saith, This

3. God favourably accepted his request. He was pleased with the wisdom of his choice, in preferring spiritual blessings before temporal, the glory of God before his own advantage; he therefore not only bestowed the wisdom that Solomon asked, but superadds riches and honour; and promises farther, long life to enjoy them, on condition that he should approve himself faithful. *Note;* (1.) When we seek God's kingdom in the first place, he has promised to add all other things thereto. (2.) Riches and honours are then truly blessings, when God bestows the wisdom and grace to improve them aright. (3.) If any man want spiritual wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth liberally, beyond all we can ask or think.

4. Solomon awoke, and behold it was a dream; yet not, as dreams usually are, empty and vain, but followed by the real communication of the wisdom then promised him. On his return to Jerusalem, therefore, he offers a great and grateful sacrifice, and rejoices before the ark of the covenant, with all his servants, who partook in his joy, and shared in his entertainment.

*Ver. 16—28. Then came there two women, &c.]* See Josh. ii. 1. respecting the word זנות *zonoth* rendered *harlots*. Solomon knew at once, that the only sign whereby to discover the true mother, would be her affection and compassionate tenderness for her child; and therefore, in order to distinguish between the two, his business was to make

trial of this. And if we suppose, that when he commanded the child to be divided he spake with a sedate countenance and seeming earnestness, as the true mother's petition to the king makes it apparent that he did, then we may suppose further, not only that the two women, but all the people present, with horror and admiration expected the execution of the thing; but when the whole ended in so just a decision, quite contrary to what they looked for, it raised joy in every breast, and gave a more advantageous commendation to the judge. It may not be improper, upon this occasion, to cite an instance or two from prophane history, of a singular address, though much inferior to this, in discovering such secrets as seemed to be past finding out. Suetonius, in his life of Claudius, chap. xv. tells us, that the emperor discovered a woman to be the mother of a young man, whom she would not own for her son, by commanding her to be married to him: the horror of committing incest obliged her to declare the truth. In like manner, Diodorus Siculus relates, that Ariopharnes, king of the Thracians, being appointed to arbitrate between three men, who all pretended to be sons of the king of the Cimmerians, and claimed the succession, found out the true son and heir, by ordering them to shoot each man his arrow into the dead king's body; which one of them refusing to do, he was deemed the lawful claimant. See Patrick and Calmet.

is my son that liveth, and thy son *is* the dead: and the other saith, Nay; but thy son *is* the dead, and my son *is* the living.

24 And the king said, Bring me a sword. And they brought a sword before the king.

25 And the king said, Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other.

26 Then spake the woman whose the living child *was* unto the king, for her bowels yearned upon her son, and she said, O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it. But the other said, Let it be neither mine nor thine, *but* divide it.

27 Then the king answered and said, Give her the living child, and in no wise slay it: *she is* the mother thereof.

28 And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged; and they feared the king: for they saw that the wisdom of God *was* in him, to do judgment.

CHAP. IV.

*Solomon's princes: his twelve officers: the peace and extent of his kingdom: his wisdom.*

[Before Christ 1012.]

**S**O king Solomon was king over all Israel.

2 And these *were* the princes which he had; Azariah the son of Zadok the priest.

3 Elihoreph and Ahiah, the sons of Shisha, scribes: Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud, the recorder.

4 And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada *was* over the host: and Zadok and Abiathar *were* the priests:

5 And Azariah the son of Nathan *was* over the officers: and Zabud the son of Nathan *was* principal officer, *and* the king's friend:

6 And Ahishar *was* over the household: and Adoniram the son of Abda *was* over the tribute.

7 ¶ And Solomon had twelve officers over

all Israel, which provided victuals for the king and his household: each man his month in a year made provision.

8 And these *are* their names: The son of Hur, in mount Ephraim:

9 The son of Dekar, in Makaz, and in Shaalbim, and Beth-she mesh, and Elonbeth-hanan:

10 The son of Hefed, in Aruboth: to him *pertained* Sochoh, and all the land of Hopher:

11 The son of Abinadab, in all the region of Dor; which had Taphath the daughter of Solomon to wife:

12 Baana the son of Ahilud; to him *pertained* Taanach and Megiddo, and all Beth-shean, which *is* by Zartanah beneath Jezreel, from Beth-shean to Abelmeholah, *even* unto the place that *is* beyond Jokneam:

13 The son of Geber, in Ramoth-gilead; to him *pertained* the towns of Jair the son of Manasseh, which *are* in Gilead; to him *also* *pertained* the region of Argob, which *is* in Bashan, threescore great cities with walls and brazen bars:

14 Ahinadab the son of Iddo *had* Mahanaim:

15 Ahimaaz *was* in Naphtali; he also took Basmath the daughter of Solomon to wife:

16 Baanah the son of Hushai *was* in Asher and in Aloth:

17 Jehoshaphat the son of Paruah, in Issachar:

18 Shimei the son of Elah, in Benjamin:

19 Geber the son of Uri *was* in the country of Gilead, *in* the country of Sihon king of the Amorites, and of Og king of Bashan; and *he* *was* the only officer which *was* in the land.

20 ¶ Judah and Israel *were* many, as the sand which *is* by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking, and making merry.

21 And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt: they brought

CHAP. IV.

*Ver. 19. And he was the only officer] Each officer presided over his land or province. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 21. And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms] This*

would be better rendered, *Solomon reigned over all the kingdoms or provinces which were from the river, &c. i. e. from the Euphrates to the Nile.* The bounds of his kingdom were, the Euphrates to the east; the country of the Philistines, which bordered upon the Mediterranean sea, to the west;

prefents, and served Solomon all the days of his life.

22 ¶ And Solomon's provision for one day was thirty measures of fine flour, and threescore measures of meal,

23 Ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the pastures, and an hundred sheep, beside harts, and roe-bucks, and fallow-deer, and fatted fowl.

24 For he had dominion over all *the region* on this side the river, from Tiphshah even to Azzah, over all the kings on this side the river: and he had peace on all sides round about him.

25 And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig-tree, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, all the days of Solomon.

26 ¶ And Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen.

27 And those officers provided victual for king Solomon, and for all that came unto king Solomon's table, every man in his month: they lacked nothing.

28 Barley also and straw for the horses and dromedaries brought they unto the place where *the officers* were, every man according to his charge.

29 ¶ And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea-shore.

30 And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt.

west; and Egypt to the south; so that he had the kingdoms of Syria, Damascus, Moab, and Ammon, which lay between Euphrates and the Mediterranean; as, indeed, without such a number of tributary kingdoms, we cannot conceive how the country of Israel could have furnished such a constant supply of provisions and other things necessary for the support of this prince's grandeur. We have, in this description of the extent and peace of Solomon's kingdom, an ample completion of God's promises to Abraham.

*Ver. 23. And fatted fowl*] See Nehem. v. 18.

*Ver. 26. And Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses*] In 2 Chron. ix. 25. he is said to have had *four thousand stalls*. The smaller number, according to Houbigant and the best critics, is to be preferred. See Houbigant's notes, and Kennicott's 1st Dissert. p. 133.

*Ver. 28. Straw for the horses*] See Judg. xix. 21. whence there is room to think, that this was not straw to litter with. The litter now used for horses, &c. in the east, is their own dung, dried in the sun, and bruised between the hands, which is heaped up again in the morning, and in the summer sprinkled with fresh water to keep it from corrupting. *Observations*, p. 209.

REFLECTIONS.—1. Solomon's kingdom was prodigiously extensive: not only Israel submitted to his gentle sway, but all the nations which his father had conquered by arms; nor did any of them think of struggling against an administration so wise and equitable. *Note*; More extensive is the dominion of the Prince of Peace, even from pole to pole; and those who know the blessings of his government count their service perfect freedom.

2. The people of Israel and Judah were immensely numerous, and lived in affluence. Their families grew like flocks, according to the promise, Gen. xxii. 17. Safe and secure from all their enemies, they sat every man under his vine and his fig-tree, their property secure, their provisions abundant, and their hearts filled with joy

and gladness, in the enjoyment of the blessings that God had bestowed upon them. *Note*; More numerous far are God's spiritual Israel, more secure their portion, more substantially abiding their joys; *their kingdom is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*.

3. Vast was the daily provision for Solomon's table, sufficient to serve, at two pounds of bread each, besides meat, no less than 29,160 men. Our great Solomon supplies a more numerous family with daily bread, and this not that bread which perisheth, but which endureth to everlasting life.

*Ver. 29. Largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea-shore*] That is, says Calmet, as one cannot count the number of the sands of the sea, so neither could one comprehend the extent or the depth of his wisdom: or, as the sands of the sea are innumerable, so the vast capacity of his genius could comprehend innumerable different objects without confusion and disorder. We may take *largeness of heart* for grandeur of soul, magnanimity, generosity, liberality. Lord Bacon observes, that as the sand upon the sea-shore incloses a great body of waters, so Solomon's mind contained an ocean of knowledge.

*Ver. 30. Solomon's wisdom excelled, &c.*] There were three nations in the east of Canaan, which were very famous for their wisdom and erudition: the Chaldeans beyond the Euphrates, the Persians beyond the Tigris, and the Arabians on the nearer side of the Euphrates, a little towards the south: but whether the Persians and Chaldeans were remarkable for their learning in Solomon's days, is much doubted among commentators. The book of Job sufficiently shews, that the Arabians (for of that nation was Job and his friends) were famous for their learning in ancient times: and as to the Chaldeans and other Oriental people, since the sons of Noah took up their habitation about Babylon and the neighbouring countries, it is reasonable to suppose, that where mankind

31 For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all nations round about.

32 And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five.

33 And he spake of trees, from the cedar-

tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes.

34 And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom.

first began to settle themselves into regular societies, there arts and sciences first began to appear. The Egyptians, however, pretend to precedency in this and several other accomplishments. They say, that the Chaldeans received the principles of philosophy at first from a colony which came from Egypt; and indeed Diodorus makes mention of such a colony, conducted by Belus. But the Chaldeans, on the other hand, maintain, that it was from them that the Egyptians received their first instructions, and, according to some, that Abraham was the person who first communicated to the Chaldeans the knowledge of astronomy and other sciences. However this be, Solomon received from God a perfect knowledge of all that useful and solid learning for which the eastern people and the Egyptians were justly famed; for, (as it follows,) he was a great moral philosopher, a great natural philosopher, and an excellent poet. It is uncertain who were the three persons mentioned in the next verse. It is generally supposed, that *Ethan* is the same with him who is mentioned at the head of some of the Psalms, particularly Psalm lxxxix.

*Ver. 32. And he spake three thousand proverbs, &c.]* Josephus, who loved to magnify every thing that concerned Solomon, instead of *three thousand proverbs*, tells us that he composed three thousand *books* of proverbs. The greater certainly is our loss, if the thing were credible; because all the proverbs of Solomon which we have, are comprized in the book which goes under that name, and in his Ecclesiastes. Of his numerous *poems* we have none remaining except his *song of songs*, unless the 127th Psalm (which in its Hebrew title is ascribed to him) may be supposed to be one of them. There have been some spurious pieces attributed to him. See Le Clerc, and Calmet.

*Ver. 33. He spake of trees, &c.]* The several books which treated of the nature and virtue of animals as well as plants, are supposed to have been lost in the Babylonish captivity; but Eusebius, as he is quoted by Anastasius, informs us, that king Hezekiah, seeing the abuse which his subjects made of Solomon's works, by placing too much confidence in the remedies which he prescribed, and the natural secrets which he discovered, thought proper to suppress them all. Notwithstanding this, since his time many wicked and pernicious books concerning the secrets of magic, medicines, and enchantment, have appeared under the name of this prince, in order to gain the more credit and sanction.

*Ver. 34. And there came of all people to hear, &c. from all kings]* It is a conceit of one of the Jewish interpreters, that all the kings of the neighbouring countries went to hear

the wisdom of Solomon; and that, upon their return, their subjects came to them, to hear what he had said: but, as we hear of none, except the queen of Sheba, who came to visit Solomon, we cannot but think, that if any other crowned heads had resorted to him, the history would have recorded them as well as her. The words denote no more, than that the kings of all the neighbouring nations sent their ambassadors; and people of every land, who had heard of Solomon's fame, came to see him: for, as an ingenious writer observes, "no spectacle is more lovely and grateful than a wife and good king: all men flock to see him, and to partake of his pious and prudent mind. They who see him are loth to leave him, and they who hear of him, are as desirous to see him as children are to find their unknown father." Dion. Prusæus, Orat. de Regno.

REFLECTIONS.—Vast were his dominions, prodigious his revenues; but greater than both were his treasures of wisdom.

1. God gave him an understanding deep as the great abyss of waters, and large as the sand on the shore, capacious, distinct, and comprehensive. Chaldea and Egypt afforded none equal to or like him; and the wisest of his cotemporaries acknowledged his superiority. *Note;* (1.) Every good gift cometh from above. God teacheth man knowledge. (2.) Uncommon abilities are a greater obligation to use them with uncommon diligence to the glory of the giver.

2. His productions were a proof of the wisdom that he possessed. As a sage, he spake three thousand proverbs, wise sayings, and observations, for moral conduct. As a poet, his compositions were numerous as exquisite, amounting to a thousand and five. As a philosopher, he dived into the secrets of nature, described all herbs, birds, beasts, with their nature, use, and qualities. *Note;* (1.) That is valuable wisdom which communicates its discoveries for general utility. (2.) A poetic genius is a blessing, when, like Solomon's, our songs speak of the beauties of our Immanuel.

3. The fame of such wisdom could not but spread abroad, and, curious to hear, or desirous to learn, people from all regions flocked to his court; and distant kings sent their ambassadors, by personal converse to bring them specimens of his superlative understanding. *Note;* They who would be wise to salvation, must go to Jesus to learn, and they will find that a greater than Solomon is there.

## CHAP. V.

*Hiram sends to congratulate Solomon, furnishes timber to build the temple, and receives from Solomon wheat and oil. Solomon's workmen and officers.*

[Before Christ 1012.]

**A**ND Hiram king of Tyre sent his servants unto Solomon; for he had heard that they had anointed him king in the room of his father: for Hiram was ever a lover of David.

2 And Solomon sent to Hiram, saying,

3 Thou knowest how that David my father could not build an house unto the name of the LORD his God for the wars which were about him on every side, until the LORD put them under the soles of his feet.

4 But now the LORD my God hath given me rest on every side, *so that there is* neither adversary nor evil occurrent.

5 And, behold, I purpose to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD spake unto David my father, saying, Thy son, whom I will set upon thy throne in thy room, he shall build an house unto my name.

6 Now therefore command thou that they hew me cedar-trees out of Lebanon; and my servants shall be with thy servants: and unto thee will I give hire for thy servants according

to all that thou shalt appoint: for thou knowest that *there is* not among us any that can skill to hew timber like unto the Sidonians.

7 ¶ And it came to pass, when Hiram heard the words of Solomon, that he rejoiced greatly, and said, Blessed *be* the LORD this day, which hath given unto David a wise son over this great people.

8 And Hiram sent to Solomon, saying, I have considered the things which thou sentest to me for: *and* I will do all thy desire concerning timber of cedar, and concerning timber of fir.

9 My servants shall bring *them* down from Lebanon unto the sea: and I will convey them by sea in floats unto the place that thou shalt appoint me, and will cause them to be discharged there, and thou shalt receive *them*: and thou shalt accomplish my desire, in giving food for my household.

10 ¶ So Hiram gave Solomon cedar-trees and fir-trees *according to* all his desire.

11 And Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand measures of wheat *for* food to his household, and twenty measures of pure oil: thus gave Solomon to Hiram year by year.

12 And the LORD gave Solomon wisdom, as he promised him: and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon; and they two made a league together.

## CHAP. V.

*Ver. 1. Hiram king of Tyre*] It was at the beginning of Solomon's reign that Hiram sent ambassadors, to condole with Solomon upon the death of his father, and to renew the league of friendship which he had with him. Josephus assures us, that in his time the letters which passed between Hiram and Solomon were preserved in the Archives of Tyre. This Hiram appears to have been the son of him who sent David timber and artificers to build his palace.

*Note;* (1.) When we are at rest from outward trials, we should give greater diligence to build up the spiritual temple within. (2.) We may put our hands comfortably to that work, in which we have the Divine promise to encourage us. (3.) They have often most of this world's ingenuity, who have no knowledge of Israel's God. (4.) God can employ those in building his church, who have themselves no part nor lot in it. (5.) Every country has its staple commodity; by exchange of which, intercourse is maintained with its neighbours. It is our happiness, that with the corn of Canaan we possess also the shipping of Tyre.

*Ver. 11. Twenty measures of pure oil*] In the parallel place, 2 Chron. ii. 10. it is *twenty thousand baths of oil*, which has the sanction of many of the versions, and seems the most probable reading in this place: and so in the 16th verse, instead of *three hundred*, it is *six hundred* in the Chronicles; to which reading the LXX give their authority.

*Ver. 12. There was peace between Hiram and Solomon, &c.*] There can be no reason why any Christian prince may not make a league and peace with the Great Turk, Mogul, or the Tartar, as well as David and Solomon did with Hiram; the latter of whom renewed the same league that his father had made, according to the wisdom which God had given him. And, no doubt, the elements of the Christian religion advise and enjoin a peace with all men; that is, to refrain from and avoid all acts of hostility with all the world, who will live peaceably with us, as the best, if not the only way to propagate the true religion, and all manner of truth; and it is very strange, that they who do believe that the conscience cannot be compelled by war or violence, can believe that there are any people in the world with whom we should not preserve peace; except they

13 ¶ And king Solomon raised a levy out of all Israel; and the levy was thirty thousand men.

14 And he sent them to Lebanon, ten thousand a month by courses: a month they were in Lebanon, and two months at home: and Adoniram was over the levy.

15 And Solomon had threescore and ten thousand that bare burdens, and fourscore thousand hewers in the mountains;

16 Besides the chief of Solomon's officers which were over the work, three thousand and three hundred, which ruled over the people that wrought in the work.

17 And the king commanded, and they brought great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house.

18 And Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders did hew them, and the stone-squarers: so they prepared timber and stones to build the house.

#### CHAP. VI.

*Solomon builds the temple, sixty cubits long, twenty cubits broad, and thirty high; which he divides into two parts; the exterior called the temple, and the interior called the oracle, in which the cherubim are placed. He finishes the work in seven years.*

[Before Christ 1011.]

**A**ND it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of

Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month Zif, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the LORD.

2 And the house which king Solomon built for the LORD, the length thereof was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof twenty cubits, and the height thereof thirty cubits.

3 And the porch before the temple of the house, twenty cubits was the length thereof, according to the breadth of the house; and ten cubits was the breadth thereof before the house.

4 ¶ And for the house he made windows of narrow lights.

5 ¶ And against the wall of the house he built chambers round about, against the walls of the house round about, both of the temple and of the oracle: and he made chambers round about:

6 The nethermost chamber was five cubits broad, and the middle was six cubits broad, and the third was seven cubits broad: for without in the wall of the house he made narrowed rests round about, that the beams should not be fastened in the walls of the house.

7 And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither

think that there are men whom God has so reprobated, that he would by no means have them drawn from their error, and intructed in the knowledge of him; and that those men are to beget others of the same infidelity to the end of the world; a conclusion, which, how inevitably soever it must follow from such propositions, no man is arrived at the madness and wickedness to avow.

*Ver. 18. And the stone-squarers*] Calmet and Houbigant, after the Vulgate, understand the Hebrew here as a proper name, *הַגִּבְלִיִּים* *haggiblim*, the *Giblites*: so it is rendered in the Margin of our Bibles. The people of *Giblos* were celebrated for their works in stone and wood. See Ezek. xxvii. 9. and Psalm lxxxiii. 7. *Note*: 1. Where the heart is set upon the work of building up God's church, we shall do it with all our might. 2. The stones being prepared, the foundation of the temple is laid: they were rich and costly, to support the glorious superstructure. Christ is this precious foundation; built upon him, every believer's soul exceeds even Solomon's temple in all its glory, as being the everlasting habitation of God through the Spirit.

#### CHAP. VI.

*Ver. 1. In the fourth year of Solomon's reign*] If it be asked, why Solomon did not begin the building of the temple sooner, and even in the first year of his reign, since his father had left him a plan, and all things necessary for the undertaking, Abarbanel's answer is, that Solomon would not make use of what his father had prepared, but was resolved to build this temple all at his own cost and charge. He therefore put into the treasure of the Lord's house, all that David had dedicated to the work; and to collect as much gold and silver as was necessary to defray so vast an expence, *four years* can be accounted no unreasonable time. Nay, even supposing that he made use of the treasure which his father had amassed, yet if the materials provided by his father lay at a considerable distance, and were left rude and unfashioned, it would cost all this time to form them into the exact symmetry wherein the Scripture represents them, before they were brought together; especially considering that the very stones which made the foundation were probably vast blocks of marble

hammer nor axe *nor* any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building.

8 The door for the middle chamber *was* in the right side of the house: and they went up with winding stairs into the middle *chamber*, and out of the middle into the third.

9 So he built the house, and finished it; and covered the house with beams and boards of cedar.

10 And *then* he built chambers against all the house, five cubits high: and they rested on the house with timber of cedar.

11 ¶ And the word of the LORD came to Solomon, saying,

12 *Concerning* this house which thou art in building, if thou wilt walk in my statutes, and execute my judgments, and keep all my commandments to walk in them; then will I perform my word with thee, which I spake unto David thy father:

13 And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake my people Israel.

14 ¶ So Solomon built the house, and finished it.

15 And he built the walls of the house

within with boards of cedar, both the floor of the house, and the walls of the ceiling: *and* he covered *them* on the inside with wood, and covered the floor of the house with planks of fir.

16 And he built twenty cubits on the sides of the house, both the floor and the walls with boards of cedar: he even built *them* for it within, *even* for the oracle, *even* for the most holy place.

17 And the house, that *is*, the temple before it, was forty cubits long.

18 And the cedar of the house within *was* carved with knops and open flowers: all *was* cedar; there was no stone seen.

19 ¶ And the oracle he prepared in the house within, to set there the ark of the covenant of the LORD.

20 And the oracle in the forepart *was* twenty cubits in length, and twenty cubits in breadth, and twenty cubits in the height thereof: and he overlaid it with pure gold; and *so* covered the altar *which was* of cedar.

21 So Solomon overlaid the house within with pure gold: and he made a partition by

or porphyry, (chap. v. 17.) and all polished in an exquisite manner. See Patrick and Poole.

*Ver. 7.* So that there was neither hammer nor axe, &c.] The true reason why no noise was heard in the building of the temple was, that the stones and all other materials were hewn and squared and fitted at a distance; so that when brought to the place where the temple was to stand, there was nothing to do but to join them together; and this might be done not only for the ease and convenience of the carriage, but also for the magnificence of the work, and in commendation of the workmen's skill and ingenuity. See Exod. xx. 25. and Martin's Explication des Textes Difficiles, p. 186. We do not enter into any direct and full explanation of the building of the temple, as it would necessarily lead us into too great length, and not be clear, after all, without the assistance of plates. We therefore refer to those authors who have treated professedly on the subject; and particularly to Calmet, Scheuchzer, and Univ. Hist. vol. iv. 8vo.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Long had the Lord taken up his abode within the curtains of the tabernacle; but now a glorious building rises to his honour, planned by himself, and dedicated to his service.

1. The time when it was begun. In the fourth year of Solomon, when the materials were prepared, and four hundred and eighty years after their coming from Egypt,

allowing forty to Moses, seventeen to Joshua, two hundred and ninety-nine to the Judges, forty to Eli, forty to Samuel and Saul, forty to David, and four to Solomon.

2. The silence observed in the building. No iron tool was heard; the materials were exactly fitted before they were brought to the spot, and nothing remained but to cement them together. *Note;* (1.) Those whom God honours as lively stones in his temple, he squares and fashions for their place. (2.) They who build the spiritual temple should be men of peace; clamour and fierce dispute disjoint the stones instead of cementing them.

3. The dimensions were just double those of the tabernacle in length and breadth, and treble in height; the windows narrow without and wide within; and chambers built round it, for the priests who were in waiting, three stories high. *Note;* (1.) When we look at others' faults, we cannot be too indulgent, nor when on our own too severe. (2.) The more enlarged our hearts are in divine graces, the nearer we shall rise to heaven.

2dly, 1. God sends a gracious message to encourage Solomon in the work, and to signify his pleasure in it; assuring him, that, if he continued faithful, he would secure to himself and his kingdom the perpetuity of his blessings. *Note;* (1.) Heart-obedience to God's law is more valuable than the most expensive donations to his church. (2.) They who go forth with a desire to God's glory, may confidently expect some tokens of his approbation.

the chains of gold before the oracle; and he overlaid it with gold.

22 And the whole house he overlaid with gold, until he had finished all the house: also the whole altar that *was* by the oracle he overlaid with gold.

23 ¶ And within the oracle he made two cherubims of olive-tree, *each* ten cubits high.

24 And five cubits *was* the one wing of the cherub, and five cubits the other wing of the cherub: from the uttermost part of the one wing unto the uttermost part of the other *were* ten cubits.

25 And the other cherub *was* ten cubits: both the cherubims *were* of one measure and one size.

26 The height of the one cherub *was* ten cubits, and so *was* it of the other cherub.

27 And he set the cherubims within the inner house: and they stretched forth the wings of the cherubims, so that the wing of the one touched the *one* wall, and the wing of the other cherub touched the other wall; and their wings touched one another in the midst of the house.

28 And he overlaid the cherubims with gold.

29 And he carved all the walls of the house round about with carved figures of cherubims and palm-trees and open flowers, within and without.

30 And the floor of the house he overlaid with gold, within and without.

31 ¶ And for the entering of the oracle he made doors of olive-tree: the lintel *and* side

posts *were* a fifth part of the wall.

32 The two doors also *were* of olive-tree; and he carved upon them carvings of cherubims and palm-trees and open flowers, and overlaid *them* with gold, and spread gold upon the cherubims, and upon the palm-trees.

33 So also made he for the door of the temple posts of olive-tree, a fourth part of the wall.

34 And the two doors *were* of fir-tree: the two leaves of the one door *were* folding, and the two leaves of the other door *were* folding.

35 And he carved *thereon* cherubims and palm-trees and open flowers: and covered *them* with gold fitted upon the carved work.

36 ¶ And he built the inner court with three rows of hewed stone, and a row of cedar beams.

37 ¶ In the fourth year was the foundation of the house of the LORD laid, in the month Zif:

38 And in the eleventh year, in the month Bul, which *is* the eighth month, was the house finished throughout all the parts thereof, and according to all the fashion of it. So was he seven years in building it.

## CHAP. VII.

*The building of Solomon's house; of the house of Lebanon; and of the house of Pharaoh's daughter. Hiram, an excellent workman, comes to Solomon from Tyre.*

[Before Christ 1004.]

**B**UT Solomon was building his own house thirteen years, and he finished all his house.

*Ver. 23. He made two cherubims of olive-tree.]* See Exod. xxv. 18.

*Ver. 31. The lintel, &c.]* The post which was the door cheeks, was at the fifth cubit. Lightf. vol. i. 1084.

*Ver. 38. So was he seven years in building it.]* That is, speaking in a round number; for he was, in fact, seven years and six months; nor is this mode of speaking unusual in Scripture. The temple itself, indeed, was but a small edifice; but the many courts and offices about it made the whole a vast pile; and the exquisiteness of the art, and fewness of the artists who could be employed, made a longer time requisite. It must be owned, however, that, considering all things, Solomon made extraordinary dispatch; for, if the building of Diana's temple at Ephesus employed all Asia minor for the space of *two hundred years*; and no less than 360,000 men were taken up for twenty

years together in erecting one pyramid, as Pliny affirms, lib. xxxvi. cap. 12. no reasonable man can wonder that this temple was seven years and a half in building. See Calmet, and Univ. Hist. vol. iv. 8vo. n. H.

*Note;* This temple was typical, 1. Of the body of Jesus, in which the fulness of the Godhead dwelt, and by whom alone our services come before God with acceptance. 2. Of the Christian, who, by the power of divine grace prepared and sanctified, becomes an habitation for God, and more gloriously adorned with faith and holiness than this temple with wrought gold. 3. Of the gospel-church, in which every consecrated soul daily ministers as a priest before God, where cherubic spirits wait on the heirs of salvation, and God manifests his presence and power in a manner which those who are without it cannot conceive. 4. Of heaven, the eternal temple, where the service will be



2 ¶ He built also the house of the forest of Lebanon; the length thereof *was* an hundred cubits, and the breadth thereof fifty cubits, and the height thereof thirty cubits, upon four rows of cedar-pillars, with cedar-beams upon the pillars.

3 And *it was* covered with cedar above upon the beams, that *lay* on forty-five pillars, fifteen *in* a row.

4 And *there were* windows *in* three rows, and light *was* against light *in* three ranks.

5 And all the doors and posts *were* square, with the windows: and light *was* against light *in* three ranks.

6 ¶ And he made a porch of pillars; the length thereof *was* fifty cubits, and the breadth thereof thirty cubits: and the porch *was* before them: and the *other* pillars and the thick beam *were* before them.

7 ¶ Then he made a porch for the throne where he might judge, *even* the porch of judgment: and *it was* covered with cedar from one side of the floor to the other.

8 ¶ And his house where he dwelt *had*

another court within the porch, *which* was of the like work. Solomon made also an house for Pharaoh's daughter, whom he had taken *to wife*, like unto this porch.

9 ¶ All these *were* of costly stones, according to the measures of hewed stones, sawed with saws, within and without, even from the foundation unto the coping, and *so* on the outside toward the great court.

10 And the foundation *was* of costly stones, even great stones, stones of ten cubits, and stones of eight cubits.

11 And above *were* costly stones, after the measures of hewed stones, and cedars.

12 And the great court round about *was* with three rows of hewed stones, and a row of cedar-beams, both for the inner court of the house of the LORD, and for the porch of the house.

13 ¶ And king Solomon sent and fetched Hiram out of Tyre.

14 He *was* a widow's son of the tribe of Naphtali, and his father *was* a man of Tyre, a worker in brass: and he was filled with

be uninterrupted, the glory infinitely surpassing, the worshippers innumerable, and no veil any longer concealing from us the brightest beams of our divine Shechinah.

#### CHAP. VII.

*Ver. 2. He built also the house of the forest of Lebanon*] The house mentioned in the foregoing verse was in Jerusalem, the winter residence of Solomon. This was built in a cool shady mountain near Jerusalem for his summer residence. See chap. xiv. 25, 26. It was called the house of the forest of Lebanon, because it was situated in a lofty place like Lebanon, and probably surrounded with many such fine cedars as grew there. Calmet is of opinion, that it was so called from the number of cedar pillars which supported it.

*Ver. 7. And it was covered with cedar*] It deserves remark, that the eastern floors and ceilings are just the reverse of ours. Their ceilings are of wood, ours of plaster or stucco work; their floors are of plaster or painted tiles, ours of wood. This fully detects a mistake of Kimchi and R. Solomon, who, according to Buxtorff, supposed, that the floor of the porch of judgment which Solomon built was all of cedar; whereas the sacred writer undoubtedly meant, that its covering at the top, its ceiling, was of cedar. Indeed here in the west, where these Jewish rabbis lived, such places are usually built after the eastern mode, which makes their mistake so much the more strange. Westminster hall, for instance, is paved with stone and ceiled with wood, and such, without doubt, was the ceiling and the pavement of the porch for

judgment which Solomon built, and which was erected in a much hotter climate. See *Observations*, p. 101. Concerning Solomon's throne, see chap. x. 18, 19. and Servius on *Æneid*. vii. ver. 169.

*Note*; (1.) They who are great, may appear so; it is as fit that a king should dwell in a palace, as a peasant in a cottage. (2.) They who are occupied in building should take care not to lose, in the stone and mortar, their solicitude to secure a better house, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

*Ver. 13, 14. King Solomon sent and fetched Hiram out of Tyre*] In former times there had been among the Hebrews very excellent workmen, who knew how to cut and engrave precious stones, to cast and work upon metals, &c. But this was before they came into the land of Canaan, in the time of Moses, when Bezaleel and Aholiab were excellent in many different arts which were necessary for the work of the temple; but, as the Scripture tells us that they had their skill by inspiration from God, it does not appear that they had any successors: and after they had got possession of Canaan, they neglected all manufactures, and applied themselves almost wholly to agriculture and the feeding of cattle; so that in the time of Solomon there were no professed artists who could undertake the work of the temple. But in Tyre and Sidon there were many; for both in his *Iliad* and *Odyssey* Homer gives the people of those two places this character; whom upon every occasion he calls, *πολυδαιδαλους* that is, *excellent artists in several kinds of work*.

*Ver.*

wisdom, and understanding, and cunning to work all works in brass. And he came to king Solomon, and wrought all his work.

15 ¶ For he cast two pillars of brass, of eighteen cubits high apiece: and a line of twelve cubits did compass either of them about.

16 And he made two chapters of molten brass, to set upon the tops of the pillars: the height of the one chapter was five cubits, and the height of the other chapter was five cubits:

17 And nets of chequer-work, and wreaths of chain-work, for the chapters which were upon the top of the pillars; seven for the one chapter, and seven for the other chapter.

18 And he made the pillars, and two rows round about upon the one net-work, to cover the chapters that were upon the top, with pomegranates: and so did he for the other chapter.

19 And the chapters that were upon the top of the pillars were of lily-work in the porch, four cubits.

20 And the chapters upon the two pillars had pomegranates also above, over against the belly which was by the net-work: and the pomegranates were two hundred in rows round about upon the other chapter.

21 And he set up the pillars in the porch of the temple: and he set up the right pillar, and called the name thereof Jachin; and he set up the left pillar, and called the name thereof Boaz.

22 And upon the top of the pillars was lily-work: so was the work of the pillars finished.

23 ¶ And he made a molten sea, ten cubits from the one brim to the other: it was round all about, and his height was five cubits: and a line of thirty cubits did compass it round about.

24 And under the brim of it round about there were knops compassing it, ten in a cubit, compassing the sea round about: the knops were cast in two rows, when it was cast.

25 It stood upon twelve oxen, three looking toward the north, and three looking toward the west, and three looking toward the south, and three looking toward the east: and the sea was set above upon them, and all their hinder parts were inward.

26 And it was an hand-breadth thick, and the brim thereof was wrought like the brim of a cup, with flowers of lilies: it contained two thousand baths.

27 ¶ And he made ten bases of brass; four cubits was the length of one base, and four cubits the breadth thereof, and three cubits the height of it.

Ver. 15. *Two pillars—of eighteen cubits high*] It is said, 2 Chron. iii. 15. that these pillars were thirty and five cubits high, which relates to the height of both of them together without their pedestals, whereas the height of each is given here with its pedestal. These two pillars were called by the names of *Jachin* and *Boaz*, ver. 21. words which imply, that God alone gave stability, or was alone the support and strength of the temple. Various allegorical designations have been given to these pillars. The authors of the Universal History observe, by way of conjecture, that one might suppose there was an inscription in some such sense as that above, given upon the basis of each of the pillars; that on the one beginning with the word *Jachin*, and that on the other with the word *Boaz*, from whence the pillars might have their denomination; as we see the books of Moses called by the first words which they begin with. See Universal History, vol. iv. p. 206.

Ver. 18. *And he made the pillars, &c.*] Thus he made the pillars; and there were two rows round about by the branch-work, which was to cover the chapter, even that [part] which was above the pomegranates: [See Light. vol. i. 1075.] and so did he, &c.

Ver. 23. *And he made a molten sea*] The Hebrews call

any great collection of waters by the name of *ים ים*, a sea. So the lake of Genesareth and others are called in the Gospel; and here the original words, *ים מוצק*, *ים mutzak*, signify a large vessel containing a great quantity of water, which served for the washing of the sacrifices, and of the priests and Levites, who washed their hands and feet not in it, but with water drawn out of it by pipes or conduits. It is said, ver. 26. to have contained two thousand baths: in 2 Chron. iv. 5. *three thousand*; which last reading Houbigant prefers. A bath was of the same contents with an ephah, i. e. eight gallons. The reader may find an accurate description and a great variety of figures of this molten sea in Scheuchzer on the place.

Ver. 27. *He made ten bases of brass*] That is, stands or tables, upon which the lavers mentioned, ver. 38. were to be placed; and which were to be so situated, ver. 39. that as soon as the priests entered they might have water to wash their hands and feet. For the other parts of the furniture of the temple, we refer to what has been said on the tabernacle furniture: see also Lightfoot on the temple, p. 228. The heathens had lustral water at the gate of their temples, to wash their hands before they offered their sacrifices. See Spencer de Leg. Heb. Diss. iii.

Ver.

28 And the work of the bases *was* on this manner: they had borders, and the borders *were* between the ledges:

29 And on the borders that *were* between the ledges *were* lions, oxen, and cherubims: and upon the ledges *there was* a base above: and beneath the lions and oxen *were* certain additions made of thin work.

30 And every base had four brazen wheels, and plates of brass: and the four corners thereof had underfettors: under the laver *were* underfettors molten, at the side of every addition.

31 And the mouth of it within the chapter and above *was* a cubit: but the mouth thereof *was* round *after* the work of the base, a cubit and an half: and also upon the mouth of it *were* gravings with their borders, four-square, not round.

32 And under the borders *were* four wheels; and the axle-trees of the wheels *were* joined to the base: and the height of a wheel *was* a cubit and half a cubit.

33 And the work of the wheels *was* like the work of a chariot-wheel: their axle-trees, and their naves, and their felloes, and their spokes, *were* all molten.

34 And *there were* four underfettors to the four corners of one base: *and* the underfettors *were* of the very base itself.

35 And in the top of the base *was* there a round compass of half a cubit high: and on the top of the base the ledges thereof and the borders thereof *were* of the same.

36 For on the plates of the ledges thereof, and on the borders thereof, he graved cherubims, lions, and palm-trees, according to the proportion of every one, and additions round about.

37 After this manner he made the ten bases: all of them had one casting, one measure, *and* one size.

38 ¶ Then made he ten lavers of brass: one laver contained forty baths: *and* every laver was four cubits: *and* upon every one of the ten bases one laver.

39 And he put five bases on the right side

of the house, and five on the left side of the house: and he set the sea on the right side of the house eastward over against the south.

40 ¶ And Hiram made the lavers, and the shovels, and the basons. So Hiram made an end of doing all the work that he made king Solomon for the house of the LORD:

41 The two pillars, and the two bowls of the chapters that *were* on the top of the two pillars; and the two net-works, to cover the two bowls of the chapters which *were* upon the top of the pillars;

42 And four hundred pomegranates for the two net-works, *even* two rows of pomegranates for one net-work, to cover the two bowls of the chapters that *were* upon the pillars;

43 And the ten bases, and ten lavers on the bases;

44 And one sea, and twelve oxen under the sea;

45 And the pots, and the shovels, and the basons: and all these vessels, which Hiram made to king Solomon for the house of the LORD, *were* of bright brass.

46 In the plain of Jordan did the king cast them, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zarthan.

47 And Solomon left all the vessels *unweighed*, because they were exceeding many: neither was the weight of the brass found out.

48 ¶ And Solomon made all the vessels that *pertained* unto the house of the LORD: the altar of gold, and the table of gold, whereupon the shew-bread *was*,

49 And the candlesticks of pure gold, five on the right side, and five on the left, before the oracle, with the flowers, and the lamps, and the tongs of gold,

50 And the bowls, and the snuffers, and the basons, and the spoons, and the censers of pure gold; and the hinges of gold, *both* for the doors of the innerhouse, the most holy place, *and* for the doors of the house, *to wit*, of the temple.

51 So was ended all the work that king Solomon made for the house of the LORD. And Solomon brought in the things which

Ver. 51. So was ended all the work] Concerning this temple, we may observe upon the whole, that the glory of

it did not consist in its bulk or largeness, (for in itself it was but a small pile of building; no more than 150 feet

David his father had dedicated; *even* the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, did he put among the treasures of the house of the LORD.

## C H A P. VIII.

*Solomon conveys the ark of God and the tabernacle into the temple. His solemn dedication of the temple, and his prayer.*

[Before Christ 1003.]

**T**HEN Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the chief of the fathers of the children of Israel, unto king Solomon in Jerusalem, that they might bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David, which *is* Zion.

2 And all the men of Israel assembled themselves unto king Solomon at the feast in the month Ethanim, which *is* the seventh month.

3 And all the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark.

4 And they brought up the ark of the LORD, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and all the holy vessels that *were* in the tabernacle, *even* those did the priests and the Levites bring up.

5 And king Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel, that were assembled unto him, *were* with him before the ark, sacrificing sheep and oxen, that could not be told nor numbered for multitude.

6 And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the LORD unto his place, into the oracle of the house, to the most holy *place*, *even* under the wings of the cherubims.

7 For the cherubims spread forth *their* two wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubims covered the ark and the staves thereof above.

8 And they drew out the staves, that the ends of the staves were seen out in the holy *place* before the oracle, and they were not seen without: and there they are unto this day.

feet in length, and 105 in breadth, taking the whole together, and is exceeded by many of our parish churches,) but its chief grandeur and excellency lay in its out-buildings and ornaments, in its workmanship, which was every where very curious, and in its overlayings, which were vast and prodigious. The overlaying of the Holy of Holies only, which was a room but thirty feet square, and twenty high, amounted to six hundred talents of gold, which comes to four millions three hundred and twenty thousand pounds of our sterling money. "The whole frame," says Josephus, "was raised upon stones, polished to the highest degree of perfection, and so artificially put together, that there was no joint to be discerned, no sign of any working tools having been upon them; but the whole looked more like the work of Providence and nature, than the product of art and human invention. And, as to the inside, what carving, gilding, embroidery, rich silks, and fine linen could do, of these there was the greatest profusion. The very floor of the temple was overlaid with beaten gold, the doors were large, and proportioned to the height of the walls, twenty cubits broad, and still gold upon gold." Antiq. lib. viii. chap. 2. In a word, it was gold all over, and nothing was wanting either within or without, that might contribute to the glory and magnificence of the work.

## C H A P. VIII.

*Ver. 2. All the men of Israel assembled—in the month Ethanim*] To celebrate the dedication of his new temple with greater magnificence, Solomon chose to defer it till the next year, which was the Jubilee, their ninth, according to Archbishop Usher, which opened the fourth millenary of the world: at which solemnity there used to be

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always a vast concourse of people from all parts of the kingdom. The ceremony began on the eighth day of the seventh month of the sacred year, which was the first of the civil year, answering to the latter end of our October, and lasted seven days; at the end of which began the feast of tabernacles. The ceremony opened with a pompous procession, in which the priests carried the ark from the tabernacle which David had erected for it, to the temple, and deposited it in the most holy place, between the two golden cherubims which Solomon had caused to be made by Hiram, to be a kind of covering to the ark. The king himself, accompanied by all his chief officers and the elders of Israel, marched before the ark: these were followed by a great number of priests and Levites, who sung some canticles proper to the occasion, and played upon various instruments. Next to the ark followed another number of singers and players, with other priests bearing the golden candlesticks, altar of incense, and other sacred utensils of the sanctuary, which had been brought from Gibeon, where they and the tabernacle had been deposited till that time. While the priests were placing the ark in the Holy of Holies, the air rung with the sound of a hundred and twenty trumpets, and with the voices of the Levites, who sang the praises of God, repeating these words at proper stanzas: *Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;—and his mercy endureth for ever*: it was then that God seemed to come down in a visible manner, to take possession, as it were, of his new temple, by filling it with a glorious cloud, as he had formerly done the tabernacle; insomuch that the priests could not stand to offer up the sacrifices which they had prepared upon that occasion. See Exod. xl. 34. 2 Chron. v. throughout, and Universal History.

3 C

*Ver.*

9 *There was* nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone, which Moses put there at Horeb, when the LORD made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt.

10 ¶ And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD.

11 So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of the LORD.

12 ¶ Then spake Solomon, The LORD said that he would dwell in the thick darkness.

13 I have surely built thee an house to dwell in, a settled place for thee to abide in for ever.

14 And the king turned his face about, and blessed all the congregation of Israel: (and all the congregation of Israel stood);

15 And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which spake with his mouth unto David my father, and hath with his hand fulfilled it, saying,

16 Since the day that I brought forth my people Israel out of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel to build an house, that my name might be therein; but I chose David to be over my people Israel.

17 And it was in the heart of David my father to build an house for the name of the LORD God of Israel.

18 And the LORD said unto David my father, Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart.

19 Nevertheless thou shalt not build the house; but thy son that shall come forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house unto my name.

20 And the LORD hath performed his word that he spake, and I am risen up in the room of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised, and have built an house for the name of

the LORD God of Israel.

21 And I have set there a place for the ark, wherein is the covenant of the LORD, which he made with our fathers, when he brought them out of the land of Egypt.

22 ¶ And Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven:

23 And he said, LORD God of Israel, *there is* no god like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart:

24 Who hast kept with thy servant David my father that thou promisedst him: thou spakest also with thy mouth, and hast fulfilled it with thine hand, as it is this day.

25 Therefore now, LORD God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father that thou promisedst him, saying, There shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit on the throne of Israel; so that thy children take heed to their way, that they walk before me as thou hast walked before me.

26 And now, O God of Israel, let thy word, I pray thee, be verified, which thou spakest unto thy servant David my father.

27 But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded!

28 Yet have thou respect unto the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O LORD my God, to hearken unto the cry and to the prayer, which thy servant prayeth before thee to-day:

29 That thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day, *even* toward the place of which thou hast said, My name shall be there: that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer, which thy servant shall make toward this place.

Ver. 9. *There was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone, &c.*] See Heb. ix. 4.

Note; Though our eyes behold not the lustre of the Jewish temple, yet whilst by faith we are enabled to look to Jesus, all our requests will be granted, and at last, with open face, we shall behold his brighter glory.

Ver. 22. *And Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord*] Raised above the people, on a brazen scaffold three cubits high, (see 2 Chron. vi. 13.) Solomon commanded the attention of the people, who stood in the court and in the galleries round about, and kneeling down, ver. 54. *He spread forth his hands towards heaven, and dedicated the*

30 And hearken thou to the supplication of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place: and hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place: and when thou hearest, forgive.

31 ¶ If any man trespass against his neighbour, and an oath be laid upon him to cause him to swear, and the oath come before thine altar in this house:

32 Then hear thou in heaven, and do, and judge thy servants, condemning the wicked, to bring his way upon his head; and justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness.

33 ¶ When thy people Israel be smitten down before the enemy, because they have sinned against thee, and shall turn again to thee, and confess thy name, and pray, and make supplication unto thee in this house:

34 Then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy people Israel, and bring them again unto the land which thou gavest unto their fathers.

35 ¶ When heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against thee; if they pray toward this place, and confess thy name, and turn from their sin, when thou afflictest them:

36 Then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants, and of thy people Israel, that thou teach them the good way wherein they should walk, and give rain upon thy land, which thou hast given to thy people for an

inheritance.

37 ¶ If there be in the land famine, if there be pestilence, blasting, mildew, locust, or if there be caterpillar; if their enemy besiege them in the land of their cities; whatsoever plague, whatsoever sickness *there be*;

38 What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands toward this house:

39 Then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou, *even* thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men;)

40 That they may fear thee all the days that they live in the land which thou gavest unto our fathers.

41 ¶ Moreover concerning a stranger, that is not of thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country for thy name's sake;

42 (For they shall hear of thy great name, and of thy strong hand, and of thy stretched-out arm;) when he shall come and pray toward this house;

43 Hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for: that all people of the earth may know thy name, to fear thee, as do thy people Israel; and that they may know that this house, which I have builded, is called by thy name.

44 ¶ If thy people go out to battle against

sacred building to God, in a most elegant and devout prayer. The noble and animated break in the 27th verse is peculiarly excellent.

Ver. 39. Give to every man according to his ways] God is represented, in the sacred writings, both as the *tutelary deity* and the *supreme magistrate* of the Jews; in consequence of which, He governed them by an equal, or rather an extraordinary Providence. This extraordinary Providence is represented as administered, 1. over the state in general; 2. over private men in particular: and such a representation we should expect to find from the nature of the republic; because, as an extraordinary Providence over the state necessarily follows God's being their *tutelary deity*, so an extraordinary Providence to particulars follows as necessarily from his being their *supreme magistrate*. As to this Providence over the state, it would be absurd to quote particular texts, when the whole Bible is one continued history of it. In his dedication of the first temple, Solomon addresses his prayer to God, that the covenant between

him and the people might remain firm and inviolate, and the old economy be still continued: and, after having enumerated divers parts of it, he proceeds in the manner described, ver. 35—39. Solomon in this petition, which, with respect to the given covenant we might properly call a *petition of rights*, speaks the language of one who extended the temporal functions of the law to particulars and individuals; for he desires God, according to the terms of the covenant, to *render to every man according to his ways*. But when is it that he prays for the exertion of this extraordinary Providence to particulars?—At the very time when it is administering to the state in general. *If there be in the land famine, &c.* ver. 37. The necessary consequence is, that as sure as Solomon believed an extraordinary Providence exercised to the state in general, so surely did he believe it exercised to individuals in particular. Divine Legation, vol. iv. p. 117, &c.

Ver. 43. Is called by thy name] That is, *is thy house*. See Explicat. des Textes Difficiles, p. 182.

their enemy, whithersoever thou shalt send them, and shall pray unto the LORD toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house that I have built for thy name:

45 Then hear thou in heaven their prayer

and their supplication, and maintain their cause.

46 If they sin against thee, (for *there is* no man that sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so

**REFLECTIONS.**—1st, The priests and people appearing in consternation at the sight of the cloud, Solomon encourages them.

1. He reminds them, that this is the fulfilment of God's promise, Lev. xvi. 6. and a gracious mark of his favour and approbation. The house now being built, the Divine inhabitant comes to take up his residence therein, and Solomon cannot but pray that it may be for ever. *Note;* (1.) If we enter, at any time, the dark cloud of affliction or temptation, let us not be dismayed, for there also God dwelleth. (2.) If we have found, at any time, God's comfortable presence, it cannot but excite us to pray, that he may take up his abode with us continually.

2. He pronounced a solemn benediction on the people, who reverently stood up to receive it.

3. He, with thankful acknowledgments to God, recites the design of his building this house. God had promised to choose the place of his abode, and David his father had planned the fabric; but God stayed him from proceeding, though he graciously accepted his intentions, and fixed on his son for the glorious work. Now then the promise is accomplished, the fixed abode for God's ark provided, and the structure for ever devoted to the service of their covenant God. *Note;* (1.) The fulfilment of God's precious promises more engage the tongues of the faithful, than their own unworthy performances. (2.) A good desire is not forgotten of God.

2dly, We have Solomon appearing in greater glory on his knees before the altar, than when seated on his ivory throne, and crowned with gold. Having comforted the people with his benediction, he lifts up his heart and hands to God in prayer, that this house, so gloriously opened, might be for ever distinguished by God's presence, grace, and merciful regard to those who should therein pour out their supplications.

1. Solomon himself began the service, and shewed the people the way to the throne of grace, where, on their behalf, he is intercessor for the settling a blessed intercourse between God and them. He did not think himself too great to bow before his Lord, nor was at a loss how to address him; but before the altar, as depending on the blood shed there for the success of his petitions, he spread abroad his hands to heaven, and bent the suppliant knee. *Note;* (1.) Let great men imitate so noble a pattern, nor think it unbecoming them to pray with their households; and if their hearts be right, as Solomon's with God, though they possess not his wisdom or gifts, they shall not want that spirit of prayer and supplication which will help their infirmities, and teach them how and what to pray for as they ought. (2.) Every prayer which would find acceptance with God, must be presented through the blood and intercession of Jesus. (3.) Fervency in prayer, whether in word or gesture, may provoke the censure of the careless or the lukewarm; but God will not despise the hands lifted up to heaven.

2. The prayer of Solomon.

[1.] He opens, with ascribing to God the glory due unto his name, acknowledges his transcendent greatness, and his faithfulness in his promises to those who walk before him in simplicity and truth. *Note;* (1.) To praise God for past mercies, is not only the tribute that we owe to him, but a comfortable encouragement to our own faith. (2.) They who desire to serve God from their hearts, will find his ear ever open to their prayers.

[2.] He supplicates for himself and people the fulfilment of God's promises, with admiration and astonishment at the condescension of God, who, though the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, vouchsafes to visit this sinful earth, and to dwell with worms of the dust. He prays, that, according to the promise made to David, his seed might never fail, nor his throne be removed; that God would ever regard this temple, where he had so gloriously manifested his presence; and that his prayers, and the prayers of the people, there presented unto him, or offered with their faces turned thitherward, might ever meet an answer of peace. *Note;* (1.) The word of promise is the ground of prayer. (2.) God still condescends to dwell on earth, not indeed in temples made with hands, but in the more glorious temple of the believer's heart. (3.) Every accepted prayer must be through him whom the temple prefigured, even Jesus Christ: and, whilst the eye of faith is turned to him, we may be assured that God will hear and answer us. (4.) Forgiveness of sin is among the most invaluable blessings which the enlightened mind seeks from God.

3dly, Having finished his prayer, Solomon arose from his knees, and dismissed the people with a gracious benediction: magnifying God for the rest and peace which they enjoyed, and the full accomplishment of all his promises; earnestly wishing that his blessing might be ever with them, as with their fathers; especially that his grace might incline their hearts to serve him, which could not fail to secure the continuance of his regard; and that a continued answer to his prayer might be vouchsafed to them; to the end, that all the earth might, from these instances of his power and love to his people, be brought to acknowledge the glory of Israel's God. And then he concludes with a solemn charge to them, to be faithful to the Lord, who would never fail them if they forsook not him. *Note;* (1.) We ought to praise God for the rest that we enjoy, spiritual or temporal; and especially for the eternal rest which the word of promise has secured to the faithful. (2.) God's presence with us is the greatest blessing that we can enjoy in this world, and the earnest of our inheritance in a better. (3.) When his rich grace sweetly influences and inclines our hearts, then, and only then, shall we be enabled to walk in the way of God's commandments. (4.) While Jesus our high-priest is our advocate, we cannot fail of the Divine benediction.

*Ver.*

that they carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy, far or near;

47 *Yet* if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried captives, and repent, and make supplication unto thee in the land of them that carried them captives, saying, We have sinned, and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness;

48 And *so* return unto thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies, which led them away captive, and pray unto thee toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name:

49 Then hear thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven thy dwelling-place, and maintain their cause,

50 And forgive thy people that have sinned against thee, and all their transgressions wherein they have transgressed against thee, and give them compassion before them who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them:

51 For they *be* thy people, and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest forth out of Egypt, from the midst of the furnace of iron:

52 That thine eyes may be open unto the supplication of thy servant, and unto the supplication of thy people Israel, to hearken unto them in all that they call for unto thee.

53 For thou didst separate them from among all the people of the earth, *to be* thine inheritance, as thou spakest by the hand of Moses thy servant, when thou broughtest our fathers out of Egypt, O LORD GOD.

54 ¶ And it was so, that when Solomon had made an end of praying all this prayer and supplication unto the LORD, he arose from before the altar of the LORD, from kneeling on his knees, with his hands spread up to heaven.

55 And he stood, and blessed all the con-

gregation of Israel with a loud voice, saying,

56 Blessed *be* the LORD, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant.

57 The LORD our God *be* with us, as he was with our fathers: let him not leave us, nor forsake us:

58 That he may incline our hearts unto him, to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his statutes, and his judgments, which he commanded our fathers.

59 And let these my words, wherewith I have made supplication before the LORD, *be* nigh unto the LORD our God day and night, that he maintain the cause of his servant, and the cause of his people Israel at all times, as the matter shall require:

60 That all the people of the earth may know that the LORD *is* God, and that there is none else.

61 Let your heart therefore be perfect with the LORD our God, to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this day.

62 ¶ And the king, and all Israel with him, offered sacrifice before the LORD.

63 And Solomon offered a sacrifice of peace-offerings, which he offered unto the LORD, two and twenty thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the house of the LORD.

64 The same day did the king hallow the middle of the court that *was* before the house of the LORD: for there he offered burnt-offerings, and meat-offerings, and the fat of the peace-offerings: because the brazen altar that *was* before the LORD *was* too little to receive the burnt-offerings, and meat-offerings, and the fat of the peace-offerings.

65 ¶ And at that time Solomon held a

*Ver. 63. Solomon offered—two and twenty thousand oxen, &c.]* That is, he offered so many sacrifices during the whole space of time, the whole *fourteen days*; the *seven days* of the feast of dedication, and the *seven days* of the feast of tabernacles, spoken of in the next verse. See 2 Chron. vii.

8, 9. This custom of dedicating temples was also common among the heathens. The Romans dedicated their temples, altars, public edifices, and the like. See Cicero's *Orat. pro Domo sui*, et Alex. ab Alex. lib. vii. cap. 14. It is probable, that the later heathens borrowed most of their rites



feast, and all Israel with him, a great congregation, from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of Egypt, before the LORD our God, seven days, and seven days, *even* fourteen days.

66 On the eighth day he sent the people away: and they blessed the king, and went unto their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the LORD had done for David his servant, and for Israel his people.

### CHAP. IX.

*God appears to Solomon. Solomon gives Hiram twenty cities, which do not please him. He builds cities, drives out the Amorites, and sends ships to Ophir, which bring from thence four hundred and twenty talents of gold.*

[Before Christ 991.]

**A**ND it came to pass, when Solomon had finished the building of the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all Solomon's desire which he was pleased to do,

2 That the LORD appeared to Solomon the second time, as he had appeared unto him at Gibeon.

3 And the LORD said unto him, I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication, that thou hast made before me: I have hallowed this house, which thou hast built, to put my name there for ever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually.

4 And if thou wilt walk before me, as David

thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, *and* wilt keep my statutes and my judgments:

5 Then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel.

6 *But* if ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children, and will not keep my commandments *and* my statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them:

7 Then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a by-word among all people:

8 And at this house, *which* is high, every one that passeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss; and they shall say, Why hath the LORD done thus unto this land, and to this house?

9 And they shall answer, Because they forsook the LORD their God, who brought forth their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have taken hold upon other gods, and have worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath the LORD brought upon them all this evil.

rites from the law of Moses, but intermixing with them the most abominable practices.

*Ver. 66. On the eighth day he sent the people away]* In 2 Chron. vii. 10. it is *on the twenty-third day*. Houbigant thinks, that what seems to have been omitted in this place, should be supplied from the parallel place in the Chronicles.

*Note;* (1.) When we return from God's ordinances, it becomes us to rejoice in the God of our salvation. (2.) A good king is the joy of his subjects. (3.) When we shall return to our eternal home, then shall our joy never end; and Jesus, our king, be the subject of our everlasting praises.

### CHAP. IX.

*Ver. 2—9. That the Lord appeared to Solomon]* Lest this young prince's heart should be too much elated by this extraordinary grandeur, God was pleased to appear to him in a dream on the first night of the dedication, when he expressed his acceptance of that sumptuous edifice, and renewed his promises to him and his posterity, provided he and they served him with an upright heart. On the

other hand, he assured him, that in case they provoked him by their idolatry and disobedience, that glorious building, which was now the wonder of the world, should infallibly become a desolation, a dwelling for owls and bats, and a proverb of reproach among all nations. See Univ. Hist.

REFLECTIONS.—1. God declares his acceptance of Solomon's prayer, and promises to answer it. As he had manifested his presence in his temple, his eye and heart shall be always upon it, and his ear attentive to the prayers of all who come thither for help. *Note;* God's eyes are now in every place over the righteous, and his ears open to their prayers.

2. He promises him, on his obedience, the establishment of his house and throne to the latest posterity. *Note;* They who would secure to their children the entail of God's blessings, must leave them the examples of their fidelity.

3. He warns him of the dreadful consequence of his, and the people's, and their posterity's departure and apostasy from God, which would cause the destruction of his family, the ruin of his kingdom, the demolition of this glorious temple, the

10 ¶ And it came to pass at the end of twenty years, when Solomon had built the two houses, the house of the LORD, and the king's house,

11 (*Now* Hiram the king of Tyre had furnished Solomon with cedar trees and fir trees, and with gold, according to all his desire,) that then king Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee.

12 And Hiram came out from Tyre to see the cities which Solomon had given him; and they pleased him not.

13 And he said, What cities *are* these which thou hast given me, my brother? And he called them the land of Cabul unto this day.

14 And Hiram sent to the king sixscore talents of gold.

15 ¶ And this *is* the reason of the levy which king Solomon raised; for to build the house of the LORD, and his own house, and Millo, and the wall of Jerusalem, and Hazor, and Megiddo, and Gezer.

16 *For* Pharaoh king of Egypt had gone up, and taken Gezer, and burnt it with fire,

and slain the Canaanites that dwelt in the city, and given it *for* a present unto his daughter, Solomon's wife.

17 And Solomon built Gezer, and Bethhoron the nether,

18 And Baalath, and Tadmor in the wilderness, in the land,

19 And all the cities of store that Solomon had, and cities for his chariots, and cities for his horsemen, and that which Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem, and in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion.

20 ¶ And all the people *that were* left of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, which *were* not of the children of Israel,

21 Their children that were left after them in the land, whom the children of Israel also were not able utterly to destroy, upon those did Solomon levy a tribute of bondservice unto this day.

22 But of the children of Israel did Solomon make no bondmen: but they *were* men of war, and his servants, and his princes, and

the contempt of the heathen, and the mournful reflection of those who remained, on the sins which brought down such desolating judgments. Thus Solomon and the people were admonished not to pride themselves on their outward privileges, or rest on the glory of the temple, seeing that its greatest beauty was the holiness of the worshippers; and that *that* once lost, the fine gold would become dim, and this lofty fabric be laid in the dust. *Note*; (1.) If our growth in grace does not correspond with our privileges, our boast of the temple, and the best form of worship, will but delude and destroy us. (2.) Whenever we see or read the desolations that God hath wrought in the earth, we should reflect on the dreadful evil and malignity of sin, and take warning.

*Ver. 13. And he called them the land of Cabul unto this day*] Houbigant thinks that *Cabul* is derived from an Arabic word, signifying *to defer the payment of a debt*; perhaps because he had not given them to king Hiram before he had finished all his buildings. The Arabic word signifies also *to refuse, to be short in*; which signification may imply, that those cities were either too small, or such as a Tyrian king should refuse. Some think, that the word *כַּבּוּל* *Cabul* should here be considered as a compound of *כָּ* *capb*, (*like, as*), and *בַּל* *bal*, or *בּוֹל* *bol*, (*nothing*;) thus well expressing king Hiram's dislike, as signifying that those cities were *worthless*, next to nothing. See Parkhurst on the word. It is uncertain why Hiram so much disliked these cities. Bedford thinks it was because the Tyrians were wholly addicted to trade and merchandize, and therefore

would not remove from the sea-shore, to live in a soil which required a great deal of labour to cultivate it; a business to which they were little accustomed. See Calmet.

*Ver. 15. And this is the reason of the levy*] *Therefore this was the reason of the levy or tribute.* That is, the money which Solomon borrowed of Hiram, ver. 14. was the reason of his raising the tribute upon his people. Houbigant.

*And Millo*] See 2 Sam. v. 9. מִלּוֹ *Millo* was a place in Jerusalem in which the people of Israel assembled, when there was any consultation to be made about public affairs. It is derived from the Hebrew word מָלֵא *malé*, which signifies *full*, because the people filled the place.

*Ver. 18. And Tadmor in the wilderness, in the land*] See 2 Chron. viii. 3, 4. This Tadmor in the wilderness is generally supposed to be the same with the city of Palmyra, whose ruins are at present so extraordinary, and of which some valuable travellers of our nation have given us the most pleasing and accurate accounts. We refer our reader to these, not only that they may receive great pleasure but great improvement; since it is not possible to conceive higher ideas of Solomon's magnificence than these ruins present, nor more humiliating ideas of the vanity and weakness of all human splendor. See Messrs. Dawkins and Wood's ruins of Palmyra.

*Ver. 19. And in Lebanon*] That is, in the palace which was styled *of the forest of Lebanon*, near Jerusalem; for Solomon built nothing in mount Lebanon, nor do we any where read that any part of that mountain was within his jurisdiction. Houbigant.

*Ver.*

his captains, and rulers of his chariots, and his horsemen.

23 These were the chief of the officers that were over Solomon's work, five hundred and fifty, which bare rule over the people that wrought in the work.

24 ¶ But Pharaoh's daughter came up out of the city of David unto her house which Solomon had built for her: then did he build Millo.

25 ¶ And three times in a year did Solomon offer burnt-offerings and peace-offerings upon the altar which he built unto the LORD, and he burnt incense upon the altar that was before the LORD. So he finished the house.

26 ¶ And king Solomon made a navy of ships in Ezion-geber, which is beside Eloth, on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom.

27 And Hiram sent in the navy his servants, shipmen that had knowledge of the sea, with the servants of Solomon.

28 And they came to Ophir, and fetched from thence gold, four hundred and twenty talents, and brought it to king Solomon.

## CHAP. X.

*The queen of Sheba visits Solomon, admires his wisdom, and departs, after having given and received presents. Solomon's wealth.*

[Before Christ 991.]

AND when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to prove him with hard questions.

2 And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart.

3 And Solomon told her all her questions: there was not any thing hid from the king, which he told her not.

4 ¶ And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built,

5 And the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cup bearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the LORD; there was no more spirit in her.

*Ver. 28. And they came to Ophir.]* Infinite are the conjectures of different writers concerning this land of Ophir. The authors of the Universal History have taken great pains to confute those opinions which appear less probable; and upon the whole their conclusion is, "that Ophir appears most likely to have been in some of those remote rich countries of India beyond Ganges, and perhaps as far as China or Japan; which last still abounds with the finest gold, and several other commodities in which Solomon's fleet dealt, as silver, precious stones, ebony, and other valuable sorts of wood; to say nothing of spices, peacocks, parrots, apes, and other such creatures; and by its distance best answers to the length of the voyage."

*Note;* Even the gold of Ophir perishes in the using; but the treasures of grace never wax old, or decay. He that is possessed of these, hath that fine gold which constitutes the truest riches, Rev. iii. 18.

## CHAP. X.

*Ver. 1. And when the queen of Sheba heard, &c.]* The queen of Sheba having heard the fame of Solomon, and the name of the Lord, came, &c. Houbigant. Concerning the custom of putting forth enigmas and dark questions, see the note on Judg. xiv. 12. Who this queen of Sheba was, or whence she came, is not agreed by interpreters. The most probable opinion seems to be, that she came from

Arabia; as for many other reasons, so particularly because she is called in the Gospel, *the queen of the south*, and is said to have come from *the uttermost parts of the earth*: Matt. xii. 42. which answers exactly to *Arabia Felix*, for it lies south of Judea, and is limited by the ocean. Add to this, that it abounded in gold, precious stones, and fine perfumes, more than any country thereabouts. If she came from Arabia, there is reason to believe that she originally descended from Abraham by his wife Keturah, one of whose sons begat Sheba, (Gen. xxv. 1. 3.) who was the first planter of this country; and consequently that she might have some knowledge of revealed religion, by tradition at least from her pious ancestors. And, indeed, this verse seems more than to intimate, that the design of her visit to Solomon was not so much to gratify her curiosity, as to inform her understanding in matters relating to piety and divine worship, concerning the name of the Lord. And what our Saviour speaks respecting her rising in judgment against the men of that generation, seems plainly to intimate, that the wisdom which she came to hear was of a much more important kind than that of merely enigmatical questions. See Calmet.

*Ver. 5. There was no more spirit in her.]* A common mode of expression to signify the highest degree of admiration; implying, says Houbigant, *aliquem esse admiratione obstupefactum*, that the person is stunned with admiration.

*Ver.*

6 And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts, and of thy wisdom.

7 Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard.

8 Happy *are* thy men, happy *are* these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom.

9 Blessed be the LORD thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the LORD loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice.

10 ¶ And she gave the king an hundred

and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones: there came no more such abundance of spices as these which the queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon.

11 And the navy also of Hiram, that brought gold from Ophir, brought in from Ophir great plenty of almug-trees, and precious stones.

12 And the king made of the almug-trees pillars for the house of the LORD, and for the king's house, harps also and psalteries for fingers: there came no such almug-trees, nor were seen unto this day.

13 And king Solomon gave unto the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, beside *that* which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty. So she turned and went to her own country, she and her servants.

*Ver. 9. Blessed be the Lord, &c.]* That the government of the Jews was only a vice-royalty, may be inferred from this circumstance. The throne and kingdom of Judea is all along expressly declared to be *God's throne and God's kingdom*. Thus the queen of Sheba, who visited Solomon to be instructed in his wisdom, and who, doubtless, had been informed by him of the true nature of his kingdom, compliments him in these words: "Blessed be the Lord thy God, who delighted in thee, to set thee on *his throne*, to be king for the Lord thy God;" as it is read 2 Chron. ix. 8.

*Ver. 11, 12. And the navy also of Hiram, &c.]* Parkhurst thinks, that the *almugim*, *thya*, or *lignumvita tree*, is so called from *אלמג* *al, not*, and *מג* *gem, to fill*, because it is of so close a texture, as *not to imbibe water*, nor be affected by the wet and weather. See Dr. Shaw's Travels, p. 422.

REFLECTIONS.—The spreading fame of Solomon brought to his court a vast resort of strangers. Among the most distinguished of which, we must reckon the queen of Sheba.

1. She came with a vast retinue, and the richest presents, to converse with a person of whom she had heard such wonders, to prove him by hard questions, to gain advice in her difficulties, and especially to inquire concerning the name of the Lord who had bestowed on Solomon such uncommon wisdom. *Note;* (1.) Wisdom can never be too dearly bought, or too far fetched. (2.) If her solicitude to inquire after God was so commendable, how will it upbraid their neglect, who, when the *greater than Solomon is here*, to teach them by his word and Spirit, refuse instruction, and will not hear the wisdom of God.

2. Solomon entertained her with the dignity becoming her rank, communed with her of all that she had in her heart, answered every question, and solved all her difficulties to her entire satisfaction. *Note;* They who have the gift of knowledge, should delight in the communication of it.

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3. What she heard and saw quite astonished her. His discourses so deep and clear; his buildings so vast and magnificent; his table so richly and regularly supplied; his servants so exact, orderly, and numerous; his liveries so grand; his cup-bearers so stately; and *his ascent by steps to the house of the Lord* so nobly contrived, so exquisitely finished; or, as it may be rendered, *the burnt-offerings in the house of the Lord*, which, as proselyted, she might now be admitted to behold: these were all so astonishing, that she was lost in admiration.

4. When she had recovered from her amazement, she could not withhold expressing her high satisfaction, and how much the event exceeded her expectation. Fame is usually too liberal, but here had been unjust, *half had not been told her*. She pronounces them happy, who enjoyed the constant opportunity of hearing such a prodigy of wisdom; declares that she could be tempted to wish her lot among his servants, rather than on the throne of Sheba; and concludes with blessing God for his distinguished gifts and greatness, and for his goodness to Israel in giving them such a king. *Note;* (1.) To enjoy the converse of those who are wise in the things of God is a most valuable mercy. (2.) God, as the author of all our blessings, deserves the praise of all. (3.) When we shall come to the presence of our Solomon, the Prince of Peace, we shall own how much the glory he hath prepared for his people exceeds all that eye hath seen or ear heard, or it hath entered into the heart of man to conceive.

5. They parted with mutual magnificent presents: she gave him gold, and spices, and jewels; and he made her a like return, presenting her besides with every thing curious, which she desired. *Note;* (1.) Mutual tokens are the pledges of friendship. (2.) Though we have nothing valuable to offer to the Lord Jesus, yet, if we have the willing heart, he will send us away loaded with his good things, and we can ask him nothing that he will not delight to bestow on us.

3 D

Ver.

14 ¶ Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred threescore and six talents of gold,

15 Beside *that he had* of the merchant-men, and of the traffick of the spice-merchants, and of all the kings of Arabia, and of the governors of the country.

16 ¶ And king Solomon made two hundred targets of beaten gold: six hundred *shekels* of gold went to one target.

17 And *he made* three hundred shields of beaten gold; three pound of gold went to one shield: and the king put them in the house of the forest of Lebanon.

18 ¶ Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the best gold.

19 The throne had six steps, and the top of the throne *was* round behind: and *there were* stays on either side on the place of the seat, and two lions stood beside the stays.

20 And twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other upon the six steps: there was not the like made in any kingdom.

21 ¶ And all king Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold; none were of silver: it was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon.

22 For the king had at sea a navy of Tharshish with the navy of Hiram: once in three years

came the navy of Tharshish, bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks.

23 So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom.

24 ¶ And all the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart.

25 And they brought every man his present, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and garments, and armour, and spices, horses, and mules, a rate year by year.

26 ¶ And Solomon gathered together chariots and horsemen: and he had a thousand and four hundred chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen, whom he bestowed in the cities for chariots, and with the king at Jerusalem.

27 ¶ And the king made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars made he to be as the sycamore-trees that are in the vale, for abundance.

28 ¶ And Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt, and linen yarn: the king's merchants received the linen yarn at a price.

29 And a chariot came up and went out of Egypt for six hundred *shekels* of silver, and an horse for an hundred and fifty; and so for all the kings of the Hittites, and for the kings of Syria, did they bring *them* out by their means.

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*Ver. 18. The king made a great throne of ivory*] The porch in which this throne was placed is mentioned, chap. vii. 7. and it was by far the most magnificent of all the rest, inasmuch as it was both the king's seat of judgment and the public audience, where he shewed himself either to the nobles, or to the strangers who resorted to him. It was placed in the midst of rich pillars of cedar, curiously carved and covered, or rather inlaid, with gold: the throne itself, which was in the fashion of a niche, was covered with ivory, inlaid and intermixed with curious ornaments in gold: the ascent to it was by six steps, each step being supported on either side by a small lion, and the arms of the seat with two others as large as the life. All these, and even the steps themselves, were covered with ivory and gold. We never read of ivory till about Solomon's time; who, perhaps, brought elephants out of India, or, at least, took care to have a great deal of ivory imported from thence; for in after ages we read of ivory beds and ivory palaces: at this time, however, it was nearly as precious as gold. The text says, *the like to this throne was not made in any kingdom*, (ver. 20.) i. e. in those days; for we read in afterages, that the throne of the Parthian kings

was of gold, encompassed with four golden pillars, adorned with precious stones; and that the Persian kings sat in judgment under a golden vine, and other trees of gold, the bunches of whose grapes and other fruits were made of several sorts of precious stones.

*Ver. 22. Bringing gold and silver, ivory, &c.*] See the note on chap. ix. 28. and Scheuchzer on the place.

*Ver. 29. And a chariot came up and went out of Egypt, &c.*] The Egyptian horses were highly acceptable to the Syrian princes, who, it seems, had them brought out of that country by the means of Solomon, at a considerable expence. What made them prize the Egyptian horses so highly, is not easy to determine. It cannot be imagined that they were animals peculiar to Egypt, or not known in that part of Asia, which made them so desirous to transplant such an useful creature into their countries; for we read of great numbers of them in Syria before the time of Solomon. (See 1 Sam. xiii. 5. 2 Sam. x. 18.) They might be supposed, however, much more useful in war, to which the prophet Isaiah may possibly refer, chap. xxxi. 3. when he tells the Israelites, that *the Egyptians were men, and not God; and their horses were flesh, and not spirit*: for it is well

## C H A P. XI.

*Solomon loves strange women, by whom he is drawn to idolatry. God raises up against him Hadad and Rezon, and declares to Jeroboam, by the prophet Abijah, that he shall reign over ten tribes. Jeroboam flies into Egypt. Solomon dies, after a reign of forty years.*

[Before Christ 980.]

**B**UT king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites,

well known, that they are much larger than other eastern horses, as well as more beautiful. Or they might be chosen on account of their stateliness, and being more proper for the use of those who desired to appear in great pomp and dignity. But, whatever was the reason, it seems to have been a proof of the respect paid to Solomon by the neighbouring princes, and among the rest by those of Egypt, which the Scripture speaks of, but which has not, as far as I know, been remarked by commentators, as pointed out in the present passage, and 2 Chron. i. 16, 17. though they are very clear proofs of it, if the present Egyptian usages are derived from remote antiquity in this respect, as they are in most other things; for the difficulty, we are told, of conveying horses out of Egypt, is so great, that, excepting those designed for Turks of high distinction at Constantinople, it cannot be overcome. M. Maillet himself, though Consul General of France in Egypt, and though he had powerful connections with the great men there, could never obtain this liberty; and in his eleventh letter he employs upwards of two pages in proposing projects for doing that by *subtily*, which he despaired of effecting by any other means. It is most probable, that the like difficulty existed in the time of Solomon, as the customs of Egypt are so very ancient; and, consequently, his bringing horses out of this country for himself, and for other princes at his pleasure, should be considered as a proof of the respect with which he was treated; as the fondness of the present great men of the East for the horses of Egypt, may account for the desire of the kings of the Hittites and of Syria to obtain them. See the *Observations*; the author of which, speaking of the *linen yarn*, v. 28. goes on to remark, that, according to Norden, this is one of the principal of the Egyptian merchandises, and is sent away in prodigious quantities, together with unmanufactured flax, and cotton spun. Sanutus, who lived about four hundred years since, observes, that though Christian countries abounded in his time in flax, yet the goodness of the Egyptian was such, that it was dispersed all about, even into the west. For the same reason, without doubt, the Jews, Hittites, and Syrians, anciently purchased the linen yarn of this country, though they had flax growing in their own.

*Note*: 1. Solomon, on his throne of ivory, was typical of his greater Son, seated on the great white throne of Judgment, and pronouncing sentence on the eternal state of men and angels; see Rev. xx. 2. 2. That king is truly glorious, who makes his subjects affluent and happy

Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites;

2 Of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love.

3 And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart.

under his wife administration. 3. If we shall be found citizens of the New Jerusalem, and our lot be cast among the subjects of Jesus, then the very streets of our city shall be pure gold, and the walls the richest jewels; so much will our eternal consolations and blessedness exceed all earthly joy and felicity.

## C H A P. XI.

*Ver. 1. Together with the daughter of Pharaoh*] Pharaoh's daughter, as we have before remarked, is generally supposed to have been a proselyte to the Jewish religion, and therefore Solomon incurred no fault in marrying her. But in marrying so many women besides, and these of a different religion, he committed two sins against the law; one in multiplying wives, and another in marrying those of strange nations, who still retained their idolatry. And therefore the wise son of Sirach, amidst all the encomiums which he heaps upon Solomon, could not forget this great flaw in his character. See the note on ver. 42.

*Ver. 3. Seven hundred wives, &c.*] Without knowing the customs of the princes of the East, their pomp, and sumptuousness of living, one might be tempted to wonder of what possible use was this multitude of wives and concubines. But, as Solomon was between forty and fifty years old before he ran into this excess, we cannot but suppose that he kept this multitude of women partly for state. Darius Codomanus was wont to carry along with him in his camp no less than three hundred and fifty concubines in time of war; nor was his queen offended at it; for the women used to reverence and adore her, as if she had been a goddess. Father Le Compte, in his history of China, tells us, that the emperor has a vast number of wives chosen out of the prime beauties of the country, many of whom he never so much as saw in his whole life: and, therefore, it is not improbable that Solomon, as he found his riches increase, might enlarge his expences, and endeavour to surpass all the princes of his time in this, as well as in all other kinds of pomp and magnificence.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Lord, what is man! Is this Solomon the wife? Is this Jedaiah, the beloved of the Lord? Is this the man of prayer, the builder of God's temple? How art thou fallen, Son of the Morning!

1. The cause of Solomon's sad departure from God is here mentioned. The love of women stole away his heart; insatiate lust led him to multiply his wives and concubines; and when the women of Israel no longer pleased his vitiated taste, or piously refused to minister to his guilty pleasure,

4 For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, *that* his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as *was* the heart of David his father.

5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.

6 And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as *did* David his father.

7 Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that *is* before Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the children of Ammon.

8 And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods.

9 ¶ And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice,

10 And had commanded him concerning

this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the LORD commanded.

11 Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant.

12 Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: *but* I will rend it out of the hand of thy son.

13 Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; *but* will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen.

14 ¶ And the LORD stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite: he *was* of the king's seed in Edom.

15 For it came to pass, when David was in Edom, and Joab the captain of the host was gone up to bury the slain, after he had smitten every male in Edom;

16 (For six months did Joab remain there

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he fought for others, less scrupulous, from the forbidden nations around him. On these his heart doated; and as he grew old, he grew fonder still, and could refuse them nothing. *Note;* (1.) No passion so dangerous to the soul as the criminal love of women. (2.) Every indulgence given to lewd desire, only makes those desires more insatiate.

2. The sad effects produced by his inordinate affections. His heart was drawn aside to idolatry, to which David in his most lamented days never inclined. His wives, taking advantage of his fondness and age, first seduced him to grant them the worship of their own gods, and then engaged him to join with them in the abominable service. To such a pitch of impiety it grew at last, that the high place of Chemosh confronted the very temple of God. *Note;* (1.) They who give way to one wilful sin, never know when or where they shall stop. (2.) The indulgence of fleshly lusts makes the heart brutish, and stupifies the conscience. (3.) Outward prosperity is a dangerous state: they who fare sumptuously every day, often find their table a snare, and pampered appetite their ruin. (4.) The greatest attainments, without continued watchfulness and jealousy, may be quickly lost; and, like Solomon, the highest in profession of godliness, become the foulest in their falls. (5.) Solomon's sin should be our warning: a busy devil, and a body of flesh, will never cease tempting. Let us never turn into an argument to embolden us, what is left on record as an admonition to deter us from the like sins.

2dly, Justly provoked at such base ingratitude and wilful disobedience, after such repeated instances of his kindness, God sends a terrible message to awaken him from his shameful backsliding. Since he had revolted from God, the kingdom shall revolt from him, that is, from his posterity in the next reign; and though, for the sake of the promise made to David, he would leave him one tribe, that is Judah, with which Benjamin, as adjacent, was reckoned: the other ten tribes should be given to his servant. In mercy God deferred the execution of his sentence till his son's reign, but left him to lament the approaching desolations, when all the glory that he hoped to transmit to his posterity would be so eclipsed. God had given him fair warning before; he has now only his own wickedness to blame. What effect this message had we are not told; but we hope it was, like Nathan's, the means of bringing him to repentance; and that the book of Ecclesiastes contains his repentance, and acknowledgment of his sin and folly.

*Ver. 14. Hadad the Edomite]* Hadad was a young prince of the royal family of Idumea, who fled into Ægypt when David conquered that country: for David, having obtained a signal victory under the conduct of Abishai, who, at that time commanded in chief, sent Joab afterwards with an order to kill all the males who should be found in the land. But Hadad had escaped into Ægypt, where, finding favour with the king, he married his wife's sister, and there settled.

*Ver.*

with all Israel, until he had cut off every male in Edom :)

17 That Hadad fled, he and certain Edomites of his father's servants with him, to go into Egypt; Hadad *being* yet a little child.

18 And they arose out of Midian, and came to Paran: and they took men with them out of Paran, and they came to Egypt, unto Pharaoh king of Egypt; which gave him an house, and appointed him victuals, and gave him land.

19 And Hadad found great favour in the sight of Pharaoh, so that he gave him to wife the sister of his own wife, the sister of Tahpenes the queen.

20 And the sister of Tahpenes bare him Genubath his son, whom Tahpenes weaned in Pharaoh's house: and Genubath was in Pharaoh's household among the sons of Pharaoh.

21 And when Hadad heard in Egypt that David slept with his fathers, and that Joab the captain of the host was dead, Hadad said to

Pharaoh, Let me depart, that I may go to mine own country.

22 Then Pharaoh said unto him, But what hast thou lacked with me, that, behold, thou seekest to go to thine own country? And he answered, Nothing: howbeit let me go in anywise.

23 ¶ And God stirred him up *another* adversary, Rezon the son of Eliadah, which fled from his lord Hadadezer king of Zobah:

24 And he gathered men unto him, and became captain over a band, when David slew them of *Zobab*: and they went to Damascus, and dwelt therein, and reigned in Damascus.

25 And he was an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon, beside the mischief that Hadad *did*: and he abhorred Israel, and reigned over Syria.

26 ¶ And Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephrathite of Zereda, Solomon's servant, whose mother's name *was* Zeruah, a widow woman, even he lifted up *his* hand against the king.

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*Ver. 23. Rezon, the son of Eliadah*] When David made war against Hadadezer, Rezon, one of his generals; escaped from the field of battle with the troops under his command; and, having lived for a little while by plunder and robbery, at length seized on Damascus, and reigned there. But his reign was not long, for David took Damascus as well as the other parts of Syria, and left it in subjection to his son Solomon; till God was pleased to suffer this Rezon to recover Damascus, and there re-establish himself; whence, uniting in league with Hadad, he greatly disturbed the latter part of Solomon's reign. Houbigant translates the 25th verse, *he therefore, while Solomon lived, was perpetually an adversary to Israel; while in the mean time Hadad vexed and laid Israel waste, for he reigned in Edom.*

REFLECTIONS.—Peace and plenty had for a time, with uninterrupted streams, flowed in upon the pious Solomon: but when he exchanged his wisdom for folly, and his piety for profaneness, then the current of his mercies was stayed, and God began to afflict him. Sin and suffering usually go linked together.

God stirred up adversaries against him, foreign and domestic, to avenge his quarrel, and to be a scourge for his sins. *Note*; The instruments that God uses, often mean only their own ambition, but he directs them to fulfil his purposes, and makes them subservient to his glory.

1. Hadad, the Edomite. At the beginning of Solomon's reign, he longed to return to his native country, which Pharaoh, though with great reluctance, granted; there he seems to have continued in secret, engaging the people in his favour, till now Solomon's sin gave him an oppor-

tunity to declare himself, and, though the mischief he did is not mentioned, he became, it is plain, a very troublesome neighbour. *Note*; (1.) The weakest instruments in God's hands can soon grow strong enough to be our bitter scourge. (2.) Like Hadad, the believer, though enjoying every thing on earth that his heart can wish, yet sighs for home, and faith, O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away to my eternal rest, in the bosom of Jesus!

2. Rezon was another enemy. Now towards the end of Solomon's reign, when his wickedness made him weak, seizing Damascus, he fixed there the seat of his kingdom. The remembrance of his former sufferings sharpened his resentment: he abhorred Solomon and Israel, and, in concert with Hadad, continued to harass and disturb them. *Note*; When God resolves to chastise, he will not want a rod.

*Ver. 26. And Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, &c.*] As the expence and trouble of building and repairing Millo were very great, Jeroboam, who was placed over this work, took an opportunity from thence to infuse a spirit of sedition into his brethren of the tribe of Ephraim, to complain heavily of the hard labour to which they were forced to submit, and the taxes that they were obliged to pay; and to represent the whole thing as a work of vanity, merely to gratify a proud foreign woman, and a silly, dotting king; for Solomon filled up a part of the valley of Millo to build a palace for Pharaoh's daughter. By these insinuations Jeroboam wrought in the people a disaffection to Solomon and his government. See Calmet.

*Ver.*



27 And this *was* the cause that he lifted up *his* hand against the king: Solomon built Millo, and repaired the breaches of the city of David his father.

28 And the man Jeroboam *was* a mighty man of valour: and Solomon seeing the young man that he was industrious, he made him ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph.

29 And it came to pass at that time when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him in the way; and he had clad himself with a new garment; and they two *were* alone in the field:

30 And Ahijah caught the new garment that *was* on him, and rent it *in* twelve pieces.

31 And he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee:

32 (But he shall have one tribe for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel:)

33 Because that they have forsaken me, and have worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god of the

Moabites, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon, and have not walked in my ways, to do *that which is* right in mine eyes, and to keep my statutes and my judgments, as *did* David his father.

34 Howbeit I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand: but I will make him prince all the days of his life for David my servant's sake, whom I chose, because he kept my commandments and my statutes:

35 But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand, and will give it unto thee, *even* ten tribes.

36 And unto his son will I give one tribe, that David my servant may have a light alway before me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen me to put my name there.

37 And I will take thee, and thou shalt reign according to all that thy soul desireth, and shalt be king over Israel.

38 And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do *that is* right in my sight, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did; that I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee.

39 And I will for this afflict the seed of David, but not for ever.

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*Ver. 29. The prophet Ahijah*] Ahijah was a native of Shiloh, and one of those who wrote the annals of king Solomon's reign, 2 Chron. ix. 29, and he is thought to have been the person who spoke twice to Solomon from God; once while he was building the temple, chap. vi. 12, and again when he fell into his irregularities, ver. 11. His prediction to Solomon, that he would one day be perverted by women; and to Jeroboam, that heifers (meaning the two golden calves) would alienate him from the service of God, are both taken notice of by Epiphanius *de Vita et Morte Prophet.* See Calmet.

*Ver. 30. Ahijah caught the new garment,—and rent it*] Language, it appears from the nature of the thing, from the records of history, and from the remains of the most ancient languages still subsisting, was at first extremely rude, narrow, and equivocal; so that men would be perpetually at a loss, on any new conception or uncommon incident, to explain themselves intelligibly to one another. This would necessarily set them upon supplying the deficiencies of speech, by apt and significant signs. Accordingly, in the first ages of the world, mutual converse was upheld by a mixed discourse of words and actions (hence came the eastern phrase, Exod. iv. 8. of the voice of the sign);

and use and custom, as in most other affairs of life, improving what had arisen out of necessity into ornament, this practice subsisted long after the necessity was over; especially among the eastern people, whose natural temperament inclined them to a mode of conversation which so well exercised their vivacity by motion, and so much gratified it by a perpetual representation of material images. Of this we have innumerable instances in Scripture, as well as in this passage. By these actions the prophets instructed the people in the will of God, and conversed with them in signs: and, as it likewise appears that the information by action was at this time and place a very familiar mode of conversation, this will lead us to a reasonable and true defence of the prophetic writings, and enable us to clear them from the charge of absurdity and fanaticism. The absurdity of an action consists in its being extravagant, and insignificant; but use and a fixed application made these in question both sober and pertinent. The fanaticism of an action consists in a fondness for unusual actions and foreign modes of speech; but these in question were idiomatic and familiar. Divine Legation, vol. iii. p. 99.

*Ver.*

40 Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam. And Jeroboam arose, and fled into Egypt, unto Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon.

41 ¶ And the rest of the acts of Solomon, and all that he did, and his wisdom, are they not written in the book of the acts of Solomon?

42 And the time that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years.

43 And Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David his father: and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead.

C H A P. XII.

*Rehoboam refusing the old men's counsel, ten tribes revolt from him, and make Jeroboam king. He is forbidden by Shemaiah the prophet to fight against Jeroboam. Jeroboam's idolatry.*

[Before Christ 975.]

**A**ND Rehoboam went to Shechem: for all Israel were come to Shechem to make him king.

2 And it came to pass, when Jeroboam the

son of Nebat, who was yet in Egypt, heard of it, (for he was fled from the presence of king Solomon, and Jeroboam dwelt in Egypt;)

3 That they sent and called him. And Jeroboam and all the congregation of Israel came, and spake unto Rehoboam, saying,

4 Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee.

5 And he said unto them, Depart yet for three days, then come again to me. And the people departed.

6 ¶ And king Rehoboam consulted with the old men, that stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, and said, How do ye advise that I may answer this people?

7 And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever.

*Ver. 40. Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam]* How Solomon came to know what was transacted between Ahijah and Jeroboam alone, is a question of no great difficulty; for, perhaps, the prophet made no scruple to report what he had delivered in the name of the Lord; perhaps Jeroboam himself, being puffed up with this assurance, could not contain, but told it to some of his confidants, who spread it abroad; or perhaps his servants, though they heard not the words of the prophet, yet, seeing him rend the garment into twelve parts, and give ten to him, might speak of this strange and unaccountable action, which Solomon, as soon as he came to hear of it, might easily understand; because the same prophet, very likely, had told him but just before, that the kingdom should be rent from him, and given to his servant; 1 Kings, xiv. 8.

*Shishak king of Egypt]* All the kings of Egypt, from the time of Abraham, are in the sacred history called by the name of Pharaoh, except Rameses (mentioned Gen. xvii. 11.) be the name of a king, and not a country; so that this is the first we meet with, called by his proper name, different from the rest of the Pharaohs. Who this Egyptian prince was, the learned are not agreed. The opinion is pretty general, that it was the famous Sesostris, mentioned in Herodotus; but his life could hardly be extended to this period. Our great Usher sets him a vast way backward, even to the time of the Israelites' peregrination, and some chronologers carry it further. But, be that as it may, it is very probable, that the prince had taken some offence at Solomon, otherwise he would hardly have harboured such seditious refugees as Jeroboam was.

*Ver. 42. Forty years]* Josephus, Antiq. lib. viii. cap. 3. tells us, that Solomon lived to a great age, that he reigned

eighty years, and died at ninety-four; but this is a manifest error in that historian; and our saying that the Scriptures give us an account of Solomon only while he continued in a state of piety, but that Josephus's computation takes in the whole of his life, is a poor and forced way of reconciling it. The authority of Josephus must never be put in balance with that of the Holy Scriptures, from which it may be learned that Solomon lived to the age of fifty-eight, or thereabout. Indeed, we may well presume, that his immoderate pursuit of sensual pleasures both shortened his life, and left an eternal stain upon his memory; otherwise the character which the author of Ecclesiasticus gives of this prince is very beautiful. "Solomon reigned in a peaceable time, and was honoured; for God made all quiet round about him, that he might build an house in his name, and prepare his sanctuary for ever. How wise wast thou in thy youth, and as a flood filled with understanding! Thy soul covered the whole earth, and thou filledst it with dark parables. Thy name went far unto the islands, and for thy peace thou wast beloved. The countries marvelled at thee for thy songs, and proverbs, and parables, and interpretations. By the name of the Lord, who is called the Lord God of Israel, thou didst gather gold as tin, and didst multiply silver as lead.—"But thou didst bow thy loins unto women," &c. Ecclus. xlvii. 13, &c.

C H A P. XII.

*Ver. 1. Rehoboam went to Shechem]* Shechem stood not only in the centre of the kingdom of Israel, but in the middle of the tribe of Ephraim; wherein was the greatest number of mal-contented. It was, therefore, very probably,

8 But he forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given him, and consulted with the young men that were grown up with him, and which stood before him :

9 And he said unto them, What counsel give ye that we may answer this people, who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke which thy father did put upon us lighter ?

10 And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt

thou speak unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou *it* lighter unto us ; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little *finger* shall be thicker than my father's loins.

11 And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke : my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.

12 ¶ So Jeroboam and all the people came

probably, by the management of Jeroboam, or some of his friends who durst not, perhaps, venture themselves at Jerusalem, that this city was made choice of as a place of general convention ; because they might more securely propose their grievances, which they were resolved to do, and use a greater freedom of speech than they could at Jerusalem, where the family of David was more powerful, more numerous, and better supported. See Calmet and Poole.

*Ver. 4. Thy father made our yoke grievous*] What the particular grievances were which these people desire to have redressed, we may gather from chap. iv. 7. namely, the tribute that Solomon exacted for his buildings, the expences of his family, and the maintenance of his chariots and horses. It is observable, that among all their complaints they take no notice of Solomon's idolatry, or the strange worship introduced by him ; though this, one would think, should have been reckoned one of their greatest grievances.

*Ver. 8. Consulted with the young men that were grown up with him*] It was a custom among the kings of the east, to have their sons educated among other young lords of the same age ; which, as it created a generous spirit of emulation, and both endeared the prince to the nobles, and the nobles to the prince, could not, in general, but tend greatly to the benefit of the public. So that Solomon's method and design in the education of his son was wise and well concerted, though it failed of success. These *young men*, however, were not so young but they might have known better, for Rehoboam was one and forty years old when he entered upon the kingdom : so that these nobles who were brought up with him must have been about the same age ; but they were young in experience and wisdom, and therefore they gave the king such unseasonable advice. See Patrick and Calmet.

REFLECTIONS.—The succession devolved on Rehoboam without dispute, and none seemed to contest his title : but we are not most safe, when most confident in our security.

1. The people of Israel desired the king to come to Shechem, in the tribe of Ephraim, as if they would there recognize his title ; but, in fact, with a view either to redress their grievances, or revolt from his government ; and they were probably already gained by Jeroboam's emissaries. *Note* ; Many a base design lurks under the most specious appearances.

2. Having privately sent for Jeroboam out of Ægypt, they, probably at his instigation, presented a petition for the redress of their grievances, which, whether real or not, would give him a handle to strike the stroke that he meditated. They complain not of his father's sins, but of the heaviness of their taxes, and beg that they may be lightened ; nor is it at all unlikely, that though Solomon's reign at first was so gentle, and their circumstances so affluent, yet when a thousand women had him in their power, they would, like so many harpies, fleece the poor people. *Note* ; (1.) The best government will not be without factious spirits, ready to blow the coals of sedition among the populace. (2.) The avarice of a kept mistress is insatiable. (3.) Most men are more concerned how to save their money than their souls.

3. Rehoboam's folly ruins him. Desiring three days to answer their petition, he consulted first the old men who had been trained up in the school of wisdom before Solomon. They prudently advise him to comply with the people's request ; either the demand was reasonable, or at least, in their present disposition, it were politic to appear gracious, and by one concession secure for ever their fidelity. Rehoboam relished not this advice ; therefore he consults his younger companions, who, having grown up with him in his pleasures, knew how to flatter his pride, and to advise those harsh measures which they saw most agreeable to his temper ; as if he had nothing to fear, but might, by rigour and threatenings, over-awe the people to obedience. Advice so suited to his own disposition, he failed not to pursue ; and, on the third day, roughly received the deputies of the people : far from condescending to their request, or vindicating his father's government from oppression, he threatens to make their yoke heavier, and, if they refused to draw in it, to chastise them with greater severity than his father had ever done : if they dared dispute his will, he would make them feel his power, so that his little finger should be thicker than his father's loins. This bad advice was God's just judgment on him, and conducted to the fulfilment of the prophecy of Ahijah. *Note* ; (1.) That government which subsists only by severity, is in a tottering condition ; no throne is sure, where a king reigns not in the hearts of his subjects. (2.) They are our best friends who dissuade us from rash designs ; and they are our greatest enemies who soothe our folly and flatter our pride. (3.) At court, too commonly, not the profit of the kingdom, but the pleasing of the king, is the object most in view.

to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had appointed, saying, Come to me again the third day.

13 And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the old men's counsel that they gave him;

14 And spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father *also* chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.

15 Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the LORD, that he might perform his saying, which the LORD spake by Ahijah the Shilonite unto Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

16 ¶ So when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? neither *have we* inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents.

17 But *as for* the children of Israel which dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them.

18 Then king Rehoboam sent Adoram, who *was* over the tribute; and all Israel stoned him with stones, that he died. Therefore king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem.

19 So Israel rebelled against the house of

David unto this day.

20 ¶ And it came to pass, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was come again, that they sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Israel: there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only.

21 ¶ And when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah, with the tribe of Benjamin, an hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, which were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam the son of Solomon.

22 But the word of God came unto Shemaiah the man of God, saying,

23 Speak unto Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and unto all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the remnant of the people, saying,

24 Thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel: return every man to his house; for this thing is from me. They hearkened therefore to the word of the LORD, and returned to depart, according to the word of the LORD.

25 ¶ Then Jeroboam built Shechem in mount Ephraim, and dwelt therein; and went out from thence, and built Peniel.

26 ¶ And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David:

*Ver. 16. Now see to thine own house, David*] It is observable to every reader of the history of the Jews, of how ungrateful a disposition this people was; not only to God, but to their best temporal benefactors. Surely no nation ever owed greater obligations to a prince, than the Israelites did to David; yet how soon are all his benefits forgotten, and the people, almost with one accord, revolt from his grandson!

*Ver. 18. Rehoboam sent Adoram, &c.*] He sent Adoram to treat with them, which was an act of great imprudence when they were so highly exasperated. But to send so disagreeable a man, one who was the collector of the very tribute of which they complained, was downright infatuation; for, nothing is so natural as to hate those who are in any sort the instruments of our oppression. We read in this verse, for the first time, of a king of Israel's riding in a chariot; Saul, David, and Solomon did not ride in any. But use was frequently made of them, both by the kings of Judah and Israel, after this unhappy division of the kingdom.

VOL. II.

*Ver. 22. Shemaiah the man of God*] This prophet was very well known in the reign of Rehoboam. He is supposed to have written the annals of that prince; and of what authority he was in Judah, we may gather from this passage, where he is said to have prevailed with the king and a hundred and fourscore thousand men, to lay down their arms and return home, merely by declaring that the division which had happened was by the order and appointment of God. Calmet.

*Note;* 1. They who know the great sin of rebellion, will suffer much, rather than rise to vindicate themselves, by so dangerous a measure. 2. When God's will contradicts our designs, we must patiently submit. 3. Love to our brethren should make us put up with many injuries, rather than seek a redress which may be ruinous to both. 4. If we fight against God, there can be no hope of success; it is wise therefore betimes to leave off meddling.

*Ver. 25. Jeroboam built Shechem*] i. e. Rebuilt, enlarged, and beautified it, and made it a royal city.

27 If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, *even* unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah.

28 Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

29 And he set the one in Beth-el, and the other put he in Dan.

30 And this thing became a sin: for the people went to *worship* before the one, *even* unto Dan.

31 And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi.

32 And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that *is* in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Beth-el, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Beth-el the priests of the high places which he had made.

*Ver. 27. If this people go up to do sacrifice, &c.]* Though the people were very angry with their ill-advised king, and though his ungracious reception of their tender of duty to him, and his threats of worse treatment towards them, transported and provoked them so far, as to make them withdraw their obedience from him; yet Jeroboam easily foresaw, that when they should go up again to the temple at Jerusalem, whither their religion obliged them to repair, and should hear the priest expound the law of God to them, they would quickly recollect themselves, and their consciences would smite them for withdrawing from their God, their temple, and their king.

*Ver. 28. And made two calves of gold, &c.]* The text is very plain respecting the reasons why Jeroboam set up these calves; and there can be no room to doubt that they were of the same kind with the calf set up by Aaron, concerning which we have spoken at large in our note on Exod. xxxii. 4. to which we refer, subjoining what Bishop Warburton has said upon the subject: "The fondness which the Israelites had for the superstitions of Ægypt, has been frequently before demonstrated. Nor did their fondness for Ægypt at all abate, when they came under the iron rod of their [absolute] kings, the magistrate whom they so rebelliously demanded, and who, as they pretended, was to set all things right. On the contrary, this folly grew still more inflamed, and instead of *one calf* they would have *two*, ver. 29. which Ezekiel hints at where he says, *yet she multiplied her whoredoms, in calling to remembrance the days of her youth, wherein she played the harlot in the land of Egypt*, Ezek. xxiii. 19. And so favourite a superstition were the calves of Bethel and Dan, that they still kept their ground against all those general reformation which divers of their better kings had made to purge the land of Israel from idolatry. It is true, their extreme fondness for Ægyptian superstition was not the only cause of this inveterate adherence to the calves. There were two others. They flattered themselves that this specific idolatry was not altogether so gross an affront to the God of their fathers as many of the rest. Others of their idolatries consisted in worshipping strange gods in conjunction with the God of Israel; this of the calves, only in worshipping the God of Israel in an idolatrous manner; as appears from the history of their erection, ver.

" 26—29. *It is too much for you*, says he, ver. 28. *to go up to Jerusalem*. Who were the men disposed *to go up*? None, surely, but the worshippers of the God of Israel: consequently, the calves here offered, to save them a journey, must needs be given as the representative of that God; and, if these were so, then certainly the calf in Horeb was intended for the same purpose; since, at their several consecrations, the very same title was proclaimed of all three. *Behold thy gods, O Israel, who brought thee up out of the land of Egypt*. The other cause of the perpetual adherence of the kingdom of Israel to their golden calves, was, their being erected for a prevention of re-union with the kingdom of Judah. *If this people* (says this politic contriver, ver. 27.) *go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn, &c.* The succeeding kings therefore, we may be sure, were as careful in preserving them, as he was in putting them up: so that, good or bad, the character common to them all was, that *he departed not from the sin of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin; namely, in worshipping the calves in Dan and Beth-el.* And those of them who appeared most zealous for the law of God, and utterly exterminated the idolatry of Baal, yet connived, at least, at this political worship of the calves; 2 Kings, x. 28, &c. A farther reason for Jeroboam's adopting this symbol in preference to others, will appear from observing that it was peculiar to the Ægyptians, and that he had sojourned in Ægypt as a refugee during the latter part of the reign of Solomon." See chap. xi. 40. Exod. xxxii. iv. and Div. Leg. vol. iii. p. 328.

*Ver. 31. He—made priests of the lowest of the people, &c.]* Out of the bulk of the people, &c. See Gen. xlvii. 2. Ezek. xxxiii. 2. *Of certain families which were not of the tribe of Levi.* Houbigant.

*Ver. 32. Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, &c.]* As the Jews had their feast of tabernacles on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, so Jeroboam had a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, which he instituted of his own accord. Some suppose, that as this feast was appointed by God to be observed after the gathering in of the fruits, which might be sooner ripe in Jerusalem than in the northern parts of the country, so  
Jeroboam

33 So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Beth-el the fifteenth day of the eighth month, *even* in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense.

## C H A P. XIII.

*A man of God foretels that the priests of Beth-el should hereafter be offered up by Josiah. The hand of Jeroboam is dried up, and restored at the prayer of the man of God. He turns in to an old prophet at Beth-el, and is destroyed by a lion.*

[Before Christ 975.]

**A**ND, behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the LORD unto Beth-el: and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense.

2 And he cried against the altar in the word of the LORD, and said, O altar, altar, thus saith the LORD; Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name;

and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee.

3 And he gave a sign the same day, saying, This *is* the sign which the LORD hath spoken; Behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that *are* upon it shall be poured out.

4 ¶ And it came to pass, when king Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, which had cried against the altar in Beth-el, that he put forth his hand from the altar, saying, Lay hold on him. And his hand, which he put forth against him, dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him.

5 The altar also was rent, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD.

6 And the king answered and said unto the man of God, Intreat now the face of the LORD thy God, and pray for me, that my hand may

Jeroboam might pretend that the eighth month would be a better time for it than the seventh, because then they would every where be gathered. Others imagine, that he might have this farther design in the alteration of the month, namely, that the people of Judah, when their own feast was over a month before at Jerusalem, might have an opportunity to come to his if their curiosity led them: but the plain case is, that he did every thing that he could in opposition to the established religion, and his chief intent was to alienate the people from Jerusalem. See Vatablus, and Bedford's Scripture Chron. book vi. ch. 2.

*Note;* 1. Image worship, however vindicated or palliated by the papists, is abominable idolatry. 2. They who think to secure their safety by sin, only hasten the ruin they would avoid. 3. All pretences to religious zeal, contrary to God's revealed will, are but the devices of Satan more fatally to delude men's souls.

## C H A P. XIII.

*Ver. 1—3. There came a man of God*] Commentators are not agreed who this prophet was, neither is there any foundation for so much as a conjecture. The prophecy, however, is one of the most remarkable that we have in sacred writ. It foretels an action which exactly came to pass above three hundred and forty years afterwards. It describes the circumstances of the action, and specifies the very name of the person who was to do it; and therefore every Jew who lived in the time of its accomplishment must have been convinced, one would think, of the divine authority of a religion founded upon such prophecies as this; since none but God could foresee, and consequently none but God could foretel, events at such a distance. See Le Clerc and Calmet.

*Ver. 4—6. And his hand—dried up, &c.*] The Almighty

employs here three striking proofs to convince a deluded people that HE is the true God, and not those *calves* which an idolatrous king had set up from a principle of false policy. We see the seducer punished in the first miracle, cursed in the second, and his altar rent in the third. The king was in a good state of health; the circulation of his blood was regular; the nervous fluids proper for sensation and motion visited every organ of his body; his fibres were in just tension. In this state, attempting to point out the prophet, he stretched forth the hand with which he offered incense. And instantly, *his hand which he put forth against him, dried up, so that he could not draw it back.* It does not seem as if this drying up should be understood of the arm's really becoming dry; as if all the vital fluids had ceased to flow thither, and it grew shrivelled, as is the case with those whose nerves are contracted; but that he became paralytic, and deprived of all voluntary motion. The paralytics of the New Testament will give room to treat more fully on this matter. However, the source of the nervous fluids as it were dried up; the fibres lost their tone, and the motion which depends upon them instantly ceased. It cannot be doubted, that a quick transport of passion may sometimes be the natural cause of a palsy, or of some similar maladies. But the anger of Jeroboam was a fury of short duration: as soon as he was smitten by the Almighty, he uttered not a word more against the prophet; but, suddenly changing his style, addressed him, as in ver. 6. and the prophet having prayed for him, *the king's hand was restored, and became as before.* There is no physician who does not confess this cure to be miraculous. The palsy is not cured suddenly, nor by words; it is a work of time, length of which is required to give a current to the nervous fluid, a tone to the fibres, and an equilibrium to the blood and spirits. This disorder demands a long use of various

be restored me again. And the man of God befought the LORD, and the king's hand was restored him again, and became as *it was* before.

7 ¶ And the king said unto the man of God, Come home with me, and refresh thyself, and I will give thee a reward.

8 And the man of God said unto the king, If thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place :

9 For so was it charged me by the word of the LORD, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest.

10 So he went another way, and returned

not by the way that he came to Beth-el.

11 ¶ Now there dwelt an old prophet in Beth-el; and his sons came and told him all the works that the man of God had done that day in Beth-el: the words which he had spoken unto the king, them they told also to their father.

12 And their father said unto them, What way went he? For his sons had seen what way the man of God went, which came from Judah.

13 And he said unto his sons, Saddle me the ass. So they saddled him the ass: and he rode thereon,

14 And went after the man of God,

various remedies. We see none of these applied. The God of Israel shews the apostate king, that he is the sole master of his body and of his life, as well as of the kingdom which he has given him.

*Ver. 7—9. The king said—come home with me, &c.]* The reason is obvious, why this prophet was forbidden to eat and drink with the people of Beth-el; because he was to have no familiarity with idolaters. But why he should not return by the same way that he came is not so evident. Probably God enjoined his prophet not to return by the same way, lest Jeroboam, or any other of the inhabitants of Beth-el, either to satisfy their curiosity upon an occasion so uncommon, or to do him some mischief for his severe denunciations against their altar and way of worship, might send men after him to bring him back. See Calmet and Le Clerc.

REFLECTIONS.—Jeroboam, (who himself ministered as a priest,) in the height of his impious offering, seemed to glory in his shame; his courtiers around him joined his idolatrous service, and none dared remonstrate against the horrid crime: but God will not suffer these doings to pass without a severe rebuke.

1. God sends a prophet from Judah to Beth-el; and in the midst of the crowd, near the altar where the king stood, he boldly delivered his message, and proclaimed aloud the Divine judgment upon the altar and its worshippers; that it should be defiled with dead men's bones; and that a king should arise, Josiah by name, who would offer up the idolatrous priests upon it: and, to confirm the truth of his message, he gives a sign, which immediately came to pass, an evidence of God's present displeasure, and an earnest of the threatened destruction. *Note;* (1.) Before God strikes, he warns; he willeth not that any should perish, but rather that they should come to repentance. (2.) God's prophets must not fear the faces of men, but openly and faithfully, even to the greatest, declare their message, however unwelcome or dangerous.

2. Jeroboam, enraged at what he termed such insolence, stretches out his hand, and gives command to seize the prophet; when instantly, struck of God, it dried up; a warning to him how dangerous it was to fight against God.

*Note;* (1.) Faithful rebukes often provoke proud wrath. (2.) The preachers of God's word are the especial butts of malice; but God will protect them: he that toucheth them, toucheth the apple of his eye. (3.) In the way of duty, we need fear no danger. (4.) The hearts of sinners, like the arm of Jeroboam, are, by rejecting God's warnings, given up to judicial hardness and impenitence.

3. Such a stroke, though it turned not his heart, altered for the time his tone. He now begs the prophet, whom he had threatened, to be his advocate, hoping for more success from his prayers than his own: not that he sought forgiveness of his sin, but deliverance from his affliction. The prophet charitably consents to pray for him, and at his request God restores the withered arm. *Note;* (1.) They who in their prosperity reject the warnings of God's ministers, will in their distress have recourse to their prayers. (2.) An impenitent heart ever betrays itself, in a greater concern for its sufferings than its sins. (3.) To pray for those who despitefully use and persecute us, is the way to obtain the promised beatitude, Mat. v. 10, 44.

4. Jeroboam now would reward the prophet for his prayers, but he is forbidden to eat or drink in Beth-el, and therefore refuses the king's invitation. *Note;* (1.) We must testify against the workers of iniquity, by refusing to have any fellowship with them. (2.) Neither offers nor threatenings must prevail with us to swerve a step from the path of duty.

*Ver. 11. An old prophet—and his sons came and told him]* It appears from this, that these sons of the old prophet were present when Jeroboam stood at the altar, and therefore joined in that idolatrous worship, though their father did not: who, nevertheless, was too timorous to reprove them. There are various opinions concerning this prophet of Beth-el. Some will needs have him to have been a false prophet, highly in esteem with king Jeroboam, because he prophesied to him soft things, and such as would humour him in his wickedness. Others, however, have believed, that he was a true prophet of God, though a wicked one; not unlike the famous Balaam, who sacrificed every thing to his interest; whilst others say that he was a weak one, who thought that he might innocently employ an

and found him sitting under an oak: and he said unto him, *Art* thou the man of God that camest from Judah? And he said, *I am*.

15 Then he said unto him, Come home with me, and eat bread.

16 And he said, I may not return with thee, nor go in with thee: neither will I eat bread nor drink water with thee in this place:

17 For it was said to me by the word of the LORD, Thou shalt eat no bread nor drink water there, nor turn again to go by the way that thou camest.

18 He said unto him, *I am* a prophet also as thou *art*; and an angel spake unto me by the word of the LORD, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water. *But* he lied unto him.

19 So he went back with him, and did eat bread in his house, and drank water.

20 ¶ And it came to pass, as they sat at

the table, that the word of the LORD came unto the prophet that brought him back:

21 And he cried unto the man of God that came from Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the LORD, and hast not kept the commandment which the LORD thy God commanded thee,

22 But camest back, and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place, of the which *the LORD* did say to thee, Eat no bread, and drink no water; thy carcase shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers.

23 ¶ And it came to pass, after he had eaten bread, and after he had drunk, that he saddled for him the ass, *to wit*, for the prophet whom he had brought back.

24 And when he was gone, a lion met him by the way, and slew him: and his carcase was cast in the way, and the ass stood by it, the lion also stood by the carcase.

an officious lie to bring the prophet of Judah back, who was under a prohibition indeed, but such a one as, in his opinion, related only to the house of Jeroboam, and such others as were of an idolatrous religion. See Joseph. Antiq. l. viii. c. 3.

*Ver. 24. A lion met him by the way, and slew him*] There was a wood not far from Beth-el, out of which the two she-bears came, mentioned 2 Kings, ii. 24.; and it is not unlikely that out of the same wood came the lion which slew this prophet. We have in this narrative a cluster of miracles: the lion, contrary to his nature, neither eats the carcase, tears the ass, meddles with the travellers who pass by, nor hurts the old prophet and his ass. Nor is this all: the ass, on which the man of God rode, remains quietly, without seeming to regard the lion, which stands to watch the body till this strange account is carried into the city, and the old prophet arrives at the spot. All this was, doubtless, done to convince the people, that the man of God was not slain by accident, but that the lion had been directed by a supernatural power. See Allan's Var. Hist. l. vi. c. 5. Some have thought that this prophet's offence was a small one to have met with so severe a punishment; but the true state of the case is this: the prophet from Judah had sufficient evidence of the truth of his own revelation; had sufficient cause to suspect some corrupt ends in the prophet who came to recal him; and had sufficient reason to expect an interposition of the same power that gave him the injunction to repeal it; and therefore his crime was an easy credulity, a complying with an offer merely to gratify a petulant appetite, which he knew was repugnant to a divine command. It argued a great levity, if not infidelity of his own revelation, to listen to the pretended one of another man. The lesson we are to learn

from God's severity in this instance is, not to suffer our faith to be perverted by any suggestions made against a revelation of uncontested divine authority. See Gal. i. 8, 9. Scheuchzer, and Stillington's Origines Sacrae.

REFLECTIONS.—Nothing could be more noble than the prophet's behaviour before the king; and one cannot but grieve to see him afterwards thus deluded and slain.

1. The instrument of his fall is called an old prophet, originally of Samaria, but now of Beth-el; whose dubious character makes it difficult to determine, whether he were a good or bad man. He is called a prophet; was favoured with revelations; did not attend the idolatrous worship; believed and confirmed the word of God against the altar at Beth-el; buries the prophet in his tomb; and desires to lie by his side. On the other hand, his abode in Beth-el; his permitting his sons to attend the altar; and, especially, the base deceit here put upon so good a man, would rather induce one to think, that, like Balaam, though speaking some truth, he was false and faithless. Having heard by his sons what had passed, he follows the prophet, and invites him to take some refreshment. The prophet pleads his express prohibition, but this he pretends to over-rule by a later revelation made to him, who boasts himself a prophet also, enjoining him to bring his brother back. Deceived by this pretence, the good prophet complies, and suffers for it. *Note*; (1.) False prophets are the most fatal enemies of God's people. (2.) They who seek to draw us aside from God's revealed will, however plausible their pretences, are the emissaries of hell. (3.) We may be seduced to do evil by appearances of piety, when we should not be driven into it by any fears of suffering.

2. The doom denounced on the disobedient prophet.—The instrument of his delusion is made the messenger of his



25 And, behold, men passed by, and saw the carcase cast in the way, and the lion standing by the carcase: and they came and told *it* in the city where the old prophet dwelt.

26 ¶ And when the prophet that brought him back from the way heard *thereof*, he said, It *is* the man of God, who was disobedient unto the word of the LORD: therefore the LORD hath delivered him unto the lion, which hath torn him, and slain him, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake unto him.

27 And he spake to his sons, saying, Saddle me the as. And they saddled *him*.

28 And he went and found his carcase cast in the way, and the as and the lion standing by the carcase: the lion had not eaten the carcase, nor torn the as.

29 And the prophet took up the carcase of the man of God, and laid it upon the as, and brought it back: and the old prophet came to the city, to mourn and to bury him.

30 And he laid his carcase in his own grave; and they mourned over him, *saying*, Alas, my brother!

31 And it came to pass, after he had buried him, that he spake to his sons, saying, When I am dead, then bury me in the sepulchre wherein the man of God *is* buried; lay my bones beside his bones:

32 For the saying, which he cried by the word of the LORD against the altar in Beth-el, and against all the houses of the high places which *are* in the cities of Samaria, shall surely come to pass.

33 ¶ After this thing Jeroboam returned not from his evil way, but made again of the lowest of the people priests of the high places: whosoever would, he consecrated him, and he became *one* of the priests of the high places.

34 And this thing became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut *it* off, and to destroy *it* from off the face of the earth.

his destruction. He upbraids him with his transgression, in returning contrary to his orders, and foretels his sudden and approaching death. If we enquire into so strange a transaction, we are lost. But we know that God is just in all his ways; the deceived and the deceiver are his; and we must wait till a judgment-day shall clear up every mysterious providence, and make his righteousness clear as the noon-day.

*Ver. 32. In the cities of Samaria]* How can they be called the cities of Samaria, when Samaria itself was not now built; nor had the separate kingdom of Jeroboam yet obtained that name? It is plain from hence, that the author or compiler of these books of kings lived after the time of Jeroboam, and writes of things and places as they were in his own day. He knew full well that Samaria was built by Omri, fifty years after Jeroboam, since he has himself given the account of its foundation; but he was willing to speak in the phrase then current, and to make himself intelligible to those who read him. And for this reason it is, no doubt, that in 2 Kings, xxiii. 18. the false prophet of Bethel is said to have come from Samaria, though at that time there was no city of that name. Though this solution, which is Calmet's, may be thought very satisfactory; yet, as the prophet evidently speaks with foreknowledge of future events, why may we not suppose, that by the same foreknowledge he anticipates the name of Samaria, as well as the events which were to happen there? Houbigant remarks, it ought not to seem any thing strange, that the prophet names *Samaria* before it is built; as the man of God has named *Josiah*, ver. 2. who reigned a long time after it was built. Instead of *high places which are in the cities of Samaria*, he reads, *which shall be*, &c. Upon a review of this narrative, who can fail to admire the un-

searchable secrets of the divine justice? Jeroboam revolts from his lawful sovereign, forsakes the worship of the true God, engages the people in gross idolatry, and is himself hardened by the menaces and miracles of the prophet who was sent to him: a false prophet deceives an innocent man with a lie, and draws him into an act of disobedience contrary to his inclination; yet this wicked Jeroboam, and this seducing prophet, escape immediate punishment, while the other, who might mean no ill perhaps in turning back, is slain by a lion, and his body deprived of the sepulture of his fathers. We must acknowledge indeed, that the depths of the judgments of God are an abyss which our understandings cannot fathom; but nothing certainly can be a more sensible proof of the truth of another life, and of the eternal recompences or punishments that attend it, than to see the righteous so rigorously treated here for slight offences; while, sentence not being speedily executed against evil men, we have an assurance from thence that *God shall bring every work into judgment*, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil. Eccles. xii. 14.

*Ver. 34. And this thing became sin]* Nothing can be more striking than the blindness and ingratitude of Jeroboam. Instead of relying on the promises which God had made him, to preserve the kingdom in his family, if he continued faithful; and fearing lest his subjects should forsake him if they went to sacrifice at Jerusalem; out of a false policy he set up an idolatrous worship in his kingdom, which occasioned the ruin of his family, and, at last, the ruin of the kingdom of the ten tribes. Thus men, instead of trusting to God, in the faithful discharge of their duty, for security, have recourse to ill methods, whereby they draw upon themselves at length those very misfortunes which they mean to avoid. Oftervald.

## C H A P. XIV.

*Abijah, the son of Jeroboam, is sick; Jeroboam sends his wife disguised, with presents to the prophet Ahijah, who, being forewarned of her coming, denounceth God's judgments against the house of Jeroboam; who dies after a reign of twenty-two years. Rehoboam dies after a reign of seventeen years, and is succeeded by his son Abijam.*

[Before Christ 956.]

**A**T that time Abijah the son of Jeroboam fell sick.

2 And Jeroboam said to his wife, Arise, I pray thee, and disguise thyself, that thou be

not known to be the wife of Jeroboam; and get thee to Shiloh: behold, there is Ahijah the prophet, which told me that I should be king over this people.

3 And take with thee ten loaves, and cracknels, and a cruse of honey, and go to him: he shall tell thee what shall become of the child.

4 And Jeroboam's wife did so, and arose, and went to Shiloh, and came to the house of Ahijah. But Ahijah could not see; for his eyes were set by reason of his age.

5 ¶ And the LORD said unto Ahijah, Be-

## C H A P. XIV.

*Ver. 2. Arise, I pray thee, and disguise thyself*] Jeroboam most probably sent his wife to consult the prophet at Shiloh, because this was a secret not to be intrusted with any body else; a secret which, had it been divulged, might have endangered his whole government; because, if once his subjects came to understand that he himself had no confidence in the calves which he had set up, but, in any matter of importance, had recourse to true worshippers of God, it is not to be imagined what an inducement this would have been for them to forsake these senseless idols, and to return to the worship of the God of Israel, whom they had imprudently forsaken. The queen then was the only person in whom he could have confidence. As a mother, he knew that she would be diligent in her inquiry; and as a wife, faithful in her report; but there were sundry reasons why he might desire her to disguise herself: for though Shiloh lay within the confines of Ephraim, yet there is sufficient ground to think, that it was subject to the house of David, and belonged to the kingdom of Judah. It was certainly nearer Jerusalem than Shechem, which Rehoboam had lately fortified, and made his place of residence: and therefore Jeroboam thought it not safe to venture his queen in a place under his rival's government, without her putting on some disguise. He knew too, that the prophet Ahijah was much offended with him for the great idolatry he had introduced; and therefore he might think, that if the prophet perceived her to be his wife, he would either tell her nothing, or make things much worse than they were. The way therefore to come at the truth, was, as he thought, to do what he did: but herein appears his infatuation, that he should not think the person whom he held capable of resolving him in the fate of his son, able to see through this guile and disguise.

*Ver. 3. Take with thee ten loaves, &c.*] What the presents were which were made to the ancient prophets, we are not always told; but all the particulars of that made to Ahijah, by Jeroboam's queen, are here given us. I very much question, however, whether that was any part of the disguise that she assumed, as Bishop Patrick supposes, who imagines that she presented him with such things as might make the prophet think her to be a country woman, rather than a courtier. It undoubtedly was not a present which proclaimed royalty; that would have been contrary to Jero-

boam's intention of her being unknown. But it does not appear to have been in the estimation of the East a present only fit for a countrywoman to have made; for D'Arvieux tells us, that when he waited upon an Arab emir, his mother and sister, to gratify whose curiosity that visit was made, sent him early in the morning, after his arrival in the camp, a present of pastry, honey, fresh butter, with a bason of sweetmeats of Damascus. Now this present differs but little from that of Jeroboam's wife, who carried loaves, cracknels, or other cakes enriched with seeds, (a species of bread then and still very common in the East,) and a cruse of honey, and was made by princesses, that avowed their quality. See *Observations*, p. 236. where the reader will find more respecting the custom of making presents in the East; and p. 133, where the author endeavours at large to confirm the meaning which he gives to the word נקדים *nikkuddim*, cracknels.

*Ver. 4. Ahijah could not see, for his eyes were set by reason of his age*] The more nearly we examine the structure of the human body, and the more attentively we consider it, the more we are struck with admiration. All, even the hardest parts, as the bones and cartilages, derive their origin from a fluid matter: but in old age the softest membranes grow hard, and the fluids themselves become subject to the laws of petrification. The smaller tubes, through which the fluids pass, are tender and flexible in youth, but acquire solidity till the age of perfection; and, at last, in old age harden and even ossify in several parts. Hence the long train of maladies, hence old age, which is itself a malady. The eyes, which are a real *camera obscura* constructed with infinite art, have not only the faculty of moving in every sense, in children, in adults, and in grown men; but by a certain subtle mechanism, the retina sometimes draws near, sometimes removes from the crystalline, according as the objects are more or less distant: and nature, without our knowing it, and even in spite of us, does in the highest perfection what art effects in a *camera obscura*, by drawing near, or removing, a paper or cloth from the glass through which the light enters. But in decrepid age this painting naturally goes off, *the eyes grow dark*, like those of Ahijah, the fibres lose their flexibility, the eyes wrinkle, and at length we see distant objects more distinctly than those which are near; and when the space which is between the retina and crystalline comes to be so blocked up, as that the rays of light can no more

hold, the wife of Jeroboam cometh to ask a thing of thee for her son; for he *is* sick: thus and thus shalt thou say unto her: for it shall be, when she cometh in, that she shall feign herself *to be* another woman.

6 And it was *so*, when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet, as she came in at the door, that he said, Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; why feignest thou thyself *to be* another? for I *am* sent to thee *with* heavy tidings.

7 Go, tell Jeroboam, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Forasmuch as I exalted thee from among the people, and made thee prince over my people Israel,

8 And rent the kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it thee: and *yet* thou hast not been as my servant David, who kept my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart, to do *that* only *which* was right in mine eyes;

9 But hast done evil above all that were before thee: for thou hast gone and made thee other gods, and molten images, to provoke me to anger, and hast cast me behind thy back:

10 Therefore, behold, I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam him that pisseth against the wall, *and* him that is shut up and left in Israel, and will take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam, as a man taketh away dung, till it be all gone.

11 Him that dieth of Jeroboam in the city shall the dogs eat; and him that dieth in the

field shall the fowls of the air eat: for the LORD hath spoken it.

12 Arise thou therefore, get thee to thine own house: *and* when thy feet enter into the city, the child shall die.

13 And all Israel shall mourn for him, and bury him: for he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave, because in him there is found *some* good thing toward the LORD God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam.

14 Moreover the LORD shall raise him up a king over Israel, who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam that day: but what? even now.

15 For the LORD shall smite Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water, and he shall root up Israel out of this good land, which he gave to their fathers, and shall scatter them beyond the river, because they have made their groves, provoking the LORD to anger.

16 And he shall give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, who did sin, and who made Israel to sin.

17 ¶ And Jeroboam's wife arose, and departed, and came to Tirzah: *and* when she came to the threshold of the door, the child died;

18 And they buried him; and all Israel mourned for him, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by the hand of his servant Ahijah the prophet.

19 ¶ And the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, how he warred, and how he reigned, behold, they *are* written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

centre in this thin tunic, the person then becomes blind.

*Note:* (1.) The ministers of God must not be courtiers, but deliver their message to the great, however disagreeable, with boldness and freedom. (2.) Disguises may pass upon men whose dim sight cannot see through the veil; but no covering can hide the hypocrite from the eye of God. (3.) They who hope to recommend themselves to God by their formal duties and services, like Jeroboam's wife with her present, will find a terrible disappointment, when, among hypocrites, their portion shall be allotted in the outer darkness.

*Ver. 10.* *And him that is shut up and left in Israel*] *That which in Israel seems laid up and safe.* Houbigant.

*Ver. 13.* *Because in him there is found some good thing toward the Lord*] It appears evidently from the same mode of expression, 2 Chron. xix. 3., that the meaning

here must be, that he was the only person in the family who had expressed a dislike to the worship of the calves; an inclination and intention to abolish it whenever he should come into power; and to admit, if not oblige, his subjects to go up to Jerusalem to worship as the Lord prescribed.

*Ver. 14.* *But what? even now*] Houbigant renders this, *and at this very time*; observing that the Hebrew particle *meb*, is not always interrogative.

*Ver. 15.* *The river*] *The river Euphrates.*

*Ver. 19.* *The Book of the Chronicles*] By this is meant a book, in which were contained the annals of the kings of Israel; and not either of those which we have under this title.

REFLECTIONS.—Jeroboam's wife is bid to carry to her husband tidings of bitter woe. The God of Israel, whom he

20 And the days which Jeroboam reigned were two and twenty years: and he slept with his fathers, and Nadab his son reigned in his stead.

21 ¶ And Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah. Rehoboam was forty and one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD did chuse out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there. And his mother's name was Naamah an Ammonitess.

22 And Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins which they had committed, above all that their fathers had done.

23 For they also built them high places and images, and groves, on every high-hill, and under every green tree.

24 And there were also sodomites in the land: and they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD cast out before the children of Israel.

25 ¶ And it came to pass in the fifth year of king Rehoboam, that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem:

26 And he took away the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house; he even took away all: and he took away all the shields of gold which Solomon had made.

he had so dishonoured, and whose people he had so injured, will avenge their quarrel upon him.

1. He upbraids him with his base ingratitude, and impious apostacy. God, who had so highly distinguished him, might justly expect a return of fidelity; but lo! he had exceeded all that went before him in wickedness. David had sins, great ones; but he never turned unto idols. Solomon for a time was unfaithful, but (we trust) repented: even Saul added not this to his iniquities. But Jeroboam had opened the flood-gates of idolatry, and not only sinned himself, but involved the people in this mortal sin. *Note;* (1.) The greater the mercies we have received, the greater the guilt of unfaithfulness to God. (2.) They who cause others to sin, heap up the measure of vengeance against themselves.

2. He denounces the approaching ruin on Jeroboam's house, chap. xv. 29. His family should be utterly extirpated, and their dead bodies lie unburied, as dung on the earth. Nor was the day distant when God would raise up another king to the throne, who should execute his vengeance: *even now* the judgment was at the door. *Note;* (1.) Sudden destruction often overtakes sinners in the midst of their career. (2.) Their carcases in the day of God shall be thus cast out, as *an abhorring to all flesh*, Isaiah, lvi. 24.

3. The death of the heir of his throne (who was sick) as soon as she reached the city, should be the prelude and earnest of the judgments which approached. In one thing he shall be distinguished from his ungodly relations; he shall go to his grave with honour; and this, because in him alone some good thing was found towards the Lord God of Israel. When all the rest apostatized, he shewed the gracious symptoms of a heart inclined to God, and which cleaved to his worship. *Note;* (1.) Every gracious desire that God implants he will take notice of. (2.) Youthful piety is peculiarly amiable. (3.) A little grace in bad times shines bright. The light is heightened by the dark shades around it. (4.) God in mercy removes the righteous from the evil to come. (5.) The darling child is often snatched away for a warning to the family. (6.) The

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soul which is early ripe for glory, God gathers, like a sweet flower, into his bosom.

4. Though the king shall bear the heaviest burden, his apostate subjects, who followed his wicked ways, shall not be unpunished. The prophet foretels their tumultuous, unsettled state, torn with faction, and frequently changing their kings, till, weakened by intestine division, they would become an easier prey to foreign enemies, and be carried away captive beyond the river Euphrates. *Note;* (1.) Though we may have examples never so great to plead for our sin, it will not screen us from punishment. (2.) Ruin is not far from a kingdom when righteousness is expelled, and iniquity triumphant.

5. The prophesy begins to receive an immediate accomplishment in the death of Abijah, who, according to the word of the prophet, died as soon as Jeroboam's wife entered the palace at Tirzah. His amiable dispositions, as well as his dignity, made him much lamented, and occasioned, no doubt, dire forebodings of the approaching evil. *Note;* Death pays no more respect to palaces, than to the clay-built hut.

6. Jeroboam himself, after a reign of twenty-two years, finished a wicked life by a miserable death, see 2 Chron. xiii. 20; struck with some dire disease, which brought him to his grave, and leaving his tottering crown to his unhappy son Nadab, who, following his father's wicked ways, soon filled up the measure of the iniquity of his family.

*Ver. 25. Shishak, king of Egypt*] It may seem something strange, that Shishak, who was so nearly allied to Rehoboam, should come up against him and take his royal city; but Rehoboam, we must remember, was not the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and therefore no relation to Shishak. But even had he been never so nearly related, as kingdom, we know, *never marry*; so it is likely that Jeroboam, who had lived long in Egypt, stirred up Shishak to invade his rival, that he might thereby establish himself in his new kingdom: and it was for this reason, that when the armies of Egypt had taken the fenced cities of Judah, they

3 F

return'd

27 And king Rehoboam made in their stead brazen shields, and committed *them* unto the hands of the chief of the guard, which kept the door of the king's house.

28 And it was *so*, when the king went into the house of the LORD, that the guard bare them, and brought them back into the guard-chamber.

29 ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Rehoboam, and all that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

30 And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all *their* days.

31 And Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David. And his mother's name *was* Naamah an Ammonitess. And Abijam his son reigned in his stead.

## CHAP. XV.

*Abijam reigns over Judah three years; Aja forty and one. He is succeeded by Jehoshaphat. Nadab reigns over Israel two years; Baasha, having made a conspiracy, kills him and all the family of Jeroboam, and reigns in Israel.*

[Before Christ 955.]

**N**OW in the eighteenth year of king Jeroboam the son of Nebat reigned Abijam over Judah.

2 Three years reigned he in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was* Maachah, the daughter of Abithalom.

3 And he walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father.

4 Nevertheless for David's sake did the LORD his God give him a lamp in Jerusalem,

returned without giving Jeroboam, or his dominions, the least disturbance. See Bishop Patrick.

*Ver. 27. Rehoboam made in their stead brazen shields.]* This shews to what a low condition the kingdom of Judah was reduced. Those shields were a matter of state and grandeur; and therefore it concerned them, if they were able, to have them of the same value that they were before, as they were carried before the king to the house of the Lord: it seemed likewise to be a matter of religion, that their value should not be diminished. Now, in making these three hundred shields, we are told, chap. x. 17. three pounds of gold went to one shield. This, at four pounds per ounce, or forty-eight pounds sterling to the pound, amounts to no more than forty-three thousand two hundred pounds; and therefore it was a miserable case that they were reduced from so much wealth to so much poverty, that neither reasons of state nor of religion could raise so small a sum on so great an occasion. See Bedford's Scrip. Chronol.

*Ver. 30. There was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all their days.]* But how does this agree with chap. xii. 23, &c. where God commands Rehoboam and his people not to fight against the Israelites? We must observe, that though the Jews were commanded not to make war upon the Israelites, yet they were not commanded not to defend themselves in case the Israelites should make war upon them: and considering that they were now become two rival nations, they might upon the borders be continually endeavouring to gain ground upon each other, and so run into frequent acts of hostility without ever once engaging in a pitched battle.

REFLECTIONS.—The histories of the kingdom of Judah and Israel are throughout this book intermixed. Jeroboam's reign was near five years longer than Rehoboam's; but, to finish his history, his death is first recorded.

1. The account of Rehoboam contains nothing either great

or good, but gives just suspicion, that the tenor of his government was as weak and wicked as the opening of it was rash and impolitic. He began his reign when, if ever, he might have been wise, at the age of forty-one, having enjoyed all the advantages of the best instruction; but he imitated his father's aged folly, rather than his early wisdom. He reigned (not half so long as his predecessors) but seventeen years, and these disturbed by perpetual wars or bickerings with his rival Jeroboam. His mother was an Ammonitess, a bad wife for a king of Israel; and her son partook more of the temper of Ammon, than the spirit of Abraham. *Note;* Ungodly connections often entail miseries on the latest posterity. He died at Jerusalem, where he reigned, and left the crown to Abijam, a bad son of a bad father.

2. The account of his subjects is bad, very bad. Led by his ill example, or not restrained by his negligence, far from being shocked at their neighbours' idolatry, they quickly imitated them, and committed abominations even beyond their fathers' worst days; provoking God to jealousy by their images and hill-altars, and forsaking the house of his glory; giving up their bodies to abominable and unnatural lusts, as well as their souls to spiritual adultery; imitating all the profane rites, and following all the detestable lewdness of the accursed Canaanites, whom God had cast out before them. *Note;* (1.) They grow most abandoned, who fall from the profession of religion that they once made. (2.) When men provoke God by their sins, he, in just judgment, gives them up to their own hearts' lusts. (3.) If Canaan for such things suffered, shall Israel escape? no, in no wise.

3. God begins his visitations for their sins, by giving them up to Shishak king of Egypt, who, in the fifth year of Rehoboam, after plundering the country, besieged Jerusalem, and was only to be bought off by the surrender of all the treasures which David and Solomon had amassed: such passing vanities are this world's riches!

to set up his son after him, and to establish Jerusalem :

5 Because David did *that which was right* in the eyes of the LORD, and turned not aside from any *thing* that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.

6 And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all the days of his life.

7 ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Abijam, and all that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? And there was war between Abijam and Jeroboam.

8 And Abijam slept with his fathers : and they buried him in the city of David : and Afa his son reigned in his stead.

9 ¶ And in the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel reigned Afa over Judah.

10 And forty and one years reigned he in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was* Maachah, the daughter of Abishalom.

11 And Afa did *that which was right* in the eyes of the LORD, as *did* David his father.

12 And he took away the sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made.

13 And also Maachah his mother, even her he removed from *being* queen, because she had made an idol in a grove ; and Afa destroyed her idol, and burnt *it* by the brook Kidron.

14 But the high places were not removed : nevertheless Afa's heart was perfect with the LORD all his days.

15 And he brought in the things which his father had dedicated, and the things which himself had dedicated, into the house of the LORD, silver, and gold, and vessels.

16 ¶ And there was war between Afa and Baasha king of Israel all their days.

17 And Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah, and built Ramah, that he might not suffer any to go out or come in to Afa king of Judah.

18 Then Afa took all the silver and the gold *that were* left in the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and delivered them into the hand of

CHAP. XV.

*Ver. 10. And his mother's name was Maachah*] According to the margin of our Bibles, *mother* signifies the same here as *grandmother*. Houbigant thinks that it should be rendered *Anab*.

*Ver. 13. Maachah his mother—he removed from being queen, because she had made an idol in a grove*] The word which we render *idol*, is in the original מַעֲלָזִים *mepletzet*, the signification of which has been doubted. The Vulgate, however, has in a great measure cleared the matter, by rendering the passage that this queen-mother was the high priestess in the sacrifices of Priapus ; and when the LXX, according to the Vatican copy, informs us, that she held an assembly in this grove, and that her son Afa cut down all the close harbours or places of retreat ; as the word Συνοδος which we render *assembly*, may have a more carnal meaning ; and the other, κρυπταρις properly signifies *hiding places*, or places of retirement for wicked and obscene purposes ; we may hence infer, that both the Latin and Greek translators took the idol of Maachah to be some lewd and lascivious deity, which loved to be worshipped in filthy and abominable actions ; and that this could be no other than the Roman Priapus, whose worshippers were chiefly women, seems to be implied in the very etymology of the word, which properly signifies *terriculamentum*, or a device to frighten things away ; for this was exactly the office of Priapus in all gardens. Such is the opinion of Mr. Jurieu, in his *Hist. des Dogmes et Culte*, part. iv. chap. 2. with whom Parkhurst in some measure agrees, though he differs

in the derivation. See his *Lexicon* on פִּלְסֵי, and Vossius de *Orig. et Prog. Idol.* lib. ii. cap. xiv. and lxxiv.

*Ver. 14. But the high places were not removed*] This seems to be contradicted by 2 Chron. xiv. 3. where we are told that Afa took away the altars of the strange gods, and the high places ; but for the right understanding and reconciling this, we may observe, that there were two kinds of high places, the one tolerated for religious purposes, the other abominable from their first institution. The one frequented by devout worshippers, the other made the receptacle of the wicked and idolatrous only. Afa took away the latter ; but those where God alone was worshipped had obtained so long, and were looked upon with so sacred a veneration, that, for fear of giving a general offence, though he knew they were contrary to a divine injunction, he would not venture to abolish them. The truth is, these high places were famous for some miraculous event ; had either been places of abode for the ark of the Lord, or such as some prophet or patriarch of old had rendered venerable by his prayers and sacrifices ; and therefore they were looked upon as consecrated to the service of God. However, when Hezekiah arose, he had the courage to effect a thorough reformation. See *Calmet*.

*Ver. 18. Then Afa took all the silver and the gold, &c.*] In cases of extreme danger, it was always held lawful to employ sacred things in the service of one's country ; but there was no such necessity in this case. God had appeared wonderfully in Afa's defence against an enemy much more powerful than Baasha was ; nay, he had promised

his servants: and king Afa sent them to Ben-hadad, the son of Tabrimon, the son of Hezion, king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying,

19 *There is a league between me and thee, and between my father and thy father: behold, I have sent unto thee a present of silver and gold; come and break thy league with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me.*

20 So Ben-hadad hearkened unto king Afa, and sent the captains of the hosts which he had against the cities of Israel, and smote Ijon, and Dan, and Abel-beth-maachah, and all Cinneroth, with all the land of Naphtali.

21 And it came to pass, when Baasha heard thereof, that he left off building of Ramah, and dwelt in Tirzah.

22 Then king Afa made a proclamation throughout all Judah; none *was* exempted: and they took away the stones of Ramah, and the timber thereof, wherewith Baasha had builded; and king Afa built with them Geba of Benjamin, and Mizpah.

23 ¶ The rest of all the acts of Afa, and all his might, and all that he did, and the cities which he built, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? Nevertheless in the time of his old age, he was diseased in his feet.

24 And Afa slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father: and Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his stead.

25 ¶ And Nadab the son of Jeroboam began to reign over Israel in the second year of Afa king of Judah, and reigned over Israel two years.

26 And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin.

27 ¶ And Baasha the son of Ahijah, of the house of Issachar, conspired against him; and Baasha smote him at Gibbethon, which *belonged* to the Philistines; for Nadab and all Israel laid siege to Gibbethon.

mised him his protection at all times, and success in all his undertakings, if he would but adhere to his service; and yet, forgetting all this, he strips the temple of its treasure, and bribes a heathen prince to come to his assistance, and break his league to another to whom he stood engaged; so that here were three offences in this one act of Afa. 1. He alienated things consecrated to God without necessity. 2. He did this out of a carnal fear, and a distrust of that God whose power and goodness he had lately experienced; and 3. He did it with an ill intent to hire Ben-hadad, in breach of his league and covenant with Baasha.

*Ver. 19. Behold, I have sent unto thee a present*] The presenting of gifts is one of the most universal methods of doing honour. The sending presents to princes to engage them to help the distressed, has been practised in the east in late times, as well as in the days of Afa. To us it may appear strange, that a present should be thought capable of inducing one prince to break with another, and engage himself in war; but it was anciently sufficient: so we find in the *Gesta Dei per Francos*, that an eastern nobleman, who had the custody of a castle called *Hafarth*, quarrelling with his master, the prince of Aleppo, and finding a want of foreign aid, sent *presents* to Godfrey of Boulogne to induce him to assist him. What they were, we are not told; but gold and silver, the things which Afa sent Ben-hadad, were frequently sent in those times to the Crusade princes, and might probably be sent on this occasion to Godfrey. Presents were frequently sent to the great, before those who sent them made their appearance. See *Observations*, p. 246.

*Ver. 27. And Baasha, the son of Ahijah*] See note on ver. 2. of the next chapter.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Afa succeeded to the throne of Israel in the twentieth year of Jeroboam, and reigned long and successfully over Judah.

1. His piety is recorded to his honour. He copied after the illustrious David in all that was excellent, and was constantly and zealously attached to the worship of God all his days. His heart was right with God, and therefore he laboured to suppress all wickedness, and to reform his deluded subjects. The men of unnatural propensities were removed: either they were put to death, or they fled out of the land for fear. Such abominations a good prince will never suffer among his subjects. The idols which his father made, he destroyed; and because his grandmother Maachah was the great patroness of idolatry, he spared not to put her and her idol to public shame. He burnt it, cast the dust into the brook Kidron, and, degrading her from her dignity, removed her from court, lest her bad example should corrupt it, and that after such an example none might hope to be connived at. He also enriched God's house with the treasures that he had dedicated from the spoil of the Ethiopians; see 2 Chron. xiv. 13, 14. as well as those which his father had dedicated out of the spoils of Jeroboam, 2 Chron. xiii. 21. *Note; A good king, who would promote religion among his subjects, must begin with discountenancing all wickedness at court.*

2. His faults are faithfully transmitted. The high places, such of them at least as had been resorted to before the temple was built, were left: he feared that it might be dangerous to attempt rooting out what long custom had consecrated. His war with Baasha put him on a sinful project, to cause a diversion in his favour, and recover Ramah. He robbed the treasury of God's house.

28 Even in the third year of Afa king of Judah did Baasha slay him, and reigned in his stead.

29 And it came to pass, when he reigned, that he smote all the house of Jeroboam; he left not to Jeroboam any that breathed, until he had destroyed him, according unto the saying of the LORD, which he spake by his servant Ahijah the Shilonite:

30 Because of the sins of Jeroboam which he sinned, and which he made Israel sin, by his provocation wherewith he provoked the LORD God of Israel to anger.

31 Now the rest of the acts of Nadab, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

32 ¶ And there was war between Afa and Baasha king of Israel all their days.

33 In the third year of Afa king of Judah began Baasha the son of Ahijah to reign over all Israel in Tirzah, twenty and four years.

34 And he did evil in the sight of the LORD,

and walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin.

CHAP. XVI.

*Zimri conspires against Baasha, and kills him: the people of Israel make Omri king, and besiege Zimri in Tirzah: Zimri burns himself in the king's palace. Omri overcomes Tibni, and is succeeded by his son Abab, who reigns twenty-two years. Joshua's curse upon the builder of Jericho fulfilled.*

[Before Christ 929.]

**T**HEN the word of the LORD came to Jehu the son of Hanani against Baasha, saying,

2 Forasmuch as I exalted thee out of the dust, and made thee prince over my people Israel; and thou hast walked in the way of Jeroboam, and hast made my people Israel to sin, to provoke me to anger with their sins;

3 Behold, I will take away the posterity of Baasha, and the posterity of his house; and will make thy house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

of the dedicated things, and sent them to Ben-hadad, in order to engage him to a wicked violation of his league with Baasha. The contrivance was successful; Ben-hadad consented; and whilst, to oppose his invasion, the king of Israel drew off his forces, Afa by proclamation summoned all his subjects, who went up, and brought away all the stones and timber of Ramah, and utterly demolished the place. But God rebuked him for his sin, 2 Chron. xvi. 7, 8, 9. and he suffered for it by the continual wars in which he was involved. *Note;* Though a sinful project may succeed, the success will be embittered.

3. He strengthened his kingdom by new cities which he built; two with materials brought from Ramah, and others besides, v. 23. To him, probably, the more pious Israelites returned, and chose their abode under his rule, rather than dwell in the tents of ungodliness. But his greatness or goodness prevented not the infirmities of old age coming upon him; till death, after a glorious reign of forty-one years, removed him to a better kingdom, whilst his pious son Jehoshaphat, who succeeded him, made his loss in Judah less sensibly felt.

2dly, We are led to turn our eyes from the flourishing state of Judah to the distractions of Israel. Nadab, the heir of his father's crimes, as well as his crown, walked in the established idolatry; and God's patience with the house of Jeroboam being ended, he raised up Baasha to conspire against him. Baasha was, probably, an officer in his army; and whilst Nadab besieged Gibbethon, which the Philistines had seized, he slew him in the camp, and was by the army proclaimed king in his stead. His first care was, to extirpate the family of Jeroboam, with an intention only to secure the kingdom to himself; but was made herein God's instrument to execute the threatened

judgment on that ungodly house. But, though he removed his rivals, he took no care to depart from their sins, and so inherited the same curse that he had executed upon them. *Note;* (1.) God's patience has its bounds: he will say to the sinner, My spirit shall no longer strive. (2.) The path of sin leads down to death and hell.

CHAP. XVI.

*Ver. 1. Saying] That he should say to him. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 2. Forasmuch as I exalted thee] It may be asked, how Baasha's exaltation to the kingdom of Israel can be ascribed to God, when it is manifest that he gained it by his own treachery and cruelty? To which it may be replied, that though the manner of invading the kingdom was from himself and his own wicked heart, yet the translation of the kingdom from Nadab to Baasha, simply considered, was from God, who by his decree and Providence ordered it, and so disposed of all occasions, and of the hearts of all the soldiers and the people, that Baasha should have opportunity to execute his judgments upon Nadab, and such success thereupon, as should procure him an immediate and quiet possession of the kingdom. So that his accession to the kingdom was from the divine decree, though the form and manner of his accession was from himself, from his own ambition and covetousness; and, as it was wicked and cruel, is therefore charged upon him, ver. 7. as a wilful murder.*

*Ver. 3. Make thy house like the house of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat] This threat was exactly verified; for as Nadab, the son of Jeroboam, reigned but two years, so Elah, the son of Baasha, reigned no more; and as Nadab was killed by the sword, so was Elah. Thus remarkable was the similitude between Jeroboam and Baasha in their lives and*



4 Him that dieth of Baasha in the city shall the dogs eat; and him that dieth of his in the fields shall the fowls of the air eat.

5 ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Baasha, and what he did, and his might, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

6 So Baasha slept with his fathers, and was buried in Tirzah: and Elah his son reigned in his stead.

7 And also by the hand of the prophet Jehu the son of Hanani came the word of the LORD against Baasha, and against his house, even for all the evil that he did in the sight of the LORD, in provoking him to anger, with the work of his hands, in being like the house of Jeroboam; and because he killed him.

8 ¶ In the twenty and sixth year of Afa king of Judah began Elah the son of Baasha to reign over Israel in Tirzah, two years.

9 And his servant Zimri, captain of half *bis* chariots, conspired against him, as he was in Tirzah, drinking himself drunk in the house of Arza steward of *bis* house in Tirzah.

10 And Zimri went in and smote him, and killed him, in the twenty and seventh year of Afa king of Judah, and reigned in his stead.

11 ¶ And it came to pass, when he began to reign, as soon as he sat on his throne, *that* he slew all the house of Baasha: he left him

not one that pisseth against a wall, neither of his kinsfolks, nor of his friends.

12 Thus did Zimri destroy all the house of Baasha, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake against Baasha by Jehu the prophet,

13 For all the sins of Baasha, and the sins of Elah his son, by which they sinned, and by which they made Israel to sin, in provoking the LORD God of Israel to anger with their vanities.

14 Now the rest of the acts of Elah, and all that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

15 ¶ In the twenty and seventh year of Afa king of Judah did Zimri reign seven days in Tirzah. And the people *were* encamped against Gibbethon, which *belonged* to the Philistines.

16 And the people *that were* encamped heard say, Zimri hath conspired, and also hath slain the king: wherefore all Israel made Omri, the captain of the host, king over Israel that day in the camp.

17 And Omri went up from Gibbethon, and all Israel with him, and they besieged Tirzah.

18 And it came to pass, when Zimri saw that the city was taken, that he went into the palace of the king's house, and burnt the king's house over him with fire, and died,

in their deaths, in their sons and in their families! See Bishop Patrick.

REFLECTIONS.—Let not Baasha expect peace in his sin, nor hope to secure to his posterity that kingdom of which his idolatry rendered him so unworthy.

1. God sends a prophet to reprove and threaten him. Greatly had God exalted him; for, though his ambition plotted the conspiracy, it was God's over-ruling providence that gave it success. He had been raised to reign over God's people, who were not yet utterly abandoned by him; but, instead of being warned by the judgments on his predecessors, he had made their images his own by his adherence to them; had, like them, led the people into idolatry, and stood chargeable with the blood of the house of Jeroboam, whose destruction, though just-respecting God, did not exculpate him from the treason and murder. Therefore, the judgments of which he had been the executioner, should for the like sins return on his own house. *Note;* (1.) God warns before he strikes. (2.) Those who harden their hearts, bring their blood upon their own heads.

2. The sentence pronounced is executed; but not

during Baasha's reign: like Jeroboam, though in continual wars, and unsuccessful too, yet he came to his grave by a natural death: but the iniquity is laid up for his children. His son Elah was scarcely settled on his throne, before one of his own officers, as Baasha had done, formed a conspiracy; and while the king was drunk, carousing at the house of Arza his steward, Zimri slew him; and, to pave the way to the throne, cut off not only all his family, but his friends, who might attempt to avenge his murder. Thus was the prophecy of Jehu fulfilled. *Note;* (1.) A drunkard lays himself open to the stroke of death by a thousand accidents; and how terrible must it be to be hurried drunk to the tribunal of God! (2.) God's word never falls to the ground; his threatenings are no bugbears.

*Ver. 18. And burned the king's house over him with fire*] Some interpreters would rather have it, that Omri set the royal palace on fire, in order to burn Zimri in it, who had retired thither. The Hebrew may, indeed, bear that construction, but the other seems the most likely interpretation; nor has prophane history neglected to preserve the memory of some princes who have chosen to die

19 For his sins which he sinned in doing evil in the sight of the LORD, in walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he did, to make Israel sin.

20 Now the rest of the acts of Zimri, and his treason that he wrought, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

21 ¶ Then were the people of Israel divided into two parts: half of the people followed Tibni the son of Ginath, to make him king; and half followed Omri.

22 But the people that followed Omri prevailed against the people that followed Tibni the son of Ginath: so Tibni died, and Omri reigned.

23 ¶ In the thirty and first year of Afa king of Judah began Omri to reign over Israel, twelve years: six years reigned he in Tirzah.

24 And he bought the hill Samaria of Shemer for two talents of silver, and built on the hill, and called the name of the city which he built, after the name of Shemer, owner of the hill, Samaria.

25 ¶ But Omri wrought evil in the eyes of the LORD, and did worse than all that were before him.

26 For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in his sin where-

with he made Israel to sin, to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger with their vanities.

27 ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Omri which he did, and his might that he shewed, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

28 So Omri slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria: and Ahab his son reigned in his stead.

29 ¶ And in the thirty and eighth year of Afa king of Judah began Ahab the son of Omri to reign over Israel: and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty and two years.

30 And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him.

31 And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him.

32 And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria.

33 And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.

in this manner, rather than fall by the sword; whereof Sardanapalus is one of the most ancient and most notorious examples. Calmet.

*Ver. 24. He bought the hill Samaria of Shemer*] It is surprising, that when Omri bought this place of Shemer, whereon he intended to build a city, he did not call it by his own name; unless we may suppose, that when Shemer sold it, he let him have the greater bargain of it upon condition that it should be continued in its first owner's name. However this be, it is certain, that as Samaria was situated in the midst of the tribe of Ephraim, on a fruitful and pleasant hill, it soon became the regal and capital city of the kingdom of Israel; nor did its kings omit any thing to make it as strong, as fine, and as rich as possible. What fate it underwent by Ben-hadad king of Syria, by Salmanasar, &c. we shall see in a great measure in the course of this history. It is conjectured by Bochart, who traced the ruins of it, to have been once larger than Jerusalem; but now it comprises nothing but a few cottages and convents inhabited by some Greek monks. See Wells's Geogr. vol. iii.

REFLECTIONS.—We have here,

1. The fall of Zimri. Though seven days terminated

his reign, yet in them he shewed his disposition to Jeroboam's sins. Unable to defend himself against the forces under Omri, he rather chose to perish in the flames of his palace, than fall with it into the hands of his envied rival. *Note;* (1.) The frequent end of ambitious projectors is, to perish in the flames that they have kindled. (2.) Envy and revenge, even in death, forsake not the wicked.

2. The civil war which ensued between Omri and Tibni. The people were divided between these competitors for the crown, and the struggle lasted four years, when Tibni seems to have fallen in battle, and Omri reigned without a rival. *Note;* Of all afflictions on a nation, none are more terrible than civil wars.

3. Omri, far from taking warning by his predecessor's sufferings, did worse than all who went before him; and, not satisfied with encouraging idolatry, compelled the people to it by penal statutes, Mic. vi. 16. At last, after a reign of twelve years, he died, and was buried; and left his crown to a son more abandoned to wickedness than his father. Thus, when a people forsake God, they go from worse to worse, till destruction comes upon them to the uttermost.

*Ver.*

34 ¶ In his days did Hiel the Beth-elite build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun.

### CHAP. XVII.

*Elijah, being hid, is fed by ravens: he goes to a widow woman of Zarephath, whose oil and meal fail not, till God sends rain: he raises her dead son to life.*

[Before Christ 909.]

**A**ND Elijah the Tishbite, *who was* of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab,

As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

2 And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying,

3 Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan.

4 And it shall be, *that* thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.

5 So he went and did according unto the word of the LORD: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan.

*Ver. 34. In his days did Hiel, &c.]* The sentence which we here see executed was pronounced above four hundred and forty years before, and is a most striking proof of the divine prescience, as well as of the authority of those sacred writings which contain so remarkable a prediction. *Hiel* was probably a professed idolater; and therefore might undertake the rebuilding of Jericho, either at the instigation of the court, or in defiance of God, and to let the world see that whatever was denounced in his name was of no significance at all: but the event proved the contrary, and he met with his condign punishment.

**REFLECTIONS.**—Ahab, that monster of iniquity, succeeds his father Omri in the 38th year of Afa. We have,

1. A general account of his wicked reign, the particulars of which may be thus recapitulated: he out-did all the worst of his predecessors; even Jeroboam's sins were light compared to his. He began with marrying a Zidonian wife, worse, if possible, than himself, idolatrous, proud, imperious, lewd, malicious, the adviser and encourager of every abomination. Her gods pleased him better than his own; and he went, probably, at first to Tyre to worship; and then, that he might have his idol nearer home, he reared a magnificent temple in Samaria, set up an altar before the image of Baal, and planted a grove around it, to perform those shocking rites which the day blushes to behold. *Note;* (1.) Of all the earthly plagues that can light upon miserable man, there is not a greater than to be joined to a wicked and abandoned woman. (2.) The idolater grudges no expence to serve his abominations; and shall we be niggards at the altar of the true and only God? (3.) Deeds of lewdness shun the light; but what thick grove can exclude the piercing eye of God?

### CHAP. XVII.

*Ver. 1. Elijah the Tishbite.]* *Elijah the Tishbite, of Thezbech in Gilead.* Houbigant. *Elijah*, who in the New Testament is commonly called *Elias*, was of Thezbech, a town on the other side of Jordan, in the tribe of Gad, and in the land of Gilead. The Scriptures making no mention either of the quality of his parents, the manner of his education,

or his call to the prophetic office, some Jewish rabbis have been of opinion, that he was an angel, sent from heaven, amidst the general corruption of the world, to preserve the true worship of God. Others pretend, that he was a priest descended from the tribe of Aaron; that his father's name was *Sabaca*, and his birth altogether miraculous; whilst others, again, will have it that he was Phinehas, the son of Aaron, who, after having lived a long while concealed, appeared again in the world under the name of *Elijah*: but all particulars of this kind, where the Scripture is silent, are of small authority. This, however, may with safety be said of him, that he was the prince of the prophets of his age; a man of a great and elevated mind, of a generous and undaunted spirit, a zealous defender of the laws of God, and a just avenger of the violations of his honour. Calmet. See on the next chapter, ver. 1.

*Ver. 3. Brook Cherith]* This brook, and the valley through which it runs, are both very near the river Jordan; but whether on the east or west side is not so well agreed. Saint Jerome places it beyond Jordan, and so on the east side of it; but others generally agree in placing it on the west side of it; because God, in sending away *Elijah*, says to him, *Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward*; where the expression, *turn thee eastward*, seems to imply that *Elijah* was on the west side of Jordan. See Wells's Geogr. vol. iii.

*Ver. 4. I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there]* Some interpreters, discontented with this miracle, have sought out a different mode of solving it, and have averred, that the word עֲרָבִים *orbim* rendered *ravens* might with propriety be rendered *Arabs* or *merchants*; who, they suppose, supplied *Elijah* with necessary food. But Bochart has satisfactorily proved, that the original word never signifies *merchants*, and that there were no *Arabians* inhabiting the coasts where *Elijah* lay concealed: and it can hardly be imagined, but that the place of his retreat would have soon been discovered to Ahab, had either merchants or other inhabitants of the country been at any time acquainted with it. Besides, the immediate order of God was, that he should retreat and hide himself where he might be absolutely concealed. And as the whole of the affair was miraculous, why

6 And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook.

7 And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.

8 ¶ And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying,

9 Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which *belongeth* to Sidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.

10 So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city,

behold, the widow woman *was* there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.

11 And as she was going to fetch *it*, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand.

12 And she said, *As* the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I *am* gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.

13 And Elijah said unto her, Fear not;

why should we not readily believe, that he who is able to do all things appointed these birds to bring *bread* and *meat* daily to the prophet? Though we should allow, that they are creatures voracious and unnatural to their young ones; yet, the more unfit instruments they seemed to be, the more they magnified the almighty power of him who controuled their natural appetites while he employed them; and if, as Saint Chrysostom fancies, there was a moral instruction in it, the more they might mollify the prophet's heart towards the deluded Israelites, by seeing those very creatures which were cruel to their young, kind to him. Though we should allow that they were creatures legally unclean, yet as it was for the meat, and not for the touch, that they were accounted so, we must grant, that this was a case extraordinary, wherein the ceremonial law was over-ruled by necessity, and by the law-giver's dispensation. There is this to be said, however, for the choice of *ravens*, that as they are solitary birds, and delight to live about brooks of water, so are they accustomed to seek out for provisions, and to carry them to the places of their abode; on which account they were no improper creatures for God to employ upon this service. For more on the subject, see Scheuchzer on the place, and Bochart's Hieroz. pars ii. lib. 2.

REFLECTIONS.—Elijah is now raised up to warn the idolatrous king, and in these days of apostacy with fervent zeal to testify against the wickedness of Israel. *Note*: God will have his witnesses in the worst of times, and will endue them with proportionable gifts and graces for the difficulties that they are called to struggle with. We have,

1. Elijah's solemn denunciation on Ahab. Probably, he had before in vain warned him of his wickedness, and, finding him incorrigible, declares the famine which, in zeal for God, he had prayed might come as a just judgment upon Israel, see Jam. v. 17. and, to affect the king with a sense of the hand from whence it came, he informs him, that the Lord Jehovah, the God of Israel, whom he had dishonoured, the living God, whom he had rejected for dumb idols, had commissioned him for this message; and that neither dew nor rain should fall, but according to his word.

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2. As he might well expect that his boldness would offend such impudent sinners as Ahab and Jezebel, God bids him hide himself by the brook Cherith, and Elijah, without hesitation, obeys. There, during the approaching famine, God promises to take care for his provision, and by a wonderful means supplies him; for, while the brook afforded him water to drink, ravens brought him morning and evening bread and flesh to eat. There, unknown, unnoticed, he abode, till, the water of the brook failing, God opened a new supply. *Note*: (1.) They who dare to be bold for God, may safely trust to him for protection. (2.) It is a bad sign for a people, when God's prophets are driven into corners. (3.) Obscurity becomes duty, when God calls us to it. (4.) God will take care that, however precarious may be their apparent subsistence, his faithful ministers shall not want; though often, like Elijah, he is pleased to feed them but from hand to mouth, to exercise their faith and patience. (5.) When God would work, he will never want means. (6.) They who give good advice, and live in bad practices, like these ravens, bring others wholesome food, and feed on carrion themselves. (7.) Every source of earthly comfort may in time run dry; but they who live upon an all-sufficient God, will find living waters of consolations that never fail.

*Vv. 9. Arise, get thee to Zarephath*] *Zarephath, or Sarepta*, lay between Tyre and Sidon, but nearest to the latter. Mr. Maundrell observes, that it is the same which is now called *Sarphan*, about three hours travel from Sidon, in the way to Tyre. It consists at present only of a few houses on the tops of the mountains; but there is reason to believe, that the principal part of the city stood in the plain below, because there are still ruins to be seen there of very considerable extent.

*Ver. 12. An handful of meal in a barrel*] Sandys tells us, that in the east they kept their corn in long vessels of clay, it being subject to be eaten by worms without that precaution: this he observed at Gaza. Agreeable whereto, Norden informs us, that a barbarian of Upper Egypt opened one of his *great jars*, in order to shew him how they preserved their corn there. The barrel in which the woman of Sarepta kept her corn, wherof she had only enough left to make a handful of meal, might be a vessel of

3 G

much

go and do as thou hast said; but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.

14 For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day *that* the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth.

15 And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat *many* days.

16 *And* the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah.

17 ¶ And it came to pass after these things, *that* the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore,

that there was no breath left in him.

18 And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God! art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?

19 And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed.

20 And he cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?

21 And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again.

much the same kind, and consequently קַד *kad* is improperly translated a *barrel*. It is certainly in the original the same word as is used for the vessels in which Gideon's soldiers concealed their torches, and which they *broke*, with a clashing terrifying noise, when they blew with their trumpets; and both circumstances indicate their being vessels of *earth*. It does not, however, follow from hence, that they had these things with them for the keeping of their *corn*; it might be for *fetching water*; for we find that the same word is expressive of the vessels in which women were wont to fetch water, Gen. xxiv. 14, &c.; and no wonder, since the same kind of vessels were used for both purposes. Norden speaks of *great jars* for corn, as was just remarked; and Bishop Pococke, on the other hand, more than once takes notice of the women of that country *carrying water in earthen jars* at this time. Rebecca, most certainly, did not carry a *barrel*, a vessel of above thirty gallons, upon her head. *Observations*, p. 150.

REFLECTIONS.—The brook being dry, Elijah is commanded to remove. We see that he waited to the last drop without solicitude, and even then removed not without an order. *He that believeth will not make haste*, but wait the Lord's leisure.

1. Zarephath, a city of Sidon, is the place fixed on for his abode, where God had provided a reception for him in the house of a widow, a Gentile, and poor withal, and in the very country where Jezebel might seize him. But they who have God's warrant to go, have no questions to ask.

2. Though he knew not the person that should be his hostess, he went, not doubting to find her; and lo! at the gate providence brings them together. A woman met him, one very unlikely to supply his wants, who appeared almost famishing herself. To her he addressed himself for a little water; and when she turned to fetch it, he desired a morsel of bread along with it. This led her to inform him of her distressed circumstances; a

handful of meal, and a little oil in a cruse, were all that she possessed; and she was now come to gather a few sticks, to dress it for herself and her son, as the last morsel they ever expected to eat. Elijah bids her do so, but first make him a cake, nor fear to want, since from God he assured her, that the meal should not fail, nor the oil be exhausted, till the days of famine were over. Behold a prodigy of faith! Without hesitation, though so difficult the command, against which reason, self-love, and natural affection might raise strong objections, she staggered not at the prophet's assurance, but did as she was desired, and trusted in the word of promise. *Note*; (1.) In our deepest distresses, God is nearer to relieve us than we are aware. (2.) God has ever chosen the poor in this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom. (3.) Faith silences all objections; a word of promise is instead of a thousand arguments. (4.) They who can trust God with their all, will find themselves no losers by him.

3. The first essay confirmed the prophet's declaration, and the daily miracle continued for two years and upwards, during which Elijah, herself, and her son, even in those days of dearth, had enough. It was plain fare, indeed; but no doubt they were abundantly thankful for it, and, coming thus from the Lord's hand, it was doubly sweet. *Note*; (1.) The prophets and ministers of God must learn of Elijah to be content with hard fare. (2.) *There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth*. Works of piety and charity bring us again our own with usury. (3.) If our hearts be open to receive the great prophet, the greater than Elijah, we shall then never want any manner of thing that is good.

*Ver. 21. And he stretched himself upon the child three times*] We are persuaded, that neither words nor gestures have any virtue; and yet we read, that the prophets of the Old Testament used extraordinary gesticulations, which would be smiled at now-a-days, and considered as superstitious ceremonies. Elijah, in raising up the only son of the widow of Sarepta, *stretched himself upon the child three*

22 And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived.

23 And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth.

24 And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in thy mouth is truth.

three times; and Elisia, the disciple of this great prophet, did the same thing when he raised up the son of the Shunamite woman, 2 Kings, iv. 34, 35. Certainly no one can think that these children were only entranced with cold, or in a swoon; so that the prophets, by stretching themselves upon them, only warmed them afresh, i. e. cured them. They were perfectly dead, as appears from the event; for, *the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived.* Besides, how could a recovering from a swoon, or warmth restored, merit that the Scripture should make express mention of it, and place this fact among those of the prophets? When the soul is once separated from the body, it is useless for a living body to stretch itself, lie down, and place its hands upon those of the dead. All the powers of nature can do nothing in this case; because it requires an overcoming of that very law of nature which unites the body to the soul, a law which cannot be reversed but by God the author of it.

*Ver. 24. The woman said—Now by this I know that thou art a man of God*] The woman certainly had sufficient reason to believe that Elijah was a prophet, or person sent from God, when she saw the miraculous increase of the meal and oil; but upon his not curing her son when he lay sick, but rather suffering him to die, her faith began to droop, whereas, upon seeing him revive, her faith revived with him; and in the joy of having him restored to her again, she accounted this latter miracle much greater than the former. See Le Clerc, and Bishop Hall's Contemplations.

REFLECTIONS.—When we have been most eminently employed for God, and have received the most reviving tokens of his regard, we must not wonder if we are called to the severest trials. Whose house could one have thought so secure from evil as this widow's; yet behold its desolations!

1. She had but one son, and he dies. Though fed by a miracle, he was not beyond the arm of death.

2. Distress and anguish weigh down the afflicted widow; and, though she cannot but own that her sin provoked the visitation, she perversely reflects upon Elijah, as if his prayers, which had brought the famine on the land, had for her sin brought death into her family. *Note;* (1.) The more unexpectedly the stroke falls, the more difficult it is at first to be resisted. (2.) In our troubles we are apt to quarrel with our best friends. (3.) We speak that in haste, which, in our cooler hours, we cannot but

## C H A P. XVIII.

*Elijah, by the command of God, promises Ahab that there shall be rain. The priests of Baal are gathered together unto mount Carmel, and Elijah agrees that the God who answers by fire shall be acknowledged for the true God; after which he slays all the prophets of Baal, and a great rain descends from heaven.*

[Before Christ 906.]

AND it came to pass after many days, that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, shew

condemn. (4.) When God visits our families, we should humbly confess and acknowledge our sins, which are the causes of our troubles.

3. Elijah exceedingly interests himself in her affliction, and, taking the dead child from her bosom, retires to lay the sad case before a compassionate God. He cries with importunity, pleads his interest with God, humbly reasons with him on the poor widow's afflictions, whose kindness had been so great to him, and whose circumstances were so pitiable; and stretching himself on the child, as if longing to re-kindle the vital heat in the lifeless clay, he fervently entreats that God who can awake the dead, to restore again the soul (which supposes its separate existence,) to the deserted corpse. *Note;* (1.) If we have christian hearts, we shall not behold the sorrows of the afflicted without tender sympathy, and a strong desire to relieve their distresses. (2.) Is Elijah so earnest to restore a dead body, and ought not Christ's ministers to be as importunate with him to quicken poor souls dead in trespasses and sins? (3.) Not all our prayers and labours can effect this spiritual resurrection, but God's power alone.

4. God hears, and graciously answers him. The child, though dead, revived, and with joy Elijah brought him down to the transported mother. Her faith had before wavered: after all that she had seen and known, she almost doubted whether he were a man of God; so apt are sore temptations to bring us under the power of unbelief. But now she is assured of it to demonstration, and without doubt professes her full confidence in all that he had told her, whether concerning the God of Israel, or the prophecies yet to be fulfilled. *Note;* As the oak grows more rooted by tempestuous winds, so faith grows stronger after the blasts of temptation.

## C H A P. XVIII.

*Ver. 1. The word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year*] St. James, speaking of this event, says, that it rained not on the earth for the space of three years and six months. Our blessed Saviour makes mention of a like compass of time, Luke, iv. 25.; and yet neither of these are contradictory to what the sacred history tells us, viz. that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year. For we must remember, that, as Egypt had usually no rain, but was watered by the river Nile, so the land of Canaan had generally none, except twice a year, which they call the early and latter rain. The former of these was in the month [D'] Nisan, which answers to our March, and the other in the

thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth.

2 And Elijah went to shew himself unto Ahab. And *there was* a sore famine in Samaria.

3 ¶ And Ahab called Obadiah, which *was* the governor of *his* house. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly :

4 For it was *so*, when Jezebel cut off the

prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah took an hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water.)

5 And Ahab said unto Obadiah, Go into the land, unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks : peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts.

6 So they divided the land between them

month מרחשוון *Marchesivan*, which answers to our October. Now, at the beginning of the drought, Ahab might very probably impute the want of rain to natural causes; but when, after six months, neither the *former* nor the *latter* rain fell in their season, he began to be enraged at Elijah, as the cause of this national judgment, and forced him, at God's command, to save his life by flight: and from that time the three years of the historian are to be computed, though from the first notice which Elijah gave Ahab of this approaching calamity, to the expiration of it, was certainly three years and a half. This calamity is said to have been procured by Elijah's prayers; yet we must not therefore imagine that his prayers were spiteful and malicious, but necessary rather, and charitable to the offenders, that, by the sharp and long affliction which they produced, God's honour and the truth of his word and threatenings, now universally contemned, might be vindicated; and that the Israelites, whose present impunity hardened them in their idolatry, might hereby be awakened to see their wickedness, their dependence upon God, and the necessity of their returning to his religion and worship. See Bedford's Script. Chron. l. vi. c. 2. and Poole's Annotations.

*Ver. 3. Ahab called Obadiah*] The Jews have many strange stories respecting Obadiah, very little to be relied upon. It is plain from what he says to Elijah, that he was a truly religious man, who worshipped God alone, and had a singular affection for his servants; enough, one would think, to have made Ahab discard, if not persecute him, had he not found him so highly useful in the management of his domestic affairs, as to connive at his not worshipping Baal or the calves.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, When Israel seemed on the verge of ruin, God graciously interposed, and sent his prophet back to save them. We have

1. The distress to which they were reduced. Famine now stalked through the land, the parched ground yielded no food, and the lowing herds sunk down at the dry brook for want of water. To save, if possible, the few beasts that were left, Ahab with Obadiah goes on a progress through the land, to see if peradventure some grass might be found. But while the country groaned under drought, a worse famine afflicted it than that of bread or water, even a famine of the word of the Lord. The cruel Jezebel, madly attached to her idols, and more enraged, instead of humbled, under this judgment, since Elijah is not found, wreaks her vengeance on his brethren, slaying the prophets who were yet trained up in the ancient schools, and cleaved to the true religion. Nor had any escaped but for the piety of Obadiah, a great good man,

even from his youth, in the worst of days, and amidst the abominations of such a court. To screen them from her fury, he hid one hundred in two caves, and fed them with bread and water; dangerous as the attempt might have proved to himself, if discovered, and expensive as in such a season even this provision must have been. *Note;* (1.) A fruitful land God maketh barren, for the iniquity of those who dwell therein. (2.) Judgments enrage instead of humbling the heart of the impenitent. (3.) The greatest misery a land can groan under is, the expulsion of God's prophets. (4.) The few faithful have ever been, and ever will be, more or less, a persecuted people. (5.) Few great men are good men, and in a corrupt court piety is least to be expected: yet God has his chosen vessels in the worst times and most dangerous places; even Nero's house and Ahab's court admit of exceptions. (6.) No danger must deter, nor expence be spared, where God's suffering cause demands our help, and claims our protection. (7.) When matters seem most desperate, God can and often does, raise up for his suffering ministers and people powerful and faithful friends.

2. God now enjoins Elijah to return to Samaria. Eagerly had Ahab sought him through all the tribes and neighbouring people, and by an oath engaged them to send him back, if he were found among them. But God had hid him, and Ahab sought in vain. Three years and six months the famine had lasted; but the time is come when God will give rain, and Elijah is bidden to shew himself to Ahab.

2dly, We have the interview between the wicked king and the holy prophet, where each appears in character.

1. Ahab, with insolent pride and abuse, accosts him as the troubler of Israel. *Note;* (1.) It is no unusual thing to misrepresent God's zealous ministers as enemies to the state. (2.) They who are the messengers of the best tidings, the impenitent brand as their troublers.

2. Elijah boldly retorts the accusation, and bids him see the troubler of Israel in the worshipper of Baalim. He designed their peace, even in his warnings, whilst Ahab provoked the judgment by his sins. To prove this, he desires a convention of the people to Carmel, with the prophets of Baal, and there it shall appear to what cause the want of rain is to be ascribed. *Note;* (1.) When duty calls, we must not fear the faces of kings. (2.) They are troublers of a land, whose sins provoke God's anger against it.

3. Ahab consents, curious perhaps to know the issue of this controversy between Elijah and the prophets of Baal; at least, desirous of rain on any terms, which he despaired of, but from Elijah's word.

*Ver.*

to pass throughout it: Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself.

7 ¶ And as Obadiah was in the way, behold, Elijah met him; and he knew him, and fell on his face, and said, *Art thou that my lord Elijah?*

8 And he answered him, *I am: go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here.*

9 And he said, What have I sinned, that thou wouldest deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab, to slay me?

10 *As the LORD thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom, whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee: and when they said, He is not there; he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not.*

11 And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here.

12 And it shall come to pass, *as soon as I am gone from thee, that the Spirit of the LORD shall carry thee whither I know not; and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me: but I thy servant fear the LORD from my youth.*

13 Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the LORD, how I hid an hundred men of the LORD's prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water?

14 And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here: and he shall slay me.

15 And Elijah said, *As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely shew myself unto him to-day.*

16 So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and

told him: and Ahab went to meet Elijah.

17 And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, *Art thou he that troubleth Israel.*

18 ¶ And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim.

19 Now therefore send, *and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table.*

20 So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel.

21 ¶ And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

22 Then said Elijah unto the people, I, *even I only, remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men.*

23 Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them chuse one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under:

24 And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the god that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken.

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*Ver. 22. I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord*] From these words one can hardly imagine, that all those hundred whom Obadiah preserved, ver. 13. were men actually inspired, and invested with a prophetic character. There is little doubt but that even in Jezebel's time there were remaining in Israel schools of the prophets, which she endeavoured to destroy, as well as those who were bred up in them, that there might be none left to instruct the people in the true religion. These she certainly looked upon as enemies to her idolatry; and she might possibly persuade her husband that they were disaffected to his government, and favourers of the kings of Judah, because they worshipped the same God, and thought that the proper place of his worship was Jerusalem; and therefore the greater was the piety and courage of Obadiah in rescuing so many

victims from the hands of this furious and enraged woman. See Patrick and Le Clerc.

*Ver. 24. The God that answereth by fire, let him be God*] This was not the first time that God had declared his approbation of his worshippers, by sending down fire to consume their sacrifices (see Lev. ix. 24. and Judg. vi. 21.); and though, perhaps, it may be possible for evil spirits, who may have great knowledge how to manage meteors and exhalations to effect their purposes, to make fire descend from the clouds; yet since they can do nothing without a divine permission, it is absurd to think that, in a matter of competition between him and false gods, he should give evil spirits any licence to rival him in his miracles. If, as it is generally believed, Baal was the idol of the sun, or that power whom his worshippers supposed to preside over the



25 ¶ And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Chuse you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye *are* many: and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under.

26 And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But *there was* no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made.

27 And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud, for he *is* a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.

28 And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and

lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.

29 And it came to pass, when mid-day was past, and they prophesied until the *time* of the offering of the *evening* sacrifice, that *there was* neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

30 ¶ And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD *that was* broken down.

31 And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the LORD came, saying, Israel shall be thy name.

32 And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed.

the element of fire, the reason of Elijah's proceeding is very obvious, as it afforded a full proof that Jehovah, the God of nature, was alone the Sovereign Lord and Ruler of all its operations.

Ver. 26. *And they leaped upon the altar that was made*] Or, *leaped up and down at the altar.* Margin. The marginal rendering seems by far the best: and the reference appears plainly to be a custom very common among heathen worshippers, of dancing round the altars of the deity whom they worshipped; and this sometimes with a variety of strange gesticulations. The dances of the Sali were of this sort. Houbigant, however, thinks that the word *וַיִּפְסְחוּ* *vaipasschu* should not be rendered *leaped*, but *walked*, signifying that they walked in solemn procession round the altar.

Ver. 27. *Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud, &c.*] Nothing can be imagined more poignant and sarcastic than these words of the prophet, in which he ridicules in the finest manner possible their wretched, false, and derogatory ideas of the Deity. The two last notions of *being asleep*, and *not at home*, how absurd soever they may be when applied to the Deity, were certainly such as several idolaters conceived of their gods, as appears from various passages in Homer, in one of which, Iliad i. ver. 423. the poet tells us, that Thetis could not meet with Jupiter, because "he was gone abroad, and would not return in less than twelve days;" and at the conclusion of that book he gives us an account of the manner in which the deities went to sleep:

"Then to their starry domes the gods depart,  
"The shining monuments of Vulcan's art;  
"Jove on his couch reclin'd his awful head,  
"And Juno slumber'd on the golden bed."

POPE.

How debasing ideas these, compared with that awful intelligence which Revelation gives us of a Deity, *who neither slumbereth nor sleepeth*; but who, every where present, is, at all times, conscious even of the secrets of the heart; at all times ready to hear and able to grant the petitions of his people!

Ver. 28. *Cut themselves after their manner, &c.*] A strange method, one would think, to obtain the favour of their gods! And yet, if we look into antiquity, we shall find, that nothing was more common in the religious rites of several nations, than this barbarous custom. Plutarch, in his book *de Superstitione*, tells us, that the priests of Bel-lona, when they sacrificed to that goddess, were wont to besmear the victim with their own blood. The Persian magi, according to Herodotus, used to appease tempests and allay the winds, by making incisions in their flesh. Those who carried about the Syrian goddess, as Apuleius relates, among other mad pranks, were every now and then cutting and slashing themselves with knives, till the blood gushed out; and even to this very day, we are informed, that in Turkey, Persia, and several parts of the Indies, there are fanatics who think they do a very meritorious service, highly acceptable to the deity, by cutting and mangling their own flesh. See Lev. xix. 28. Calmet, and Picart's Religious Ceremonies. The word *prophesied*, in the next verse, implies their praying or singing hymns in praise of their gods.

Ver. 30. *He repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down*] The altar, which the sacred author here calls *the altar of the LORD*, was certainly one of those which were built in the time of the judges and first kings of Israel, when, for want of a fixed place of worship, such structures were permitted. Both Tacitus and Suetonius speak of the *God of Carmel*, whom Vespasian went to consult when he was in Judea; but they tell us, that there was neither temple nor statue upon the mountain, except one single altar, plain, but venerable for its antiquity. The altar of Carmel seems to have had its original from the altar of the true God, which the ancient Hebrews first erected, and Elijah afterwards repaired; and which even the heathens held in such veneration, that when they came to be masters of the country, they would not so much as place an image by it.

Ver.

33 And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid *him* on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour *it* on the burnt-sacrifice, and on the wood.

34 And he said, Do *it* the second time. And they did *it*, the second time. And he said, Do *it* the third time. And they did *it* the third time.

35 And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water.

36 And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou *art* God in Israel, and *that* I *am* thy servant, and *that* I have done all

these things at thy word.

37 Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou *art* the LORD God, and *that* thou hast turned their heart back again.

38 Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that *was* in the trench.

39 And when all the people saw *it*, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he *is* the God; the LORD, he *is* the God.

40 And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.

41 ¶ And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee

*Ver. 33. Fill four barrels with water, &c.]* The prophet did this to make the miracle more conspicuous and convincing, to shew that there was no fallacy in it, no fire concealed in or about the altar; but that the lightning, which was to consume the sacrifice, came from heaven, and at his invocation; and so Josephus tells us, that Elijah invited the people to draw near, that they might search and spy every where, if they could find any fire secretly conveyed under the altar. Antiq. lib. viii. cap. 7.

*Ver. 37. Hear me, O Lord, hear me.]* Elijah, according to Abarbanel, was more urgent and fervent in his prayer, because he had undertaken to make the experiment of God's power of his own accord, and without any particular command from him; nothing doubting but that he would appear, to vindicate his own honour, even though the prophet offered sacrifices on a high place, which was not agreeable to the law.

*Ver. 40. Elijah said—take the prophets of Baal, &c.]* It appears from the course of the divine history of this people, that the Israelites had ever a violent propensity to mix with the neighbouring nations, and to devote themselves to the practices of idolatry. This would naturally, and did in fact, absorb large portions of them; and the sole human means which preserved the remainder, was the severity of their civil laws against idolatry. It will be necessary to remind the reader of that particularly which is recorded, Deut. xvii. 2—5. which will throw great light upon this transaction, and vindicate the conduct of Elijah from objections. Such laws were necessary to support a separation of the Israelites from the idolatrous nations; but penal laws, enforced by the ordinary magistrate for matters of opinion, are manifestly unjust. Some way, therefore, was to be contrived to render these laws equitable; for we are not to suppose that God would ordain any thing which should violate the rule of natural justice. Now these penal laws are equitable only in

a theocracy; and therefore a *theocracy* was necessary. It will be proper to observe, that God was pleased to stand in two *arbitrary* relations towards the Jewish people, besides that natural one in which he stands towards them and the rest of mankind in common. The first was, that of a *tutelary deity, gentilitial and local, the God of Abraham, &c.* who was to bring their posterity into the land of Canaan, and to protect them there, as his peculiar people. The second was, that of *supreme magistrate and law-giver*: and in both these relations, he was pleased to refer it to the people's choice, whether they would or would not receive him for their *God and King*. The people, therefore, thus solemnly *accepting* him, these necessary consequences followed from the Horeb contract. First, that, as the national God and civil magistrate of the Jews centered in one and the same object, their civil policy and religion must be intimately united and incorporated. Secondly, as the two societies were thoroughly incorporated, they could not be distinguished, but must stand or fall together: consequently, the direction of all their civil laws must be for the equal preservation of both, as the renouncing him for king was the throwing him off as *God*, and the renouncing him for God was the throwing him off as *king*. There was, however, this manifest difference in the two cases, as to the effects: the renouncing of God as civil magistrate might be remedied, without a total dissolution of the constitution; not so the renouncing him as tutelary God; because, though he might and did appoint a deputy in his office of king among the Jewish tribes, yet he would have no substitute, as God, among the pagan deities: therefore of necessity, as well as of right, idolatry was punishable by the civil laws of a theocracy, it being the greatest crime that could be committed against the state, as tending by consequence to dissolve the constitution; for the one God being the supreme magistrate, it subsisted in the worship of that God. Idolatry therefore, as the renunciation of one God alone,

up, eat and drink; for *there is* a sound of abundance of rain.

42 So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees,

43 And said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, *There is* nothing. And he said, Go again seven times.

44 And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud

out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up; say unto Ahab, Prepare *thy chariot*, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not.

45 And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel.

46 And the hand of the LORD was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

alone, was, in a strict philosophical as well as legal sense, the crime of *lese-majesté*, or high treason. Thirdly, the punishment of idolatry by law had this farther circumstance of equity, that it was punishing the rebellion of those who had chosen the government under which they lived when freely proposed to them. Hence, in the law against idolatry, Deut. xvii. 2. the crime is with great propriety called *the transgression of the COVENANT*. Thus we see the law in question stands clear of the cavils of infidels, and the abuse of intolerant believers. We see that the severity used by Elijah was as justifiable as that of Phinehas, which is spoken of with great commendation, Numb. xxv. 11. Psalm cvi. 30. We may likewise infer from this exertion of the penal laws against idolatry, that the *theocracy* subsisted at this time, because such laws are absolutely unjust under any other form of government.

*Ver. 45. The heaven was black with clouds and wind*] When rain falls in the eastern countries, it is often preceded by a squall of wind; so the ingenious editor of the Ruins of Palmyra tells us, that they seldom have rain there, except at the equinoxes; that nothing could be more serene than the sky all the time they were there, which was about a fortnight in March, except one afternoon, that there was a small shower, preceded by a whirlwind, which took up such quantities of sand from the desert as quite darkened the sky. This circumstance of the wind's taking up such quantities of sand as to darken the sky, may serve to explain the present passage, which describes the heaven as *black with wind*, as well as *clouds*; for neither of these circumstances, a squall preceding the rain, or its raising great quantities of dust, is peculiar to deserts. Dr. Russel speaks of both as common at Aleppo, which is at a considerable distance from a desert. The wind's prognosticating rain is also referred to Prov. xxv. 14.

*Ver. 46. And he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab*] In this country long and loose garments were in use, and therefore when people were inclined to run, or make any great expedition, their custom was to gird them round their waist. The eastern princes used frequently to be preceded by running footmen, chanters, &c. Hanway tells us, that when the famous Kouli Khan removed his camp, he was preceded by his running footmen, and by his chanters, who were nine hundred in number, and frequently chanted moral sentences and encomiums upon him, occasionally proclaiming his victories also. We are willing to suppose,

that Elijah's running before Ahab's chariot to the gates of Jezreel, was not *unworthy of his prophetic character*. Bishop Patrick supposes he ran before Ahab *like one of his footmen*, in which he shewed his "readiness to do the king all "imaginable honour;" and that he was "far from being "his enemy." But, if Ahab had *chanters* running before him, like Kouli Khan, it does not appear at all contrary to the rules of decorum, for one brought up to celebrate the divine praises, to put himself at the head of them, to direct them in singing praise to him who was then giving them rain, and to intermingle due encomiums on the prince who had permitted the extermination of the priests of Baal: or if *he* had none such, yet, if it had been practised in those times, and was thought graceful, and becoming a prince, nothing forbad Elijah's doing it alone; and perhaps what is said concerning the fingers of the contemporary king of Judah, 2 Chron. xx. 21, 22. may enable us to guess whether it was a practice totally unknown at that time. The expression of the divine historian, that *the hand of the Lord was upon him*, perfectly agrees with this thought; for it appears from 2 Kings, iii. 15. that it signifies the enabling a prophet to prophesy: and therefore we may understand these words of God's stirring him up to the composing and singing of some proper hymns on this occasion, as well as enabling him to run with greater swiftness than *his age* would otherwise have permitted him to do. See 1 Sam. xviii. 6, 7.

REFLECTIONS.—How great does Elijah appear, alone supporting the cause of God against an idolatrous king, a wicked people, and a multitude of false prophets!

1. With zeal he reproves their inconstancy and infidelity. As there can be but one self-existent, infinite, eternal Being, their halting between God and Baal proved their wavering minds; and the attempt to reconcile their incompatible services evinced their folly. *Note*; (1.) Unsettled notions in religion have a direct tendency to lead us to unsound practices. (2.) There is no reconciling Christ and Belial, the love of God and the love of the world: the very attempt is a proof of an apostate heart.

2. As conviction sealed up their lips, he condescends (being authorised from God so to do) to make them a fair proposal to try the merits of the cause. Though multitudes and authority, king, priests, and people, were against him, alone he offers to enter the lists on God's behalf, and

## C H A P. XIX.

*Elijah flees into the wilderness, and there goes, in the strength of the meat which he had taken, forty days and forty nights. He is commanded to anoint Hazael to be king of Syria, Jehu king of Israel, and Elisha to be prophet. Elisha follows Elijah.*

[Before Christ 906.]

**A**ND Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword.

and rests the issue of the trial on an answer of fire from heaven, to consume the sacrifice he proposed. Let him be acknowledged the true God, whose power thus appeared. *Note;* God's ministers must not be discouraged at seeing all the world united against them. If God be on their side, that is enough to embolden them.

3. The people approved the proposal, and Baal's prophets either dared not reject it, lest they should appear deceivers, or hoped in the issue, if not to prevail in the contest, yet to be on a level with their adversary, and that the shame of his disappointment would then fall heaviest upon him. *Note;* God entangleth the wise in their own craftiness, and the hope of the hypocrite perisheth.

4. Elijah, because they were many, gives them the preference in the trial; let them begin their sacrifice, but put no fire under it. They prepare their bullock, lay it on the altar, and with loud calls invoke the presence of their deity till noon. Baal probably represented the sun, and from his burning rays at noon they hoped some beam would kindle up the flame: but when past the meridian, mad with vexation, they leaped on or about the altar, and with knives and lancets wounding themselves, sought by their blood to render their deity propitious to their prayers; whilst Elijah, with high disdain and ridicule, mocked at their folly in these mad gestures and cries, as if their god was engaged in business, on a journey, or asleep, and needed to be awaked. Baal, deaf as his image, paid no regard to their prayers, or praises, or prophetic fury, and left his votaries covered with confusion and despair. *Note;* The corporal severities of popery are like the wounds of Baal's prophets, not of any value in the sight of God, but merely *satisfying* the pride of the fleshly mind. See Col. ii. 23.

5. It is now Elijah's turn to make the essay; and the calmness and dignity of his procedure bespeak his confidence of success. An ancient altar was there, on which sacrifice had been offered before the temple was built, but now either decayed by time, or thrown down by the idolatrous worshippers of Baal. This he repairs with twelve stones, according to the number of the sons of Jacob, whose name God had altered into Israel on his prevailing prayer; and he doubted not that the same power with God would attend his own. He calls the people to draw near; and having prepared his sacrifice, to prevent the suspicion of delusion, he bids them pour upon it four barrels of water three several times, till the trench he had dug around the altar was filled. Then, at

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2 Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time.

3 And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which *belongeth* to Judah, and left his servant there.

4 ¶ But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down

the time when the evening sacrifice at Jerusalem was offering, he drew near the altar, and with holy awe, yet humble boldness, addresses his prayer to the covenant God of their fathers, entreating him to appear, for the magnifying of his own great name, for the conviction of the people, and their conversion from idolatry, as well, as to vindicate his prophet's injured character, and prove his divine mission. Instantly the devouring fire descends, and, to the astonishment of the beholding multitude, devours the sacrifice and wood; yea, it burns the very waters dry, and consumes the stones of the altar even to the dust. *Note;* (1.) Great is the power of effectual prayer: if it bring not the visible fire from heaven, it will still draw down the fire of love, and enable us to offer that best sacrifice, a flaming heart, to God. (2.) The conversion of souls is the deepest concern that lies on a faithful minister's heart. (3.) When the fire of God's wrath fell on Jesus, the sinner's sacrifice, then was the ransom paid, and the covenant of peace established among men.

6. Vanquished by such evidence, the people in adoration fall on their faces, as confounded at their idolatry, and confessing now the only true God: but alas! the change was of short continuance. *Note;* Miracles may extort confessions, but cannot convert the soul. (1.) Like Elijah, we must not faint because we do not instantly receive, but persevere in prayer, and we shall not be disappointed. (2.) Great events arise from small beginnings: the work of grace in the heart at first is like the little cloud; it begins, perhaps, by a casual word dropped without design, but by and by overspreads all the faculties of the body and soul. (3.) They who are most distinguished of God, and with greatest boldness are called to rebuke men's sins, must shew their humility exemplary as their zeal, and pay every due respect to men's persons. (4.) When God strengthens us, we shall run, and not be weary.

## C H A P. XIX.

*Ver. 2. Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah]* This certainly was the effect of Jezebel's blind rage, and not of any prudence in her; for prudence would have advised her to conceal her resentment till she had been ready to put her designs in execution: whereas this sending him word was giving him notice of his danger, and admonishing him to avoid it: but since he had had the confidence to come where she was, she might think, perhaps, that he was as courageous as she was furious; that upon this notice he would scorn to fly; and she too, in her pride,

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might

under a juniper-tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I *am* not better than my fathers.

5 And as he lay and slept under a juniper-tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise *and* eat.

6 And he looked, and, behold, *there was* a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water

at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again.

7 And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise *and* eat; because the journey *is* too great for thee.

8 And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God.

might scorn to kill him secretly, resolving to make him a complete sacrifice.

*Ver. 3, 4. And when he saw that, he arose, &c.]* It is very doubtful, whether *juniper-tree* be the proper rendering of the original word **רֹתֵם** *rothem*. Parkhurst says, that it signifies the *broom* or *birch-tree*, so called from its tenacity or toughness, which was so great that its twigs served for cords. See Plin. Nat. Hist. lib. xxiv. cap. 9. The Arabians, and from them the Spaniards, still retain the name *retama*, for the *birch-tree*. See Job, xxx. 4. and Scheuchzer. It must be acknowledged, that there is something not consistent with the other parts of his character in this conduct of Elijah: the truth is, *he was a man subject to the like passions as we are*; and, probably, it was with a view to this part of his behaviour that the apostle made that reflection. Elijah knew Jezebel, that she had all the faults incident to her sex in a superlative degree; that she was fierce, cruel, vindictive, and implacable: that in slaying the priests of Baal he had incurred her displeasure, and that, to revenge herself, she had all the power of the kingdom under her command. These notions made such an impression upon his spirits, as deprived him of that manly resolution otherwise so remarkable: nor was there wanting a wise design of Providence, in suffering this timidity to fall upon his servant. It was to shew him his natural imbecility, and the necessity that he had at all times of the divine assistance, which alone could fortify him with a spirit of intrepidity. It was to suppress all the little sentiments of pride and arrogance, which might possibly arise in his breast upon the contemplation of the gifts and graces bestowed on him, and the many great miracles which were wrought by his hands; that if he did glory, he might glory in the Lord, and not dare to take any part of his honour to himself. See 2 Cor. xii. 7. and Calmet.

*Ver. 8. Went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights]* From Beer-sheba to mount Horeb is at the most not above a hundred and fifty miles, and the prophet, it seems, had advanced one day's journey into the wilderness; so that he had not now more to finish than any active man might have done in four or five days. How came the prophet then to make *forty* of it? To this some reply, that he, like the Israelites of old, was kept wandering up and down this pathless wilderness forty days, as they were forty years, till at length he came to the sacred mountain: others suppose, that he went about by private ways, and perhaps rested, and lay hid, in order to prevent discovery. The Jews have made a comparison between Moses and Elijah in many particulars,

and given Moses the preference, especially in the matter of his forty days fast, though certainly without any reason; as it is very plain from the text; that Elijah, as well as Moses, took no other food during the forty days than that here mentioned. To make the miracle more remarkable, we are informed, that the food here mentioned was simple bread and water; and who can doubt that God could make its strength and nourishment sufficient for the time specified? His slightest volition can make the same meal which usually serves us for four-and-twenty hours support us for forty days, and much longer if he pleases. That meat of any kind should sustain us for four-and-twenty hours, if rightly considered, is a miracle, and that the like proportion should do it for the space of forty days, is still but a miracle; and with the same facility that God does the one, he can do the other. See Exod. xxxiv. 28. and Deut. viii. 3.

REFLECTIONS.—Elijah entered Jezreel yesterday as in triumph, to-day he is driven thence in disgrace, and flies for his life: so changeable is this vain world!

1. Hardened Ahab relates to Jezebel the late transactions, and fails not to inform her of the death of her prophets: that though he dared not himself, for fear of the people, seize Elijah, he might incense her, whose furious passions would not fail to fire at the tidings. *Note*; With the wickedness to which we instigate others, we are as chargeable as if ourselves had committed it.

2. Jezebel, enraged, denounces vengeance on Elijah, and swears by her gods that he shall have met his death by to-morrow at that time. *Note*; (1.) Profaneness in a woman is doubly shocking. (2.) The presence of a good man is a burdensome restraint on the wicked, and they are always impatient to get him out of the way.

3. Elijah, who had not been intimidated by kings, priests, or people united, now trembles at the threats of a woman; and, without waiting God's orders, seeks to save himself by flight; and, as if he heard Jezebel's voice behind him, even at Beer-sheba, though out of the territories of Ahab, he cannot think himself safe, but hides himself a day's journey in the wilderness; thus deserting his post, when he was most wanted to carry on that reformation which was begun. *Note*; (1.) The strongest in faith, when left for a moment to themselves, turn cowards. (2.) We ought never to desert the path of duty, though it lead us through the valley of the shadow of death.

4. Fatigued with his journey, and impatient under his burdens, he grew weary of life, which he had fled

so

9 ¶ And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the LORD *came* to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?

10 And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, *even* I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

11 And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; *but* the LORD *was* not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; *but* the LORD *was* not in the earthquake:

12 And after the earthquake a fire; *but* the LORD *was* not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.

13 And it was *so*, when Elijah heard *it*, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the

cave. And, behold, *there came* a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?

14 And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, *even* I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

15 And the LORD said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael *to be* king over Syria:

16 And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint *to be* king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shalt thou anoint *to be* prophet in thy room.

17 And it shall come to pass, *that* him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay: and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay.

18 Yet I have left *me* seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.

so far to save: and, though unwilling to die by the hand of Jezebel, prays to die there by the hand of the Lord. He concludes his usefulness to be at an end; and, as not better than his fathers, desires his dismissal, thinking that he has lived long enough. *Note*: (1.) However dark providences appear, we must not despair; we know not what further work God may have to do by us. (2.) Though to desire to be with Christ is laudable, to be weary of our warfare is sinful.

5. Grieved and weary, sleep stole upon his eyelids; and under a juniper-tree he lay down, careless whether he ever awoke again. But God, kinder to him than he deserved, awakes him by an angel; and there he sees a table spread for his refreshment, and a bright spirit his attendant. Having satisfied his hunger, and again composed himself to sleep, he is again called upon to rise and eat, because the journey was great to which God called him, even to Horeb. Thither in the strength of this repast he travels; and, during forty days and nights, needed no other refreshment. *Note*: (1.) How much better is God to his children than their frowardness desires! He supports them and feeds them, even in this wilderness; and when they are ready to despair, he is at hand to succour and save them. (2.) They who are travelling to Horeb, the mount of God in glory, will find strength ministered to them for their journey, and meat to eat which the world knoweth not of. (3.) The meanest child of God is more nobly attended than the kings of the earth; angelic spirits minister continually to these heirs of salvation.

*Ver. 9—14.* He came thither unto a cave, &c.] Elijah being now come to the same place where God had delivered

the law to his servant Moses, God was inclined to communicate the like favour to his prophet; namely, to unveil his glory to him, and to give him some signal of his actual presence. Various are the speculations which this appearance of the Deity has suggested to interpreters. The greater part have considered it as a figure of the Gospel dispensation, which came not in such a terrible manner as the law did, with thunders and lightnings and earthquakes, but with great lenity and sweetness; wherein he speaks to us by his Son, who makes use of no other than gentle arts and soft persuasions.

*Ver. 17.* Him that escapeth the sword of Hazael, &c.] It is evident, that the text mentions not the things according to the order of time wherein they happened; for Elisha was prophet before Hazael was king, and Hazael was king before Jehu; but they are spoken of according to the decree of God; and the words plainly mean no more than this: that God, in his providence, had appointed three persons to punish the Israelites according to their deserts; and that one or other of these should infallibly execute his judgments upon them. The only difficulty is, How the prophet Elisha can be said to *slay*, when by profession he was a pacific man, and never engaged in war? But when we consider the two-and-forty children which he destroyed, the sore famine which, by God's appointment, he sent upon the Israelites, 2 Kings, vi. 25. and the many dreadful prophecies and comminations (called in Scripture the *sword of the mouth*, Isai. xlix. 2. Rev. i. 16.) which he denounced against them, and which were fulfilled, we shall find reason enough to justify the expression.

*Ver. 18.* And every mouth which hath not kissed him] This  
3 H 2  
verse

19 ¶ So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who *was* plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him.

20 And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and *then* I will follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again: for what have I done to thee?

21 And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat.

Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him.

## C H A P. XX.

*Abab defeats Ben-hadad, king of Syria, with a great slaughter, in two battles; he spares Ben-hadad, and is on that account severely reprov'd by a prophet.*

[Before Christ 901.]

**A**ND Ben-hadad the king of Syria gathered all his host together: and *there were* thirty and two kings with him, and horses, and chariots: and he went up and besieged Samaria, and warred against it.

2 And he sent messengers to Ahab king of

verse seems to be inserted to correct Elijah's mistaken opinion, that he alone remained a worshipper of Jehovah. Kissing the image of a false god, or kissing the hand and stretching it out towards the image, was esteemed an act of adoration. See Job, xxxi. 27.

REFLECTIONS.—We have here Elijah lodged in a cave, at the foot of mount Sinai, or Horeb: either taking refuge there as a place of safety, or hoping there to meet God, where he had once so eminently manifested his glory.

1. God there appears to him, to reprove and to encourage him: What dost thou here? is the Divine inquiry; (where he was buried from usefulness, and through coward fear acted so unlike the zealous Elijah.) *Note;* (1.) Whom God loves, he rebukes. (2.) When we step out of the way of duty, we should hear this voice of God addressing us, *What dost thou here?* (3.) Wherever God's people are driven, no place can exclude his gracious manifestations.

2. He answers the inquiry by intimating the cause of his flight. His zeal for God against the prophets of Baal had exasperated Jezebel to take away his life; and the hardened impenitence of the people, who had renounced God's covenant, had deserted his worship with insult against his altars, and slain the few faithful which remained, made him despair of success, while he had reason to fear that they would readily join their queen, in conspiring his death, who was now left alone, without so much as one to support or countenance him. *Note;* (1.) We are apt to be discouraged under want of success, as if the sufficiency of the power was of ourselves, and not of God. (2.) Woe to that people against whom their rejected ministers turn accusers of their obstinacy. (3.) They who would be faithful to God in evil days, must put their lives in their hand; and, as they dare speak for God, be ready to die for him.

3. God bids him come forth from the cave, and he will meet him in the mount, and make his glory pass before him. The prophet obeys, and God appears. Before him went the furious whirlwind, rending the rocks, and casting down the mountains; the trembling earth shook with reverence at his approach, and the fierce devouring flames bespoke his glorious presence. A still small voice succeeded, and now the prophet perceives the present Deity.

Wrapped in his mantle, his face is hid, ashamed, afraid to look upon God, yet standing in the mouth of the cave, attentive to the words of the eternal Jehovah. *Note;* (1.) Though God is terrible to his enemies as a consuming fire, his voice is melody and love to his children; and to them he says, *fury is not in me.* (2.) When we appear before a holy God, shame may well cover our face. (3.) The law, like this tempest, breaks the stony heart of man; but it is the office of the blessed Gospel, in gentle accents, to soothe the broken heart, and softly, with kind words of peace and pardon, to bind up the wounded spirit.

*Ver. 19. Elisha—was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen, &c.]* This was so far from being an argument of Elisha's poverty, that it was in reality a token of his wealth. For he who could keep *twelve yoke of oxen* at plough was, in this respect, no inconsiderable man; and yet, according to the manner of these early times, he looked after his own business himself; for nothing, as we have had occasion frequently to observe, was of greater esteem, not only among the Hebrews, but also among the ancient Greeks and Romans, than agriculture. The *mantle* was the proper habit of a prophet, and therefore Elijah's casting his upon Elisha was the ceremony here used for his inauguration; though, as it was customary for servants to carry their master's garments after them, others understand it only as a token that Elisha was to be his servant, to attend upon him, and to succeed in his office. However this be, it is probable, that when he cast his mantle upon him, he said something to him whereby he acquainted him with his design, though in so brief a history the particular words are not expressed. See Le Clerc.

*Ver. 20. For what have I done to thee?]* It seems very difficult to give any satisfactory explanation of these words as they stand in our version. They might be rendered *for I have done something to thee:* Elijah giving Elisha to understand, that, by casting his mantle upon him, he was thus appointed to follow him, and afterwards to have his spirit. Houbigant renders the whole clause, *Go and return, bearing in mind what I have done unto thee.*

Israel into the city, and said unto him, Thus saith Ben-hadad,

3 Thy silver and thy gold *is* mine; thy wives also and thy children, *even* the goodliest, *are* mine.

4 And the king of Israel answered and said, My lord, O king, according to thy saying, I *am* thine, and all that I have.

5 And the messengers came again, and said, Thus speaketh Ben-hadad, saying, Although I have sent unto thee, saying, Thou shalt deliver me thy silver, and thy gold, and thy wives, and thy children;

6 Yet I will send my servants unto thee to-morrow about this time, and they shall search thine house, and the houses of thy servants; and it shall be, *that* whatsoever is pleasant in thine eyes, they shall put *it* in their hand, and take *it* away.

7 Then the king of Israel called all the elders of the land, and said, Mark, I pray you, and see how this *man* seeketh mischief: for he sent unto me for my wives, and for my children, and for my silver, and for my gold; and I denied him not.

8 And all the elders and all the people said unto him, Hearken not *unto him*, nor consent.

9 Wherefore he said unto the messengers of Ben-hadad, Tell my lord the king, All that thou didst send for to thy servant at the first I will do: but this thing I may not do. And the messengers departed, and brought him word again.

10 And Ben-hadad sent unto him, and said, The gods do so unto me, and more also, if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls for all the people that follow me.

11 And the king of Israel answered and said, Tell *him*, Let not him that girdeth on *his harness* boast himself as he that putteth it off.

12 And it came to pass, when *Ben-hadad* heard this message, as he *was* drinking, he and the kings in the pavilions, that he said unto his servants. Set *yourselves in array*. And they set *themselves in array* against the city.

13 ¶ And, behold, there came a prophet unto Ahab king of Israel, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou seen all this great multitude? behold, I will deliver it into thine hand this day; and thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD.

14 And Ahab said, By whom? And he said, Thus saith the LORD, *Even* by the young men of the princes of the provinces. Then he said, Who shall order the battle? And he answered, Thou.

15 Then he numbered the young men of the princes of the provinces, and they were two hundred and thirty-two: and after them he numbered all the people, *even* all the children of Israel, *being* seven thousand.

16 And they went out at noon. But Ben-hadad *was* drinking himself drunk in the pavilions, he and the kings, the thirty and two kings that helped him.

17 And the young men of the princes of the provinces went out first; and Ben-hadad sent out, and they told him, saying, There are men come out of Samaria.

18 And he said, Whether they be come out for peace, take them alive; or whether they be come out for war, take them alive.

19 So these young men of the princes of

## CHAP. XX.

*Ver. 12. Set yourselves in array, &c.] Draw near; and they drew near to the city. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 13. Behold there came a prophet] The Scripture nowhere informs us who this prophet was. It is something extraordinary, that during this whole war with Ben-hadad, neither Elijah nor Elisha, the two principal prophets of Israel, should appear; though other prophets, whereof there seems to have been a considerable number, make no scruple of executing their office; whether it was, that this war commenced before Jezebel's persecution of the prophets, or that this impious queen abated her per-*

secution, and let them have some respite, when she had, as she thought, exterminated Elijah, cannot now be ascertained.

*Ver. 14. Even by the young men of the princes of the provinces] By the help of the servants, which the princes of the provinces have. Houbigant. The Hebrew word נָאֲרִי naari has some ambiguity in it, and may signify either the sons or the servants of the princes of the provinces. It was by these young men, says Poole, and not by old experienced officers, that this battle was to be won; that thereby it might appear, that the victory was wholly owing to God's gracious and powerful Providence, and not to the valour or fitness of the instruments.*

*Ver.*



the provinces came out of the city, and the army which followed them.

20 And they slew every one his man: and the Syrians fled; and Israel pursued them: and Ben-hadad the king of Syria escaped on an horse with the horsemen.

21 And the king of Israel went out, and smote the horses and chariots, and slew the Syrians with a great slaughter.

22 ¶ And the prophet came to the king of Israel, and said unto him, Go, strengthen thyself, and mark, and see what thou doest: for at the return of the year the king of Syria will come up against thee.

23 And the servants of the king of Syria said unto him, Their gods *are* gods of the hills; therefore they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they.

24 And do this thing, Take the kings away, every man out of his place, and put captains in their rooms:

25 And number thee an army, like the army that thou hast lost, horse for horse, and chariot for chariot: and we will fight against them in the plain, *and* surely we shall be stronger than they. And he hearkened unto

their voice, and did so.

26 And it came to pass at the return of the year, that Ben-hadad numbered the Syrians, and went up to Aphek, to fight against Israel.

27 And the children of Israel were numbered, and were all present, and went against them: and the children of Israel pitched before them like two little flocks of kids; but the Syrians filled the country.

28 ¶ And there came a man of God, and spake unto the king of Israel, and said, Thus saith the LORD, Because the Syrians have said, The LORD *is* God of the hills, but he *is* not God of the vallies, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.

29 And they pitched one over against the other seven days. And *so* it was, that in the seventh day the battle was joined: and the children of Israel slew of the Syrians an hundred thousand footmen in one day.

30 But the rest fled to Aphek, into the city; and *there* a wall fell upon twenty and seven thousand of the men *that were* left. And Ben-hadad fled, and came into the city, into an inner chamber.

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*Ver. 23. Their gods are gods of the hills]* See Numb. xxiii. 27. and Virgil, *Æn.* viii. ver. 698, &c. Bishop Warburton observes, that when Ben-hadad, whose forces consisted of chariots and horsemen, had warred with ill success against the king of Israel, his ministers, in a council of war, delivered their advice to him in the terms included in this verse. From this passage, says he, I collect, 1. That the army of Israel, consisting all of infantry, had chosen the situation of the hills; and this with proper military skill. 2. That their constant success with such a disposition of their forces occasioned this advice of the ministers of Ben-hadad. These men, possessed with the general notion of local tutelary deities, finding the arms of Israel always successful on the hills, took it for the eminent manifestation of the powers of their gods; *Their gods, say they, are gods of the hills.* Their superstition dictated the first part of their opinion, and their skill in war the second; *Let us fight them in the plains.* The operations of war had been hitherto most absurd: they had attacked an army of infantry with one of cavalry on hills and defiles. The advice of these ministers was truly good; but how to put it in execution was the question; for, they being the assailants, the Israelites were masters of the ground: so that, after all, there was no other way of bringing them into the plains, than by beating them from the hills; and there they must have stuck till famine and desertion had

ended their quarrel. In this exigence, their blasphemy against the God of Israel enabled them to put their counsels against him into execution. They fancied, according to the superstition of that time, and so gave out, *that he was God of the hills, but not of the vallies.* His omnipotence being thus disputed, he placed his people in the plains, and sent his prophet, ver. 28. to predict the coming vengeance on his enemies; and their defeat was a singular and undeniable confirmation both of his divine omnipotence and veracity. Div. Leg. vol. iii. p. 290, &c.

*Ver. 30. The rest fled to Aphek, &c.]* Aphek was situated in Libanus upon the river Adonis, between Heliopolis and Biblos, and in all probability was the same which Lucas speaks of, as swallowed up in a lake of mount Libanus, about nine miles in circumference, wherein there are several houses, all entire, to be seen under water. The soil about this place was very bituminous, which seems to confirm their opinion who think that subterraneous fire consumed the solid substance of the earth whereon the city stood, so that it subsided and sunk at once, and a lake was soon formed in its place. *And there a wall fell,* would be rendered more properly, *and the wall fell,* meaning the whole wall of the city; an event which may be accounted for in a natural way, by supposing that the Syrians, after their defeat, betook themselves to this fenced city of Aphek, and, despairing of any quarter, mounted the walls, or retired into

31 ¶ And his servants said unto him, Behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings: let us, I pray thee, put sackcloth on our loins, and ropes upon our heads, and go out to the king of Israel: peradventure he will save thy life.

32 So they girded sackcloth on their loins, and put ropes on their heads, and came to the king of Israel, and said, Thy servant Ben-hadad saith, I pray thee, let me live. And he said, Is he yet alive? He is my brother.

33 Now the men did diligently observe

whether *any thing would come* from him, and did hastily catch it: and they said, Thy brother Ben-hadad. Then he said, Go ye, bring him. Then Ben-hadad came forth to him; and he caused him to come up into the chariot.

34 And Ben-hadad said unto him, The cities, which my father took from thy father, I will restore; and thou shalt make streets for thee in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria. Then said Ahab, I will send thee away with this covenant. So he made a covenant with him, and sent him away.

into some castle with a resolution to defend themselves to the last, and that the Israelitish army, coming upon them, plied the walls of the castle on every side so warmly with their batteries, that down they came at once; and killing some, wounding others, and making the rest disperse with fear, did all the execution which the text intends. But though the event may thus be accounted for, it is more reasonable to think that God upon this occasion wrought a miracle, and either by some earthquake or sudden storm of wind, overturned this wall upon the Syrians; and, indeed, if any time was proper for his Almighty arm to interpose, it was this, when these blasphemous people had denied his sovereign power and authority in the government of the world, and thereby in some measure obliged him, in vindication of his own honour, to give them a full demonstration of it; to shew that he was the God of the plains as well as of the hills; that he could as effectually destroy them in strong holds as in the open field, and make those very walls wherein they trusted for defence, the instruments of their ruin. See Patrick and Poole.

Ver. 31, 32. *Let us—put sackcloth on our loins, and ropes, &c.*] The approaching persons, *with a sword hanging to the neck*, is, in the East, thought to be a very humble and submissive manner of coming before them. So William of Tyre, describing the great solemnity and humiliation with which the governor of Egypt under the caliph of that country appeared before his master, tells us, that he prostrated himself on the ground thrice, with his sword hanging to his neck, which, at the third prostration, he took off and laid down. Thevenot has mentioned this circumstance in the account he has given of the taking of Bagdat by the Turks in 1638, extracted from the letter of a person of distinction in the Turkish army, to one of the Sangiacks of Egypt; for upon the besieged begging quarter we are told, that the lieutenant, and principal officer of the governor of Bagdat, went to the grand vizier with a scarf about his neck, and his sword wreathed in it, (which, says he, is an ignominious mark of submission,) and begged, both in his own and his master's name, *aman*, that is to say, pardon and mercy; and having obtained it, the governor came and was introduced to the grand signior, and obtained not only a confirmation of the promise of life which had been made him, but also divers presents of value. Thevenot supposed, that the hanging the sword about the neck was an ignominious mark of submission; but

its being used by the governor of Ægypt, when he appeared before his master, shews, that though it was an expression of humiliation and perfect submission, it was not an ignominious one; but a token it undoubtedly was of such respect as was thought proper for the conquered to pay to the victor, when they begged their lives; and as such was used, I suppose, by Ben-hadad: for those ropes about the necks of his servants were, I should imagine, what they suspended their swords with, if the customs of later times may be thought explanatory of those of ancient days, as in the East, particularly, they often are. *Observations*, p. 354.

Ver. 34. *Thou shalt make streets for thee in Damascus, &c.*] Ben-hadad, received to mercy, and treated with respect, promised upon this occasion to restore to the kingdom of Israel the cities that his father had taken from it. *And thou shalt make*, said he, *streets for thee in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria.* This was a proposal better relished by Ahab, than understood by commentators. Bishop Patrick tells us, that some suppose the word *חצות* *chutsoth* to signify market-places, where things were sold, the toll of which should belong to Ahab: others think that he meant courts of judicature, where he should exercise a jurisdiction over the Syrians; others, what we now call a piazza, or rather what by Rauwolf is called a *fondique*, *champ*, *caravatschura*, or *caravansera*, and by others a *kane*; i. e. a great house, built like a cloister, round a great court-yard, and full of warehouses and apartments, in which foreign merchants are wont to live, or travellers to repair, as to an inn, and of which Ahab was to receive the rents. But commonly, says the Bishop, interpreters understand by the word, *fortifications* or *citadels*, as we now speak; Vallandus, however, attempts to prove, that *palaces* are meant, the building of which by Ahab was a great token of subjection in Ben-hadad. Perhaps the privileges which we know were actually granted to the Venetians for their aid, by the states of the kingdom of Jerusalem, in the time of the captivity of Baldwin II. may more satisfactorily explain these words of Ben-hadad. William of Tyre, the greatest historian of the Croisades, has preserved that ancient and curious instrument; from which convention, as well as from the accounts he has elsewhere given of the privileges granted to other nations for their assistance, it appears, that they were wont to assign churches, and give streets in their towns and cities to those foreign nations, together with great liberties and jurisdiction.

35 ¶ And a certain man of the sons of the prophets said unto his neighbour in the word of the LORD, Smite me, I pray thee. And the man refused to smite him.

36 Then said he unto him, Because thou hast not obeyed the voice of the LORD, behold, as soon as thou art departed from me, a lion shall slay thee. And as soon as he was departed from him, a lion found him, and slew him.

37 Then he found another man, and said, Smite me, I pray thee. And the man smote him, so that in smiting he wounded him.

38 So the prophet departed, and waited for the king by the way, and disguised himself with ashes upon his face.

39 And as the king passed by, he cried unto

the king: and he said, Thy servant went out into the midst of the battle; and, behold, a man turned aside, and brought a man unto me, and said, Keep this man: if by any means he be missing, then shall thy life be for his life, or else thou shalt pay a talent of silver.

40 And as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone. And the king of Israel said unto him, So shall thy judgment be; thyself hast decided it.

41 And he hastened and took the ashes away from his face; and the king of Israel discerned him that he was of the prophets.

42 And he said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Because thou hast let go out of thy hand a man whom I appointed to utter de-

dition in these streets. Thus he tells us, that the Genoese had a street in Accon, or John D'Acree, together with full jurisdiction in it, and a church, as a reward for taking that city, together with a third part of the dues of the port. Thus too the above-mentioned ancient instrument very clearly shews, that the Venetians had a street also in Accon; and explains what this full jurisdiction in a street means, by giving them liberty to have in their street there an oven, mill, bagnio, weights and measures for wine, oil, and honey, if they thought fit, and also to judge causes among themselves; together with as great a jurisdiction over all who dwelt in their street and houses, of whatever nation they might be, as the king of Jerusalem had over others. May we not believe, that the same or nearly the same franchises and regalities which were granted to the Venetians and Genoese, in order to obtain aid from them, the father of Ahab had granted to Ben-hadad's father to obtain peace, and Ben-hadad, upon this fatal turn of his affairs, proposed to grant to Ahab in Damascus;—a quarter for his subjects to live in, and which he should possess, and over which he should enjoy the same jurisdiction, as he did with respect to the rest of his kingdom? Such a power in Samaria, and such a making-over a part of it to the father of Ben-hadad, and annexing it to the kingdom of Syria, with a right of building such idol temples as he thought fit, was a sufficient disgrace to the father of Ahab, as the proposing to give Ahab now a like honour in Damascus was an expression of a very abject adulation in Ben-hadad. The privileges that commentators have mentioned are either not of importance enough to answer the general representation of matters in the history, or are absolutely destructive of them. A medium is therefore to be sought for; and such an one, we presume, is here satisfactorily proposed. See *Observations*, p. 355.

Ver. 35, 36. *A certain man—said unto his neighbour in the word of the Lord, Smite me, &c.] Said—by the command of the Lord, &c.* Houbigant. The prophets, as we have before observed, both in their parabolical speeches and

symbolical actions, are to be considered as persons of a singular character. See ch. xi. 30, 31. We have one here, desiring his companion, a person bred up in the same school with him, to give him a wound, that thereby he might have a better opportunity of reproving Ahab for his ill-timed clemency to Ben-hadad. To desire to be wounded was, in appearance, a request so frantic, that his brother prophet might justly have denied him, had he not been satisfied that his request was from God. But herein lay the great fault of the recusant; though he knew the authority of God's commands, and that this was the very thing which he enjoined; yet, out of an indiscreet pity and compassion to his brother, he refused to comply. Had he been a stranger to the several methods of divine prophesy, he might have excused himself with a better grace; but as he was equally a prophet, bred up in the same school as the other, and well understood the weight of his brother prophet's request, he was utterly inexcusable.

Ver. 38. *With ashes upon his face]* Houbigant reads, *with a bandage;—he had his eyes covered with a bandage.* Several of the versions render it *with a veil.* See ver. 41.

Ver. 42. *Thus saith the Lord, because thou hast let go, &c.]* The offence which God threatens to punish thus severely in Ahab, consisted in his suffering such a blasphemer as Ben-hadad to go unpunished, which was contrary to an express law, Lev. xxiv. 16. If it should be urged, that this was nothing to Ben-hadad, since the law concerned the Israelites only, the reply is, that this law extended not to those only who were born in the land, but, as it is there expressed, to strangers likewise, who were among them and in their power, as Ben-hadad certainly was. God had delivered him into Ahab's hand for his blasphemy, as he had promised, ver. 28. and therefore this act of providence, compared with the law, did plainly intimate that he was appointed by God for destruction. But so far is Ahab from punishing him as he deserved, that he treats him like a friend and brother, dismisses him upon easy terms, and takes his bare word for the performance, without the least care

struction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people.

43 And the king of Israel went to his house heavy and displeased, and came to Samaria.

care about the reparation of God's honour. See Patrick and Poole.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have here,

1. Samaria besieged by Ben-hadad king of Syria, with thirty-two tributary or confederate kings under him: and sin had so weakened Israel's hands, that they met with no resistance in their way even to the capital. *Note;* They who provoke God to leave them, are defenceless indeed.

2. As ambition and covetousness dictated the invasion, swollen with insolence and pride on his success, he sends Ahab a haughty message as his vassal, and bids him submit and surrender his all without reserve. *Note;* Success makes vain minds insolent.

3. Ahab, whose coward heart dared not oppose the haughty conqueror, and whose guilt forbid him to hope for help in God, tamely submits to purchase his peace at this ignominious price.

4. Ben-hadad, grown more insolent on his submission, and now concluding his affairs desperate, rises in his demands. Not content with his treasures, or his vassalage, he requires that his servants may search his house, and the houses of his great men, and plunder them of every thing that is valuable, and expects his answer by the morrow. *Note;* (1.) There is no satisfying a covetous mind. (2.) Mean spirits delight to tyrannize over those who they think dare not resist them.

5. Roused by so unreasonable a demand, Ahab summons his council, and exposes to them the concessions he had offered, and the fresh demands imposed on him. They encourage him to stand out, and promise to support him; on which the messengers are dismissed with a denial, yet couched in such terms as might least offend; and with a proposal to ratify the former offer.

6. Enraged at his refusal, Ben-hadad swears by his gods to beat Samaria into dust, and to bring such an host into the field that there shall not be enough for each to take a handful. *Note;* (1.) The greatest talkers are not the greatest doers. (2.) The threats of pride are often impotent and vain.

7. Ahab wisely admonishes him of the uncertainty of war, and that the most confident are not always the most successful. *Note;* As long as we are in the flesh, it becometh us with fear and trembling to work out our salvation: when we shall put off the body in the grave, then we may shout for victory.

2dly, The treaty being broken off, each side prepares for war.

1. Ben-hadad commands the city to be invested, or preparation made for an assault; though himself took no care to superintend the attack, but sat at noon-day drinking himself drunk with the kings in his pavilion, unapprehensive of danger, and by his ill example rendering them as negligent and debauched as himself. *Note;* Those who feel themselves most secure, are often nearest the precipice of ruin.

2. In Ahab's distress, unworthy as he is of such a mercy, yet for Israel's sake, God interposes, and sends his

prophet, with encouragement to him, and assurance of victory that very day, that he may be convinced that God is the Lord, the true Jehovah. On his inquiry how, or by whom, his deliverance should be wrought, he is commanded to draw out the young men of the princes of the provinces. Ahab obeys, numbers the young men, no more than 232, and after them 7000, probably such as offered to second them; a most unequal force against such an enemy: but God's promise is better than the most numerous host; and these despicable forces best suited to abate the pride of the insolent king. *Note;* (1.) God shews the wicked many mercies, to work upon them to repent, or leave them inexcusable. (2.) We must obey God in the use of means, however inadequate they may appear, and trust him for the event.

3. Ahab, according to the divine command, falls forth at noon, with his little force, whilst Ben-hadad was drunk in his tent; and on news being brought him of the appearance of some troops, despising their numbers, he commands, whether they came for peace or war, to take them prisoners: but when the Syrians advanced to seize them, the Israelites caught each his man, and slew them, which wrought such a panic in the host, that they instantly fled; while the rest of the forces follow now under the king, and obtain a complete victory. *Note;* (1.) Those who walk in pride, God is able to abate. (2.) The weakest instruments are effectual in God's hands.

3dly, Ahab, triumphant, little thought that the storm was gathering afresh, and promised himself no farther disturbance. But

1. God warns him, by a prophet, of the preparations making against him, and bids him prepare for another campaign; for, though the former victory was not achieved by human strength, he must not tempt God by neglecting to use his best endeavours. *Note;* (1.) We are apt to flatter ourselves that the danger is over, when the present trial is overcome; and not to be aware, how restless are our spiritual foes, and that earth and hell will not let us be quiet long. (2.) Though God only can enable us to overcome, we must labour as earnestly as if the success depended on ourselves.

2. Ben-hadad is encouraged by his servants to raise another army, to retrieve his lost honour. They suggest to him, that Israel's God was only mighty in the hills, but in the valley they had nothing to fear from him, according to their false notions of topical deities.

3. With unequal forces the two armies take the field. The Syrians like locusts covered the country; whilst the two little bands of Israel, not a man of whom was lost in the last encounter, appeared as few and weak as two little flocks of kids. But one advantage they had which overbalanced all; God was for them. His prophet assures them of victory, though they deserved it not, to make the Syrians know that the God of Israel is every where omnipotent and irresistible. *Note;* As unequally matched does the church of God and every believer in it appear amidst their spiritual foes; but God is with them, therefore they are more than conquerors.

## C H A P. XXI.

*Ahab is denied Naboth's vineyard; Jezebel causeth Naboth to be stoned: Elijah denounceth God's judgments against Ahab and Jezebel.*

[Before Christ 899.]

**A**ND it came to pass after these things, that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria.

2 And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house: and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it; or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money.

3 And Naboth said to Ahab, The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee.

4 And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him: for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him down upon his

bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.

5 ¶ But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said unto him, Why is thy spirit so sad, that thou eatest no bread?

6 And he said unto her, Because I spake unto Naboth the Jezreelite, and said unto him, Give me thy vineyard for money; or else, if it please thee, I will give thee another vineyard for it: and he answered, I will not give thee my vineyard.

7 And Jezebel his wife said unto him, Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? arise, and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.

8 So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that were in his city, dwelling with Naboth.

9 And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people:

4. The issue confirms the prophet's word. Seven days they encamped near each other; on the seventh, after this encouragement, Ahab dared join in the unequal conflict, and prevailed. One hundred thousand Syrians fell that day; and when the shattered remains of the army took refuge under the walls of Aphek, an earthquake, or whirlwind, threw down the wall upon twenty-seven thousand men, and slew, wounded, or dispersed them.

## C H A P. XXI.

*Ver. 1. Naboth, &c.] Naboth the Jezreelite who dwelt in Jezreel had a vineyard in Samaria, hard by the palace of king Ahab. See Essay for a New Translation.*

*Ver. 2. Ahab spake unto Naboth, &c.] The account of Ahab's coveting Naboth's vineyard is immediately set after his treatment of Ben-hadad, to shew his extreme great wickedness in sparing him, as Saul did Agag king of the Amalekites, and killing Naboth that he might get possession of his vineyard; for this was a high aggravation of his crime, that he basely murdered a just Israelite, and suffered an impious enemy to escape. It appears however, from this request of Ahab, that, though the kings of Israel ruled their subjects in a very arbitrary and despotic manner, they did not take the liberty to seize on their land and hereditaryments; and, therefore, what Samuel prophesies of the kings of Israel, 1 Sam. viii. 14. does not extend to any true and lawful, but a presumed and usurped right only in their kings. See Calmet and Patrick.*

*Ver. 3. The Lord forbid it me, &c.] Ahab's request was inconsistent with the law, Lev. xxv. 15. 25. 28. and therefore shewed an unbounded avarice, if not impiety in*

the king; for as, by means of the incorporation of the religious and civil societies which was the consequence of a theocracy, religious matters came under a civil consideration; so likewise civil matters came under the religious. See Div. Leg. vol. iv. Houbigant remarks, that Naboth very properly urges a religious motive; for it was part of his religion not to alienate a paternal inheritance, unless through poverty or necessity. They were to have the same sentiments concerning each particular inheritance, as concerning the possession of the land of Canaan itself; which contained the pledge of the divine promises of a better covenant. Besides, Naboth knew that his vineyard, if possessed by kings, would not return to him at the jubilee. So that he is not to be blamed for refusing a condition which would have been most dishonourable to any private man. *Note;* When we must offend God or man, there can need no hesitation to determine which.

*Ver. 7. Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel?] In truth the king has very excellent authority in Israel! Houb.*

*Ver. 9. Proclaim a fast] It was always usual, upon the approach of any great calamity, or the apprehension of any national judgment, to proclaim a fast. Jezebel orders such a fast to be observed, the better to conceal her design against Naboth: for by this means she intimated to the people, that they had some accursed thing among them, which was ready to bring down the vengeance of God upon their city; and that therefore it was their business to enquire into all those sins which provoked God to anger against them, and to purge them out effectually. As, therefore, these days of fasting were employed in punishing offenders, doing justice, and imploring God's pardon,*

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10 And set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme God and the king. And then carry him out, and stone him, that he may die.

11 And the men of his city, *even* the elders and the nobles who were the inhabitants in his city, did as Jezebel had sent unto them, and as it was written in the letters which she had sent unto them.

12 They proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people.

13 And there came in two men, children of Belial, and sat before him: and the men of Belial witnessed against him, *even* against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, Naboth did blaspheme God and the king. Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died.

14 Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, Naboth is stoned, and is dead.

15 ¶ And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned, and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give thee for money: for Naboth is not alive, but dead.

16 And it came to pass, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the

Jezreelite, to take possession of it.

17 ¶ And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying,

18 Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, which is in Samaria: behold, *he is* in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to possess it.

19 And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, *even* thine.

20 And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee: because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD.

21 Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy posterity, and will cut off from Ahab him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel,

22 And will make thine house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the provocation wherewith thou hast provoked me to anger, and made Israel to sin.

23 And of Jezebel also spake the LORD, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.

the elders of the city had now an occasion to convene an assembly, and the false witnesses a fair opportunity to accuse Naboth before them. The phrase, *set Naboth on high*, seems to be similar to that of *lifting up the head*; Gen. xl. 13. 20. and signifies to bring a person to a public trial. Others however think, that as Naboth was a man of consequence, it implies the setting him in an honourable place among the elders of the city. See Le Clerc, and Pilkington's Remarks.

*Ver. 10. Thou didst blaspheme God and the king*] It was death by the law of Moses to blaspheme God; Lev. xxiv. 16. and by custom it was death to revile the king, Exod. xxii. 28. Now, in order to make sure work, the witnesses, as they were instructed, accused Naboth of both these crimes, that the people might be the better satisfied to see him stoned. There is this difference, however, to be observed between these two crimes, that if a man had blasphemed God, his goods came to his heirs; whereas when a man was executed for treason, his estate went to the exchequer, and was forfeited to him against whom the offence was committed; for this reason it was that they accused Naboth of this crime likewise, that his estate might be confiscated, and Ahab might by that means get possession

of the vineyard. See Patrick, and Selden, De Succes. cap. xxv. *Note*; 1. Perjury is among the most deadly sins, and most dangerous to society; no man's life or property is safe against a lying tongue. 2. Injustice committed under the pretext of law is the most insupportable kind of oppression. 3. No innocence can protect a man from the power of oppressors. 4. There is a day, when the blood of innocence, and the tears of the oppressed, will come into remembrance; and then woe to the murderer and the oppressor.

*Ver. 19. Thus saith the Lord, In the place where dogs licked, &c.*] Instead of *מקום* *mekom* the place, some would render it, *the manner*; and so the sense of the passage will be, "In the same manner as dogs licked Naboth's blood, even so shall they lick thy blood, even thine." Houbigant renders it *wherever, or in whatever place, dogs, &c.*

*Ver. 20. Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?*] *Why art thou come to me, O mine enemy? Elijah answered, I am therefore come unto thee, because thou hast sold thyself, &c.* The word *sold*, which is used by St. Paul, Rom. vii. 14. signifies the total giving up of one's self into the hand or power of another, and is a very strong and nervous expression for the total slavery of the soul to sin.

24 Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat.

25 But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.

26 And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all things as did the Amorites, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel.

27 ¶ And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly.

28 And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying,

29 Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house.

## CHAP. XXII.

*Ahab, seduced by false prophets, is slain at Ramoth-gilead; the dogs lick up his blood. Jehoshaphat's good reign: he is succeeded by Jehoram, and Ahab by Abaziah.*

[Before Christ 897.]

AND they continued three years without war between Syria and Israel.

2 And it came to pass in the third year, that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down to the king of Israel.

3 (And the king of Israel said unto his servants, Know ye that Ramoth in Gilead is ours, and we be still, and take it not out of the hand of the king of Syria?)

4 And he said unto Jehoshaphat, Wilt thou go with me to battle to Ramoth-gilead? And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses.

5 ¶ And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Enquire, I pray thee, at the word of the LORD to-day.

*Ver. 27. Ahab—went softly] Went groaning.* Houbigant; who observes, that the Hebrew word *וָנָא* at, is from the Arabic to groan, as a camel when wearied, or falling under its burden. Though Ahab thus assumed the external garb of a penitent, we do not find him produce any of the fruits of sincere repentance; how came God, then, who inspects the heart, and cannot be deceived with external show, to have had any regard to such repentance, and in consequence of it, to have revoked, at least in part, the sentence which he had denounced against Ahab? Some have replied, that God had so great an esteem for true repentance and reformation, that he was willing to reward the very appearance of it. But this is an answer which comports not so well with the purity and holiness of God; and therefore we should rather choose to say, that Ahab's repentance at this time was true, though imperfect, and his sorrow sincere, though of no long continuance; and that had he persisted in his good resolutions, God would have remitted him not only the temporal, but the eternal punishment likewise which was due to his sins. This, however, is an example of the infinite goodness of God towards the greatest sinners, when they humble themselves before him; and we may hence, to our great comfort, infer, that if the repentance of Ahab appeased the Lord for a time, because there was something of sincerity in it, though it was of short continuance; much more infallibly will those who repent with all their heart, and persevere in their repentance, obtain from the divine mercy the pardon of all their sins. See Calmet and Ostervald.

REFLECTIONS.—Ahab had now filled up the measure of his iniquities. Worse than all his predecessors in wickedness, and more infamous in his idolatries, he had willingly

fold himself to commit every abomination: nor is it any exculpation of his guilt, that Jezebel stirred him up, whom he should have restrained, rather than have obeyed.

1. Elijah, at God's command, met him in Naboth's vineyard, and his unwelcome presence marred the master's joy. Ahab's guilty conscience told him that the prophet's coming boded no good, and therefore he accosts him, with his former unhumiliated pride, as the enemy of his repose; yet expressing a dread, which majestic goodness impressed even on such a hardened heart. *Note;* (1.) The ministers of God, who cannot bear to see sinners perishing in their iniquities without warning, are therefore often counted by them as their worst enemies. (2.) The very presence of a godly man strikes an awe upon sinners, and they shun him as the ghost which haunts their conscience, and as the fiend come to torment them before their time.

2. Elijah denounces on him his deserved doom: *I have found thee*, and am come from God to pass sentence on thee. He charges him with Naboth's murder, and his unjust seizure of his inheritance, and, with a terrible commination of approaching judgments, thunders God's wrath against him. His wicked house shall be utterly cut off, as the houses of Jeroboam and Baasha, whose uncommon wickedness he had exceeded: his accursed wife shall be eaten by dogs; so low shall her pride fall; and in the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, (awful and just retaliation!) dogs, says he, shall lick thy blood, even thine. *Note;* (1.) Let no sinner hope to be hidden; sooner or later, terrors like an armed man shall seize him; and woe then to the soul, that, flying now from its convictions, treasures up wrath against the day of wrath. (2.) No subtrefuges in the day of judgment will be able to evade conviction.

6 Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall I go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up; for the LORD shall deliver *it* into the hand of the king.

7 ¶ And Jehoshaphat said, *Is there* not here a prophet of the LORD besides, that we might enquire of him?

8 And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, *There is* yet one man, (Micaiah the son of Imlah) by whom we may enquire of the LORD: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. And

Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so.

9 Then the king of Israel called an officer, and said, Hasten *hither* Micaiah the son of Imlah.

10 And the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah sat each on his throne, having put on their robes, in a void place in the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them.

11 And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made him horns of iron: and he said, Thus saith the LORD, With these shalt thou push the Syrians, until thou have consumed them.

12 And all the prophets prophesied so,

conviction. Both the approver and the perpetrator stand guilty before that God who searcheth the heart. (3.) God's justice in this world sometimes appears most exemplary in suiting the sinner's punishment to his crime.

3. Shocked at the message, his stubborn heart, for a moment, trembled; and, driven to his knees in terror, with sackcloth on his loins, he wore the garb of penitence; and God is pleased to grant him a short reprieve. *Note*; Partial professions of penitence legal terrors often produce; but a sense of pardoning love alone can convert the heart.

CHAP. XXII.

*Ver. 6. The prophets together, about four hundred men*] It is clear enough, from the 7th and 23d verses, that these were idolatrous and false prophets; most probably the worshippers of Baal, and the tools of Ahab and Jezebel. Some have thought, since the number so exactly hits, that these false prophets were the four hundred prophets of the groves, who were constantly fed at Jezebel's table, chap. xviii. 19. But it appears not likely that Ahab would presume to affront Jehoshaphat in so gross a manner, by bringing Jezebel's prophets (prophets probably of *Astarte*, and known idolaters) before him, and making them speak in the name of Jehovah the true God. Neither, on the other hand, does it appear at all probable, that they were such as had been bred up in the *schools* of the prophets, under Elijah, or any other true prophet of God. For, besides that one may reasonably suppose such to have been better men, *Jezebel* but a little before had made so great slaughter of them, that there could hardly be any such number as four hundred left, though some, indeed, might have been hid at that time, whom Elijah knew not of. It remains, therefore, that they might, very probably, be Ahab's own prophets, such as he had set up by rewards and promises, and who accordingly knew how to suit his humour, and to flatter his vanity, all agreeing to a man in the same fawning compliances, and the same treacherous counsels which pleased and tickled for the present, but proved fatal in the end.

*Ver. 11. Zedekiah—made him horns of iron*] It was by these actions that the prophets instructed the people in the will of God, and conversed with them in signs; but

where God teaches the prophet, and, in compliance with the custom of the times, condescends to the same mode of instruction, then the significative action is generally changed into vision, either natural or extraordinary. The significative action, I say, was, in this case, *generally* changed into a vision, but not *always*. For as sometimes, where the instruction was for the people, the significative action was perhaps in *vision*: so sometimes again, though the information was only for the prophet, God would set him upon the real expressive action, whose obvious meaning conveyed the intelligence proposed or sought. Of this we have given a very illustrious instance in the case of Abraham's offering up his son Isaac. The excellent Maimonides, not attending to this primitive mode of information, is much scandalised at several of these actions, unbecoming, as he supposed, the dignity of the prophetic office; and is therefore for resolving them in general into supernatural visions impressed on the imagination of the prophet; and this, because some few of them may perhaps admit of such an interpretation. The actions of the prophets are delivered as realities; but he and some christian writers in conjunction with him represent them as mean, absurd, and fanatical. They gain nothing, however, by the expedient of asserting them to be visions: the charge of fanaticism will follow the prophet in his visions, as well as his waking actions; for if these actions were absurd and fanatical in the real representation, they must needs be so in the imaginary; the same turn of mind operating both asleep and awake. But we have already shown, that information by action was at this time and place a very familiar kind or mode of conversation; and having thence shewn that these actions were neither absurd nor fanatic, we have cleared this mode of instruction from objection, and opened a way not only for a true defence, but likewise for a true understanding of the prophetic writings. Div. Leg. vol. iii. p. 100, &c.; see ch. xi. 19, &c.

REFLECTIONS.—Three years of peace, like the calm which ushers in the storm, bring Ahab's respite to an end, and hasten on the fatal day.

1. Ramoth-gilead was now in the hands of the Syrians, which Ahab resolves, with the assistance of his ally Jehoshaphat,



saying, Go up to Ramoth-gilead, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver *it* into the king's hand.

13 And the messenger that was gone to call Micaiah spake unto him, saying, Behold now, the words of the prophets *declare* good unto the king with one mouth: let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak *that which is good*.

14 And Micaiah said, *As* the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak.

15 ¶ So he came to the king. And the king said unto him, Micaiah, shall we go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we

forbear? And he answered him, Go, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver *it* into the hand of the king.

16 And the king said unto him, How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but *that which is true* in the name of the LORD?

17 And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd: and the LORD said, These have no master: let them return every man to his house in peace.

18 And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil?

Jehoshaphat, to rescue from them; either repenting his former lenity to Ben-hadad, or provoked at his perfidy. *Note;* (1.) When by our neglect we lose the opportunity that God gives us, we afterwards struggle but in vain to recover it. (2.) Treaties are slender bands to hold perfidious princes.

2. Ahab asks Jehoshaphat to accompany him in the expedition, to which the latter consents: he had made peace with Ahab, had confirmed it by marrying his son to Ahab's daughter, and now he has not the heart to deny him, though it brought him into a very dangerous and unsuccessful quarrel. *Note;* The wicked are often too worldly wise for God's children, and connections with them usually end in their infinite loss and damage.

3. Though Jehoshaphat consents to go, he is first for asking counsel of God: whereupon Ahab, who never thought of consulting God in the matter, sends for his court prophets, whose complaisance he well knew, to advise with. Their declarations are unanimous: "Go, and prosper," is all the cry; nay, one of them, as imitating the signs of a real prophet with horns of iron, emblems of majesty and strength, predicts that such shall be their power and success, that the Syrians shall be utterly destroyed; and, to engage Jehoshaphat's credit, prefaces his declaration with the name of Jehovah. *Note;* (1.) The false prophets in every age are a numerous body, and, with the vaunt of God's name in their mouth, more fatally lie in wait to deceive. (2.) Unity and multitude are neither proofs of a true church, nor a good cause.

4. Jehoshaphat is little satisfied with these pretenders; and, though unwilling to affront Ahab by suggesting his real sentiments, asks if there was no other prophet of the Lord beside these, to consult with. Ahab mentions one more, Micaiah, a prophet indeed of God; but he hated him for his ill-boding tongue (never prophesying good concerning him); and it seems he was now in prison; see ver. 26. probably for the message delivered, chap. xx. 39. Jehoshaphat gently reproves the wicked king, who merited a more severe rebuke; and Ahab, not to disoblige his ally, consents that Micaiah shall be brought, while they, seated on thrones in their royal robes, sur-

rounded with their courtiers and prophets, waited his arrival. *Note;* (1.) We must not believe every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God; and false prophets are of no difficult detection. (2.) They who do ill must not expect to hear from God's prophets visions of peace. (3.) There is no surer proof of a false teacher, than his prophesying smooth things, and suffering the careles and the hypocrite to sleep in their sins.

5. Ahab knew where Micaiah lay fast bound, and therefore his officer soon finds him. By the way, he fails not to acquaint him with the unanimity of the other prophets, and to advise him to conform to them, as the king's pleasure was well known, and his dissent from them might bring him into still greater trouble and suffering. But Micaiah with solemn indignation rejects such pusillanimous and wretched counsel. He sought not to please men; he served a greater master than these who sat on tottering thrones; and as he feared not their faces, whether it please or displease, he must and will speak as God commands. *Note;* (1.) No worldly fear or hope can intimidate the faithful minister: he will hazard the loss of men's favour, rather than be false to their souls. (2.) When deluding teachers abound, we must be singular, if we would be faithful.

*Ver. 15. Go, and prosper: for the Lord shall deliver, &c.]* Supposing Micaiah had spoken in earnest, his answer does not at all contradict the other prophets: but the words, it is most likely, were spoken ironically, and in mockery to the equivocal promises which the other prophets made to Ahab. Accordingly, we may observe by Ahab's reply, that he suspected Micaiah's sincerity, and gathered, either from his gesture or manner of speaking, that his meaning was to ridicule and traduce these false prophets for their answers: so that Micaiah's answer is in effect as if he had said, "Since thou dost not seek to know the truth, but only to please thyself, go to the battle, as all thy prophets advise thee; expect the success which they promise thee, and try the truth of their predictions by thy dear-bought experience."

19 And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left.

20 And the LORD said, Who shall persuade

Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner.

21 And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him.

*Ver. 19—23. I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, &c.]* The following passage must be considered as a lively and affecting parable. The prophets who came to Ahab were not the LORD's prophets, but *Ahab's*. They spake at all adventures what they presumed would please him, like fawning parasites and flattering sycophants; a spirit of lying was upon them all, because they were disposed to flatter the king's humour, found their gain in it, or were afraid to do otherwise. This is the short and true account of the whole matter, and is what Micaiah sets forth in his present parable. Instead of bluntly telling the king that these prophets were all deceivers, he takes up his parable, as prophets were used to do, declaring what he had seen in prophetic vision, which was the way that God had made choice of for disclosing the whole matter to him. In the 17th verse Micaiah says, *I saw all Israel scattered, &c.* which can be understood only of what he saw in prophetic vision; pre-signifying the real fact which should follow after. Micaiah, therefore, saw what he there relates, just as St. Peter *saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him*; not any thing of what St. Peter saw was real, excepting that such ideas or such appearances were really wrought or formed upon his mind, as he lay in a trance. The like representation was made to Micaiah in a vision; signifying what was doing in the matter of Ahab, and what the event would be. The moral or meaning of the whole was, that, as Ahab loved to be cajoled and flattered, so God had permitted those four hundred men, pretending to be prophets, to abuse and impose upon him; which in conclusion would prove fatal to him. After Micaiah had reported his vision at full length, he briefly explained and applied it to Ahab, ver. 23. *Now, therefore, the Lord, &c.* It is frequent in holy Scripture to call that the Lord's doing, which he only permits to be done; because he has the supreme direction of all things, and governs the event. Wicked devices proceed from wicked men; but that they prevail and take effect, is owing to the hand of God directing and ordering where they shall light, and what shall be the issue of them. As to the text that we are now upon, the words of the original will bear to be translated, *the Lord hath permitted or suffered a lying spirit in the mouth, &c.* Accordingly, our translators in other places often render the word (נָתַן) *natan*, by *suffer* or *let*, in the sense of *permitting*; Gen. xx. 6. Exod. xii. 23. Psalm xvi. 10. And it may be observed also of the words of God to the lying spirit, as represented in the parable, ver. 22. *Go forth, and do so*, that they are to be understood, not in the commanding but permissive sense; for the imperative is so used more than once in other places of Scripture; there is therefore no room left for charging God, as the author of any deception brought upon Ahab by the sins of men. Houbigant observes, that as all this is said in parable, it is absurd to inquire whether

God would encourage evil angels to deceive the human mind, unless any one would also choose to inquire whether animals could speak, because they are often introduced speaking in fables.

*Ver. 21. There came forth a spirit]* That evil being, named Satan, was little known to the Jewish people till their captivity; and then this history was taught openly as a security against the doctrine of the *two principles*. The Jewish law-giver, where he so frequently enumerates and warns the Israelites of the snares and temptations which would draw them to transgress the *law of God*, never mentions this chief foe of heaven. Nay, when the form of that sacred history which Moses composed, obliged him to treat of Satan's first grand machination against mankind, he entirely hides this wicked spirit under the animal which he made his instrument; but as the fulness of time drew near, they were made more and more acquainted with this their arch-enemy. When Ahab, for the crimes and follies of the people, was suffered to be infatuated, we have the account in the words of Micaiah above. Satan is not here recorded by *name*; and so we must conclude the people were yet permitted to know little of his history: however, this undertaking sufficiently declared his nature.

REFLECTIONS.—Micaiah now appears before the kings and courtiers, alone, indeed, but not unsupported; God was with him, therefore could he not be moved.

1. Ahab puts the same question to him that he had before put to his own prophets; and Micaiah, who had heard their answer, and knew the king's mind, answered him in their very words; but with such a tone and gesture, as evidently bespoke contempt of his prophets, and the vanity of their prophecy. *Note*: It is folly which deserves to be ridiculed, to ask advice of others, when you are determined to follow your own opinion.

2. Ahab, perceiving the irony of his answer, conjures him, without further delay, to speak his mind; and this he does freely and boldly. He saw all Israel scattered like sheep on the hills near Ramoth-gilead, and their shepherd wanting; intimating, that Ahab should fall in the battle, and Israel be defeated. *Note*: Sinners cannot be too plainly warned of their danger.

3. Exasperated at such a declaration, which he interpreted only as the prophet's malice and ill-will against him, he turns to the too credulous Jehoshaphat, to divert him from attending to such a prophecy. But Micaiah confirms it by the vision, wherein he describes Ahab's determined ruin. *Note*: (1.) The greatest kindness shewn in faithful rebuke to men's souls, is often perversely misinterpreted into selfish anger, or dislike of their persons. (2.) God ruleth over all: the greatest are but worms of earth; and, however men spurn at it, his counsel must stand.

22 And the LORD said unto him, Where-with? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade *him*, and prevail also: go forth, and do so.

23 Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee.

24 ¶ But Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near, and smote Micaiah on the cheek, and said, Which way went the spirit of the LORD from me to speak unto thee?

25 And Micaiah said, Behold, thou shalt see in that day, when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself.

26 And the king of Israel said, Take Micaiah, and carry him back unto Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son;

27 And say, Thus saith the king, Put this *fellow* in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction, and with water of affliction, until I come in peace.

28 And Micaiah said, If thou return at all in peace, the LORD hath not spoken by me. And he said, Hearken, O people, every one of you.

29 ¶ So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth-gilead.

30 And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself, and enter into the battle; but put thou on thy robes. And

the king of Israel disguised himself, and went into the battle.

31 ¶ But the king of Syria commanded his thirty and two captains that had rule over his chariots, saying, Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel.

32 And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, Surely it is the king of Israel. And they turned aside to fight against him: and Jehoshaphat cried out.

33 And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots perceived that it *was* not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him.

34 ¶ And a *certain* man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness: wherefore he said unto the driver of his chariot, Turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host; for I am wounded.

35 And the battle increased that day: and the king was stayed up in his chariot against the Syrians, and died at even: and the blood ran out of the wound into the midst of the chariot.

36 And there went a proclamation throughout the host about the going down of the sun, saying, Every man to his city, and every man to his own country.

37 ¶ So the king died, and was brought to Samaria; and they buried the king in Samaria.

38 And *one* washed the chariot in the pool of Samaria; and the dogs licked up his blood;

Rand. (3.) God does, without impeachment of his glory, permit Satan to tempt sinners, and sometimes gives them up to be led captive by him at his will. (4.) The sinner abandoned of God rushes on his ruin, as the horse rusheth into the battle.

4. Zedekiah cannot bear such a keen reflection, and with insolent effrontery, in the king's presence, strikes Micaiah over the face, and treats with contempt his prophecy, as if himself alone had the spirit, who could not contradict his own inspirations. *Note*; (1.) The bitterest enemies of God's true prophets are the teachers of lies. These, to support their own credit with the people, seek by every base suggestion and oppression, to prevent the influence of the truth, lest the shame of their nakedness should appear. (2.) Confusion will shortly cover the wicked, and those who will not take God's warning must feel his wrath.

5. Ahab seconds his prophet's abuse, commits the innocent Micaiah to prison, and bids him be hardly treated till his return in peace, which he speaks of with confidence; designing then to execute him for a false prophet. Micaiah is very ready to rest his life on this issue; and they part thus, never to meet again. *Note*; (1.) The career of persecutors is often stopped short. (2.) They have little reason to promise themselves peace, who are declaring war against God in the person of his prophet.

*Ver. 31.* Fight neither with small nor great] Ben-hadad might give this order, either in policy, supposing this to be the best and readiest way to put an end to the war, or with a design to take Ahab prisoner, that thereby he might wipe out the stain of his own captivity, and recover the honour and advantages which he then lost. We shall have occasion in the second book of Chronicles to speak concerning Jehoshaphat.

*Ver.*

and they washed his armour; according unto the word of the LORD which he spake.

39 ¶ Now the rests of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, and the ivory house which he made, and all the cities that he built, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

40 So Ahab slept with his fathers; and Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead.

41 ¶ And Jehoshaphat the son of Afa began to reign over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel.

42 Jehoshaphat *was* thirty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and five years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was* Azubah the daughter of Shilhi.

43 And he walked in all the ways of Afa his father; he turned not aside from it, doing *that which was* right in the eyes of the LORD: nevertheless the high places were not taken away; *for* the people offered and burnt incense yet in the high places.

44 And Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel.

45 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, and his might that he shewed, and how he warred, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

46 And the remnant of the sodomites, which remained in the days of his father Afa, he took out of the land.

47 *There was* then no king in Edom: a deputy *was* king.

48 Jehoshaphat made ships of Tharshish to go to Ophir for gold: but they went not; for the ships were broken at Ezion-geber.

49 Then said Ahaziah the son of Ahab unto Jehoshaphat, Let my servants go with thy servants in the ships. But Jehoshaphat would not.

50 ¶ And Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father: and Jehoram his son reigned in his stead.

51 ¶ Ahaziah the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned two years over Israel.

52 And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father, *and in* the way of his mother, and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin:

53 For he served Baal, and worshipped him, and provoked to anger the LORD God of Israel, according to all that his father had done.

Ver. 47. *There was then no king in Edom; a deputy was king*] This is inserted to give us the reason why Jehoshaphat might build ships in the port of Ezion-geber, which was in the territories of the Edomites; namely, that there were no kings in Edom from the time that David had conquered the Edomites, but that the kings of Judah sent thither deputies or vice-roys. Instead of *ships of Tharshish*, ver. 48. Houbigant reads, *ships of burden*. Others say, that *ships of Tharshish* means such as were made after the model of those built at Tharshish.

Ver. 49. *But Jehoshaphat would not*] In the parallel place, 2 Chron. xx. 36, 37. Jehoshaphat is blamed by the prophet for having joined himself with Ahaziah in building ships. Commentators endeavour by various methods to solve this difficulty. Houbigant reads it, וְלוֹ אָכָה *velo abah, he consented*. Or, rather we might say, that Jehoshaphat at first consented; but afterwards, being warned by a prophet, he corrected his error, ver. 49.