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THE  
PULPIT COMMENTARY,

EDITED BY THE

VERY REV. H. D. M. SPENCE, D.D.,

DEAN OF GLOUCESTER;

AND BY THE

REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

WITH

INTRODUCTIONS

BY THE

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VICAR AND RURAL DEAN OF ST. PANCRAS, AND EXAMINING CHAPLAIN TO THE LORD  
BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER AND BRISTOL

AND BY THE

REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL,

EDITOR OF "THE HOMILETIC QUARTERLY."

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I. KINGS.

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Homilies by Various Authors:

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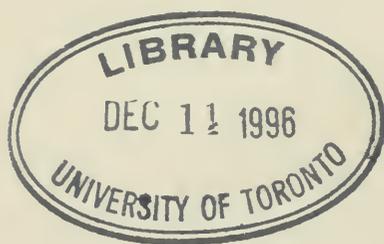
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THE  
BOOKS OF THE KINGS.

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INTRODUCTION.

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I. UNITY OF THE WORK.

THE Books now known to us as the First and Second Books of the Kings, like 1 and 2 Samuel, were originally and are really but one work, by one writer or compiler, and it is only for convenience of reference and because of long established usage that we here treat them as two. In all Hebrew MSS. down to the time of Jerome certainly, and probably down to A.D. 1518, when the Hebrew text was first printed by D. Bomberg at Venice, the division into two books was unknown. It was first made in the Greek version by the Septuagint translators, who followed a prevailing custom of the Alexandrine Greeks of dividing ancient works for facility of reference. The division thus introduced was perpetuated in the Latin version of Jerome, who took care, however, while following the LXX. usage, to notice the essential unity of the work;\* and the authority of the Septuagint in the Eastern, and of the Vulgate in the Western Church, has ensured the continuance of this bipartite arrangement in all later time.

That the two books, however, are really one is proved by the strongest internal evidence. Not only is there no break between them—the separation at 1 Kings xxii. 53 being so purely arbitrary and artificial that it is actually made haphazard in the middle both of the reign of Ahaziah and of the ministry of Elijah—but the unity of purpose is conspicuous throughout. Together they afford us a continuous and complete history of the kings and kingdoms of the chosen people. And the language of the two books points conclusively

\* “*Quartus Melachim, i.e., Regum, qui iii. et iv. Regum volumine continetur*” (Prolog. Galeat.) Similarly *Origen* in *Euseb.* “*Eccles. Hist.*” vi. 25: Βασιλιῶν πρώτῃ, τετάρτῃ ἐν ἑσθ' Οὐαμμίλεχ Δαβιδ, ὅτι ἴσθι βασιλεία Δαβιδ.

to a single writer. While there are no indications of the manner of speech of a later period, no contradictions or confusions such as would arise from different writers, there are many phrases and formulæ, tricks of expression, and turns of thought, which show the same hand and mind throughout the entire work, and effectually exclude the idea of a divided authorship.

While, however, it is indisputable that we have in these two portions of Holy Scripture the production of a single writer, we have no sufficient warrant for concluding as some (Eichhorn, Jahn, *al.*) have done, that the division between them and the Books of Samuel is equally artificial, and that they are parts of a much greater work (called by Ewald "the Great Book of the Kings")—a work which comprised along with them Judges, Ruth, and 1 and 2 Samuel. The arguments in support of this view are stated at considerable length by Lord Arthur Hervey in Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible" (vol. ii. p. 21), but to my thinking they are entirely inconclusive, and have been effectually disposed of by, among others, Bähr,\* Keil,† and Rawlinson, ‡ each of whom cites a number of peculiarities not only of diction, but of manner, arrangement, materials, &c.,§ which clearly distinguish the Books of Kings from those which precede them in the sacred Canon.

## II. TITLE.

The name **KINGS** (מְלִיכִים) requires but little notice. Whether these scriptures bore this name from the first or not—and it is hardly likely that they did, the probability being that the Book was originally cited, like those of the Pentateuch, &c., by its initial words, והמלך דוד, and was only called "Kings" from its contents (like the Book of "Samuel") at a later period—this one word aptly describes the character and subject-matter of this composition and sufficiently distinguishes it from the rest of its class. It is simply a history of the kings of Israel and Judah, in the order of their reigns. The LXX. Title, Βασιλειῶν. γ. δ. (*i.e.* "Kingdoms"), expresses the same idea, || for in Eastern despotisms, and especially under the Hebrew theocracy, the history of the *kingdom* was practically that of its *kings*.

\* "Die Könige," Einleitung, § 3.

† "The Books of the Kings." English Translation. Introduction, pp. 9, 10. Compare his "Introduction to the Old Testament," vol. i. pp. 254—260.

‡ "Speaker's Commentary," vol. ii. p. 468.

§ For example. The chronology of the Kings is precise and detailed, whilst that of 1 and 2 Samuel is extremely vague and general; the Kings abound in references to the Mosaic law, which are nowhere found in Samuel; the author of the former constantly refers to his authorities, the writer of the latter never.

|| Jerome, in his "Prologus Galeatus," questions the fitness of this title, but with insufficient reason. The books contain the history of two kingdoms, though of but one nation.

## III. CONTENTS AND PURPOSE.

It must be remembered, however, that the history of the kings of the chosen people will necessarily have a different character and a different design from the chronicles of all other reigns and dynasties; it will, in fact, be such history as a pious Jew would naturally write. Such a one, even without the guidance of Inspiration, would inevitably view all the events in the history both of his own and of neighbouring nations, not so much in their secular or purely historical as in their religious aspect. His firm belief in a particular Providence superintending the affairs of men, and requiting them according to their deserts by *temporal* rewards and punishments, would alone give a stamp and colour to his narrative very different from that of the profane historian. But when we remember that the historians of Israel were in every case *prophets*; that is, that they were the advocates and spokesmen\* of the Most High, we may be quite sure that history in their hands will have a "purpose," and that they will write with a distinctly religious aim. Such was assuredly the case with the author of the Kings. His is an ecclesiastical or theocratic rather than a civil history. Indeed, as Bähr well observes, "Hebrew antiquity does not know the secular historian."† The different kings, consequently, are portrayed not so much in their relations to their subjects, or to other nations, as to the Invisible Ruler of Israel, whose representatives they were, whose religion they were charged to uphold, and of whose holy law they were the executors. It is this consideration accounts, as Rawlinson remarks, for the great length at which certain reigns are recorded as compared with others. It is this again, and not any "prophetic-didactic tendency," or any idea of advancing the prophetic order, accounts for the prominence given to the ministries of Elijah and Elisha, and to the interpositions of various prophets at different crises of the nation's life (see 1 Kings i. 45; xi. 29—40; xiii. 12, 21—24; xiv. 5—16; xxii. 8; 2 Kings xix. 20; xx. 16; xxii. 14, &c.) It explains too the constant references to the Pentateuch, and to the previous history of the race (1 Kings ii. 8; iii. 14; vi. 11, 12; viii. 56, &c.; 2 Kings x. 81;

\* The *προφήτης* is properly one who *speaks* for another, as advocate or interpreter. It is a mistake to explain the word of prediction or foretelling. The *προ* has no reference to time. Apollo is called *Διὸς προφήτης*—"the interpreter of Jove" (Aesch. Eumen. 19). And Plato calls poets *Μουσῶν προφήται* (Phaedr. 262 D). It is true that the term נָבִי conveys primarily the idea of inspiration, or possession (נָבִי, *ebullivit*, Gesenius, Thesaurus, ii. 838; cf. *μάντις* from *μαίνομαι*), but this word also, at an early period, had the meaning of "spokesman," as in Exod. vii. 1, "Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet." The "prophets" of the New Testament (1 Cor. xi. 4, 5; xiv. *passim*), it is well known, were *preachers* rather than predictors, and the term "prophecy" was formerly used in our own language of *expounding*.

† In the American translation of Lange's "Bibelwerk" unfortunately rendered, "The secular historian does not know Hebrew antiquity."

xiv. 6; xvii. 18, 15, 37; xviii. 4—6, &c.), and the constant comparison of the successive monarchs with the king "after God's own heart" (1 Kings xi. 4, 38; xiv. 8; xv. 3, 11, &c.), and their judgment by the standard of the Mosaic law (1 Kings iii. 14; vi. 11, 12; viii. 56, &c.) The object of the historian clearly was, not to chronicle the naked facts of Jewish history, but to show how the rise, the glories, the decline and the fall of the Hebrew kingdoms were respectively the results of the piety and faithfulness or of the irreligion and idolatry of the different kings and their subjects. Writing during the captivity, he would teach his countrymen how all the miseries which had come upon them, miseries which had culminated in the destruction of their temple, the overthrow of their monarchy, and their own transportation from the land of their forefathers, were the judgments of God upon their sins and the fruits of the national apostasy. He would trace, too, the fulfilment, through successive generations, of the great promise of 2 Sam. vii. 12—16, the charter of the house of David, on which promise indeed the history is a continuous and striking commentary. True to his mission as the Divine ambassador, he would teach them everywhere to see the finger of God in their nation's history, and by the record of incontrovertible facts, and especially by showing the fulfilment of the promises and threatenings of the Law, he would preach a return to the faith and morals of a purer age, and would urge "his contemporaries, living in exile with him, to cling faithfully to the covenant made by God through Moses, and to honour steadfastly the one true God."\*

The two Books embrace a period of four and a half centuries; viz. from the accession of Solomon in B.C. 1015 to the close of the captivity of Jehoiachin in B.C. 562.

#### IV. DATE.

The date of the composition of the Kings can be fixed, with much greater facility and certainty than that of many portions of Scripture, from the contents of the Books themselves. It must lie somewhere between B.C. 561 and B.C. 538; that is to say, it must have been in the latter part of the Babylonian captivity. It cannot have been *before* B.C. 561, for that is the year of the accession of Evil-Merodach, whose kindly treatment of Jehoiachin, "in the year that he began to reign," is the last event mentioned in the history. Assuming that this is not an addition by a later hand, which we have no reason to think is the case,† we have thus one limit—a *maximum* of antiquity—fixed with certainty. And it cannot have been *after* B.C. 538, the date of the return under Zerubbabel, as it is quite inconceivable that the historian should have omitted to notice an event of such profound importance, and one too which had such a direct bearing on

\* Thenius.

† See Keil, Introduction to Kings, p. 9.

the purpose for which the history was penned—which was partly, as we have already remarked, to trace the fulfilment of 2 Sam. vii. 12—16, in the fortunes of David's house—had that event occurred at the time when he wrote. We may safely assign this year, consequently, as the *minimum* date for the composition of the work.

And with this conclusion, that the Books of Kings were written during the captivity, the style and diction of the Books themselves agree. "The language of Kings belongs unmistakably to the period of the captivity" (Rawlinson, "Speaker's Commentary," pp. 469, 470).\* Lord A. Hervey, indeed, contends that "the general character of the language is that of the time *before* the Babylonish captivity"—elsewhere he mentions "the age of Jeremiah"—but even if we allow this, it does not in the least invalidate the conclusion that the work was given to the world between *a.c.* 460 and *a.c.* 440, and probably about *a.c.* 460.

#### V. THE AUTHORSHIP

is a question of much greater difficulty. † It was long held, and it is still maintained by many scholars, that the Kings are the work of the prophet Jeremiah. And in support of this view may be alleged—1. Jewish tradition. The Talmud (Baba Bathra, f. 15. 1) unhesitatingly ascribes the work to him. *Jeremias scripsit librum suum et librum regum et threnos.* 2. The last chapter of 2 Kings agrees, except in some few particulars, with Jer. lii. The spelling in the latter is more archaic and the facts recorded in vers. 28—30 differ from those of 2 Kings xxv. 22—26, but the general agreement is very striking. It is alleged, accordingly, and not without reason, that the two narratives must have had a common origin, and more, that the final page of Jeremiah's history of the Kings, with a few alterations and additions made by a later hand, was appended to his collection of prophecies, as forming a fitting conclusion to those writings. And certainly this arrangement, though it does not prove Jeremiah's authorship of the Kings, does afford evidence of a very ancient *belief* that he was the writer. 3. There is in many cases a marked resemblance between the language of Kings and that of Jeremiah. Havernick, perhaps the most powerful and energetic advocate of this view, has furnished a striking list of phrases and expressions common to both. ‡ And so marked are the correspondences between them that even Bähr, who summarily rejects this hypothesis, is constrained to allow that "the mode of

\* Rawlinson gives, *loc. cit.*, an interesting list of the words and phrases which substantiate this assertion. And see Dict. Bib. vol. ii. p. 26.

† "As regards the authorship of these Books, but little difficulty presents itself" (Lord A. Hervey, who ascribes them to Jeremiah). But Bähr, Keil, *al.* reject this idea with equal positiveness.

‡ Einleitung, vol. ii. pp. 171 sqq. This list is accessible to the English reader in the "Speaker's Commentary," ii. p. 471.

thinking and expression resembles that of Jeremiah," and he accounts for the similarity by the conjecture that our author had before him the writings of the prophet or was, perhaps, his pupil,\* while Stähelin is driven to the conclusion that the writer was an imitator of Jeremiah. But the resemblance is not confined to words and phrases: there is in both writings the same *tone*, the same air of despondency and hopelessness, † while many of the facts and narratives again are more or less common to the history and the prophecy. ‡ 4. Another consideration which is equally striking is the omission of all mention of the prophet Jeremiah in the Books of Kings—an omission easily accounted for if he was the author of those Books, but difficult to explain on any other supposition. Modesty would very naturally lead the historian to omit all mention of the share he himself had taken in the transactions of his time, especially as it was recorded at length elsewhere. But the part Jeremiah sustained in the closing scenes of the history of the kingdom of Judah was one of so much importance that it is hard to conceive any impartial, not to say pious or theocratic historian, completely ignoring both his name and his work.§

But a string of arguments, equally numerous and equally influential, can be adduced *against* the authorship of Jeremiah, prominent among which are the following: 1. That if Jeremiah did compile these histories, he must have been at the time about eighty-six or eighty-seven years of age. Bahr regards this one consideration as conclusive. He, like Keil and others, points out that Jeremiah's ministry began in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah (Jer. i. 2), when, it is urged, he must have been at least twenty years of age. But the Book of Kings, as we have just seen, cannot have been penned earlier than B.C. 562; that is to say, at least sixty-six years afterwards. In reply to this, however, it may fairly be remarked (1) that it is quite possible that Jeremiah's entrance upon the prophetic office took place *before* he was twenty years old. He calls himself a child (יָלֵד Jer. i. 6), and though the word is not always to be taken literally, or as furnishing any definite chronological datum,|| yet the tradition that he was but a boy of fourteen is not wholly irrational or incredible. (2) It is quite within the bounds of possibility that the work may have been written by an octogenarian. We have had conspicuous instances amongst our own contemporaries of men far advanced in years retaining all their mental vigour

\* This latter supposition is also the view of Thenius. Bleek suggests Baruch.

† Compare 2 Kings xvii. 14 with Jer. vii. 26; 1 Kings ix. 8 with Jer. xxii. 8; and 2 Kings xxi. 12 with Jer. xix. 3. These parallels are the more striking since they disclose at the same time a similarity of tone and of language.

‡ For a list of these, see "Dictionary of the Bible," vol. ii. pp. 28—30.

§ It is true Jeremiah is only mentioned twice by the Chronicler, but this is easily accounted for by the brevity and incompleteness of his work.

|| Nägelsbach, "Jeremias," in Lange's "Bibelwerk," p. 2.

and engaging in arduous literary labours. And (3) it does not absolutely follow, because the last paragraph of the Kings carries us down to B.C. 562 that that is also the date of the composition or compilation of the rest. It is quite obvious that the bulk of the work might have been written by Jeremiah some years before, and that these concluding sentences might have been added by him in extreme old age. There is much greater force, however, in a second objection, viz., that the Kings must have been written or completed in Babylon, whilst Jeremiah spent the concluding years of his life and died in Egypt. For, though it is not absolutely certain, it is extremely probable that the work *was* finished and published in Babylon. There is not much weight perhaps in Bähr's remark that it cannot have been composed for the handful of fugitives who accompanied Jeremiah to Egypt, but must have been designed for the kernel of the people in captivity, for the prophet may have composed the work in Tahpenes, and have at the same time hoped, perhaps even provided, for its transmission to Babylon. But it cannot be denied that while the writer was evidently familiar with what transpired in the court of Evil-Merodach, and was acquainted with details which could hardly have been known to a resident in Egypt, there is an absence of all reference to the latter country and the fortunes of the remnant there. The last chapter of the work, that is to say, points to Babylon as the place where it was written. So also, *primâ facie*, does the expression of 1 Kings iv. 24, "beyond the river" (Auth. Vers. "on this side the river"). The "region beyond the river" can only mean that *west* of the Euphrates, and therefore the natural conclusion is that the writer must have dwelt *east* of the Euphrates, *i.e.*, in Babylon. It is alleged, however, that this expression, which is also found in Ezra and Nehemiah, had come at this time to have a meaning different from its strict geographical signification, and was used by Jews, wherever they might happen to reside, of the provinces of the Babylonian Empire (including Palestine), west of the Great River, just as a Roman, even after residing in the country, might speak of *Gallia Transalpina*, and it cannot be denied that the expression is used indifferently of either side of the Jordan, and therefore presumably it may designate either side of the Euphrates.\* But it is to be observed—1. that in the majority of instances where the expression is used of the Euphrates (Ezra vi. 6; vii. 21, 25; Neh. ii. 7), it is found in the lips of persons residing in Babylonia or Media; 2. that in other instances (Ezra iv. 10, 11, 16) it is used in letters of state by Persian officers, who would naturally adapt their language to the usages of the Persian court and of their own country, even when resident abroad, and lastly, that in the one instance (Ezra viii. 36) where the words are employed

\* See note on ch. iv. 24.

of Jews resident in Palestine, it is by a Jew who had just returned from Persia. While therefore it is perhaps impossible to arrive at any positive conclusion from the use of this formula, it is difficult to resist the impression that on the whole it suggests that the Book was written in Babylon, and therefore not by Jeremiah. 8. A third consideration alleged by Keil in his earlier edition,\* viz., that the variations of style and diction between 2 Kings xxv. and Jer. lii. are such as to negative the supposition of their having proceeded from the same pen, or rather such as to compel the belief that "this section has been extracted by the author or editor in the two cases from a common or more copious source," is too precarious to require much notice, the more so, as (1) these variations, when carefully examined, prove to be inconsiderable, and (2) even if the distinct authorship of these two portions, or their having been copied from a common authority, were established, it would by no means necessarily follow that Jeremiah had not copied them, or had had no share in the rest of the work.

It would seem, therefore, that the arguments for and against Jeremiah's authorship of the Kings are so evenly balanced that it is impossible to speak positively one way or the other. Professor Rawlinson has stated the conclusion to which an impartial survey conducts us with great fairness and caution. "Though Jeremiah's authorship appears, all things considered, to be highly probable, we must admit that it has not been proved, and is, therefore, to some extent, uncertain."†

## VI. SOURCES OF THE WORK.

The Books of Kings being obviously and necessarily, from their historical character, to a very large extent, a compilation from other sources, the question now presents itself, What and of what sort were the records from which this narrative was constructed?

What they were the writer himself informs us. He mentions three "books" from which his information must have been largely derived—"the book of the acts of Solomon" (1 Kings xi. 41); "the book of the Chronicles of (lit. of the words [or events] of the days to) the kings of Judah" (1 Kings xiv. 29; xv. 7, 22; xxii. 45; 2 Kings *passim*); and "the book of the Chronicles ("the words of the days") of the kings of Israel" (1 Kings xiv. 19; xv. 31, &c.) That he made abundant use of these authorities is evident from the fact that he refers to them more than thirty times; that he constantly quoted from them *verbatim* is clear from the fact that passages agreeing almost *verbatim* with those of the Kings are found in the Books of Chronicles, and also from

\* Professor Rawlinson appears to have only had the edition of 1846 before him. But the Kings of Keil and Delitzsch's Commentary is practically a new work, and differs very materially from its predecessor.

† "Speaker's Commentary," ii. 472.

the use of expressions which manifestly belong, not to our author, but to some document which he cites.\* It is consequently more than "a reasonable supposition that" this "history was, in part at least, derived from the works in question."† And there is a strong presumption that these were his only authorities, with the exception perhaps of a narrative of the ministry of the prophets Elijah and Elisha, for though he refers to them so constantly, he never once refers to any other. What, however, was the precise character of these writings is a matter of considerable uncertainty. We are warranted in the belief, from the way in which they are cited, that they were three separate and independent works, and that they contained fuller and more extended accounts of the reigns of the several kings than any which we now possess, for the invariable formula in which they are referred to is this, "And the rest of the acts of . . . are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles," &c. It hardly follows, however, as Bähr thinks, that this formula implies that the works, at the time our history was written, were "in general circulation," or "in the hands of many," for our author surely might reasonably refer to them, even if they were not generally known or readily accessible. But the great question in dispute is this: Were "the books of the words of the days to the kings," as their name at first sight seems to imply, state papers; *i.e.*, public archives prepared by appointed officers, or were they private memoirs of the different prophets. The former opinion has the support of many great names.‡ It is alleged in its favour that there was, at any rate in the kingdom of Judah, a state functionary, "the recorder," whose business it was to chronicle events and prepare memoirs of the different reigns, a "court historian," as he has been called; § that such memoirs were certainly prepared in the kingdom of Persia by an authorized officer, and were afterwards preserved as state annals,|| and, lastly, that such public documents appear to be sufficiently indicated by the very name they bear, "The book of the chronicles to the kings." There is no question, however, despite these allegations, that the second view is the correct one, and that the "Chronicles" were the compilations, not of state officials, but of various members of the schools of the prophets. For, to begin with, the name by which these writings are known,

\* The expression "unto this day," in the great majority of cases, cannot refer to the date of authorship—the time of the captivity—but belongs to a period when the southern kingdom was still in existence, and the temple was still standing. See 1 Kings viii. 8; ix. 13; x. 12; 2 Kings ii. 22; x. 27; xiv. 7; xvi. 6; xx. 17, &c.

† Rawlinson.

‡ Among others, Berthold, Hävernack, Movers, and Ewald.

§ Ewald, "History of Israel," iii. p. 270. Ewald, however, does not identify this officer with the *Mazkir* or Remembrancer (see p. 267) as many writers do. See, *e.g.*, Dict. Biblic. Art. "King."

|| A similar institution is said to exist in modern Persia. Vide Malcolm's "History of Persia," ch. xxiii.

and which has been thought to imply a civil origin, really means no more than this, "*the Book of the history of the times of the Kings,*" &c., as Keil interprets it, and by no means indicates any official archives. And, in the second place, we have no evidence in support of the view that the recorder or any other officer was charged with the preparation of the history of his time. The word *מְזַכֵּר* properly means "*remembrancer,*" and he was no doubt so called, not "because he kept the memory of events alive,"\* but because he reminded the king of the state affairs which required his attention. It is generally admitted † that he was "more than an annalist," but is not so well understood that in no case in which he figures in the history is he in any way connected with the public records, but always appears as the king's adviser or chancellor (cf. 2 Kings xviii. 18, 37; 2 Chron. xxxiv. 8). Moreover, there are almost insuperable difficulties in the way of believing that the "books of the Chronicles" can have been compiled by this remembrancer. For example, (1) there is no trace of the existence of any such functionary in the kingdom of *Israel*; (2) David is said to have instituted the office of "*court and state scribe,*" but we find that David's history was recorded, not in any state annals prepared by this functionary, but in "*the book of Samuel the seer,* and in the book of *Nathan the prophet,* and in the book of *Gad the seer*" (1 Chron. xxix. 29). Now, surely, if any such officer charged with such a duty had existed, the record of David's life would have been composed by him, and not by unofficial and irresponsible persons. But (3) the state archives of the two kingdoms, including the memoirs—if such there were—of the different kings, can hardly have escaped the sack of Samaria and the burning of Jerusalem. It has been conjectured, indeed, that the Assyrian and Babylonian monarchs preserved the records of conquered nations in their respective capitals, and permitted such of the exiles as had acquired their favour to have access to them, ‡ but this, as Bähr observes, is obviously a supposition "as unfounded as it is arbitrary," and is beset with difficulties. Seeing that not only the royal palace, but also "all the great houses were burned" (2 Kings xxv. 9), the conclusion is almost inevitable that all the public records must have perished. And such records—in the kingdom of *Israel*, at least—had also had to run the gauntlet of intestine warfare and dissension. A dynasty cannot be changed nine times, and each time be destroyed, root and branch, without the greatest danger to the archives of sharing the same fate. That amid all the changes and chances of the two kingdoms, changes which culminated in the transportation of the two entire nations to distant lands, the state annals had been preserved and were accessible to a historian of the time of

\* Dict. Bib., Art. "King."

† See Dict. Bib., Art. "Recorder."

‡ Stähelin, Einleitung, s. 129, cited by Bähr.

the captivity, seems almost incredible. But our author manifestly refers to the "Books of the Chronicles," &c., as still existent in his time, and, if not generally circulated, yet guarded and accessible somewhere. But a still more conclusive argument against the "state paper" origin of our histories is found in their contents. Their tone and language absolutely forbid the supposition that they were based on the records of any court historiographer. They are to a very large extent histories of the sins, idolatries, and enormities of the respective sovereigns whose reigns they describe. "The history of the reign of each of the nineteen kings of Israel begins with the formula, 'He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord.' The same formula occurs again with respect to twelve out of the twenty kings of Judah. . . . Even of the greatest and most glorious king, Solomon, it is related at length how deeply he fell. 'The sin of Jeroboam who made Israel to sin' is represented as the source of all the evils of the kingdom: the conspiracies and murders of a Baasha, a Shallum, a Menahem; the shameful acts of an Ahab, a Jezebel, and a Manasseh are recorded without any indulgence." \* And these are the deeds and the reigns with respect to which we are referred for fuller information "to the Books of the Chronicles." For that these "Chronicles" contained accounts of the impieties and abominations of the various kings is clear from 2 Chron. xxxvi. 8, where we read (of Jehoiakim), "His abominations which he did and that which was found in him, behold they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah." Now, it is altogether out of the question that any court scribe can have described his late master's reign in such terms as these; indeed no one could or would have used such language, but men who lived at a later period, and those, courageous and high-minded prophets, who were perfectly independent of the court and regardless of its favours. And, lastly, the constant change of dynasty on the throne of Israel is fatal to the supposition. We have already mentioned those changes as endangering the preservation of the state papers, but they are equally an argument against the memoirs of the different royal houses having been written by the "recorder," for the object of each successive dynasty would be, not to preserve a faithful record of the reigns of its predecessor, but to stamp them with infamy, or consign them to oblivion.

We find, therefore, that the prevailing opinion as to the character of the "books or the words of the days" is encompassed with difficulties. But these vanish at once, if we see in these records the compilations of the schools of the prophets. We have incontrovertible evidence that prophets *did* act as historians. Samuel, Nathan, Gad, Iddo, Ahijah, Shemaiah, Jehu the son of Hanani, Isaiah the son of Amoz, are all mentioned by

\* Bähr (Einleitung, p. 12), whom I have largely followed in this note.

name as the compilers of memoirs. We know, too, that for portions of this very history we must be indebted to members, probably unknown members, of the prophetic order. The histories of Elijah and Elisha never formed part of the "books of the Chronicles," and they contain matters which, in the nature of things, can only have been contributed by these prophets themselves, or by their scholars or servants. The history of Elisha, especially, has several marks of a separate origin. It is distinguished by a number of peculiarities—"provincialisms" they have been called—which betray a different hand, while the narratives are such as can only have proceeded, originally, from an eye-witness. But perhaps it is hardly necessary to mention these particulars, as it is "universally allowed that prophets generally were the historians of the Israelitish people."\* It was almost as essential a part of their office to trace the hand of God in the past history of the Hebrew race as to predict future visitations, or to promise deliverances. They were preachers of righteousness, spokesmen for God, interpreters of his just laws and dealings, and to be this they only needed to be faithful and impartial historians. It is not without significance, in this connexion, that the historical books of the Old Testament were known to the Jewish fathers by the name נְבִיאִים "and are distinguished from the books strictly prophetic only in this, that the adjective ראשונים *priores*, is applied to them, and to the latter אחרונים *posteriores*." †

But we have evidence of the most positive and conclusive kind, evidence almost amounting to demonstration, that the three authorities to which our historian so repeatedly refers, were in their original form the works of different prophets, and not of the public annalist. For we find that where the author of *Kings*, after transcribing a string of passages, which agree almost word for word with a series in the *Books of Chronicles*, ‡ and which must therefore have been derived from a common source, refers to "the book of the *acts of Solomon* (1 *Kings* xi. 41), the chronicler indicates as the documents upon which he has drawn, "the book of *Nathan the prophet*, and the *prophecy of Ahijah* the Shilonite, and the *visions of Iddo the seer*. The conclusion, therefore, is irresistible (2 *Chron.* ix. 29), that the "book of the words of the days to Solomon," if not identical with the writings of the three prophets who were the historians of that reign, was nevertheless based on those writings, and to a large extent composed of extracts from

\* Bähr, who cites Knobel, "Der Prophet. der Hebr." i. 58 sqq. Josephus (*Contra Apion.* i. 8) expressly says, "The prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their time in thirteen books."

† Bähr.

‡ Compare 1 *Kings* viii. 12-50 with 2 *Chron.* vi. 1-40; 1 *Kings* viii. 64-lx. 9 with 2 *Chron.* vii. 7-22; 1 *Kings* x. 1-28, with 2 *Chron.* ix. 1-28, &c.

them. It is possible, and indeed probable, that in the one "book of the Chronicles," the memoirs of the three historians had been condensed, arranged, and harmonized; but it hardly admits of doubt that the latter were the originals of the former. And the same remarks apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to the "book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah." The history of Rehoboam in 1 Kings xii. 1—19 is identical with the account of that monarch in 2 Chron. x. 1—4; the words of 1 Kings xii. 20—24 are the same that are found in 2 Chron. xi. 1—4; while 2 Chron. xii. 13 is practically a repetition of 1 Kings xiv. 21. But the authority to which our author refers is the "book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah," whereas that mentioned by the Chronicler is "the book of *Shemaiah the prophet*, and of *Ido the seer*." Now it is clear that these parallel passages are derived from the same source, and that source must be the book or books of these two prophets.\*

Nor does it invalidate this contention that the Chronicler, in addition to the prophetic writings just named, also cites occasionally the "book of the kings of Israel and Judah" (2 Chron. xvi. 11; xxv. 26; xxvii. 7; xxviii. 26; xxxii. 32; xxxv. 27, &c.); in one place apparently called "the book of the kings of Israel" (2 Chron. xx. 34), together with a "*Midrash* of the book of the Kings" (2 Chron. xxiv. 27). For we have no evidence whatsoever that any of these authorities were of a public and civil character. On the contrary, we have ground for believing that they were composed of the memoirs of the prophets. It is not quite clear what the Midrash just referred to was, but the two works first cited were probably identical with "the Books of the Chronicles" so often mentioned by our historian. And in one case (2 Chron. xx. 34), we have distinct mention of a prophetic book or writing—that of Jehu, the son of Hanani—which was embodied in the book of the kings of Israel.†

We can hardly be mistaken, therefore, in concluding from these data that the prime "sources of this work" were really the prophetic memoirs mentioned by the Chronicler (1 Chron. xxvii. 24; xxix. 29; 2 Chron. ix. 29; xii. 15; xiii. 22; xx. 34; xxiv. 27; xxvi. 22; xxxii. 32; xxxiii. 18) which, together, perhaps, with other writings, the authors of which are unknown to us, furnish the materials for the "Books of the Words of the Days," &c.

The relation of the KINGS to the Books of the CHRONICLES will be more appropriately discussed in the Introduction to that volume.

\* The fact that the Chronicler alleges his authority, and that a different one from the authority given by the KINGS, forbids the assumption that the agreement is the result of copying on the part of the former from the latter.

† *הַעֲלֶהָ*, literally was made to ascend upon, i. e., was introduced or incorporated into the history of the kings of Israel.

## VII. CREDIBILITY.

But the question may possibly arise, Are these writings, whatever their origin, to be accepted as authentic, sober history?

It is a question, happily, which may be dismissed with few words, for their veracity has never been seriously doubted. If we except the miraculous portions of the history—to which the only serious objection is that they are miraculous, and therefore in the nature of things must be mythical—there is absolutely no reason for challenging the veracity and honesty of the narrative. Not only has it throughout the air of sober history; not only is it accepted as such—including the supernatural portions—by our Lord and His apostles (Matt. vi. 29; xi. 14; Luke iv. 25-27; ix. 8, 54; Mark i. 6; Acts vii. 47, 48; Rom. xi. 3, 4; Heb. xi. 35; James v. 17, 18; Rev. ii. 20; xi. 9), but it is everywhere confirmed by the monuments of antiquity and the records of profane historians, whensoever it and they happen to have points of contact. The reign of Solomon, for example, his friendly relations with Hiram, his Temple, and his wisdom are mentioned by the Tyrian historians, from whom Dios and Menander of Ephesus derived their information (*Jos.*, *Contra Apion*. i. sectt. 17, 18). The proficiency of the Zidonians in the mechanical arts and their knowledge of the sea is attested both by Homer and Herodotus.\* The invasion of Judah by Shishak in the reign of Rehoboam, and the conquest of many of the cities of Palestine, is proved by the inscription of Karnak.† The name and the importance of Omri are proclaimed by the inscriptions of Assyria, which also tell of the defeat of “Ahab of Jezreel” by the Assyrian armies, of the defeat of Azariah, and the conquest of Samaria and Damascus by Tiglath Pileser.‡ And, to pass by later matters and points of less moment, the recently discovered Moabite stone bears its silent but most striking witness to the conquest of Moab by Omri, and its oppression by him, and by his son and successor, for forty years,§ and to the successful rebellion of Moab against Israel,|| and also mentions by name Mesha, Omri, Chemosh, and Jehovah. In the face of such remarkable and minute corroborations of the statements of our historian, and in the absence of any well-founded instances of misstatement on his part, and, indeed, of any solid grounds for impeaching his historical accuracy, it would be the very wantonness of criticism to deny the credibility and truthfulness of these records.

## VIII. CHRONOLOGY.

There is one particular, however, in which our text, as it now stands, is open to some suspicion, and that is the matter of dates. Some of these, it

\* See note on ch. v. 6.

† See note on ch. xiv. 25.

‡ See notes on 2 Kings xvi. 7-16.

§ See note on 2 Kings i. 1, and iii. 4, 5.

|| See note on 2 Kings iii. 3.

would appear, have been accidentally altered in the course of transcription—a result which need cause us no surprise, if we remember that anciently numbers were represented by letters, and that the Assyrian, or square characters, in which the Scriptures of the Old Testament have been handed down to us, are extremely liable to be confounded. The reader will see at a glance that the difference between כ and כ (which represent respectively *two* and *twenty*), between ד and ד (four and two hundred), between ח and ח (eight and four hundred), is extremely slight. But other dates would appear to have been altered, or inserted—probably from the margin—by some reviser of the text. We have nothing more than what we find elsewhere in Scripture, and even in the text of the New Testament—the marginal gloss finding its way, almost unconsciously, into the body of the work.\* It will be sufficient to mention here as instances of such imperfect or erroneous chronologies, 1 Kings vi. 1; xiv. 21; xvi. 23; 2 Kings i. 17 (cf. iii. 1); xiii. 10 (cf. xiii. 1); xv. 1 (cf. xiv. 23); xvii. 1 (cf. xv. 30, 33). But this fact, though it has occasioned no little difficulty to the commentator, in no way detracts, it need hardly be said, from the value of our history. And it does this less because these corrections or interpolations are as a rule sufficiently conspicuous, and because, as has been justly remarked, “the chief difficulties of the chronology and almost all the actual contradictions disappear, if we subtract from the work those portions which are generally parenthetical.”†

#### IX. LITERATURE.

Amongst the works available for the exposition and illustration of the text, and to which reference is most frequently made in this Commentary, are the following:—

1. *Commentar über der Bücher der Könige.* Von Dr. Karl Fried. Kiel. Moskau, 1846.
2. *Biblischer Commentar über die prophetischen-Geschichts-bücher des A. T. Dritter Band: Die Bücher der Könige.* Leipzig, 1874. By the same author. Both these works are accessible to the English reader in translations published by Messrs. Clark of Edinburgh (1857 and 1877). I have thought it well to refer to both volumes, as though the latter, no doubt, represents Kell's matured judgment, still the former occasionally contains valuable materials not included in the latter work.
3. *Die Bücher der Könige.* Von Dr. Karl C. W. F. Bähr. Bielefeld, 1873. This is one of the most valuable volumes of Lange's *Theologisch Homiletisches Bibelwerk*. It has been translated, under the editorship of Dr. Philip Schaff, by Dr. Harwood, of New Haven, Conn. (Edinb., Clark); and as the translation, especially in its “Textual and Grammatical” section, contains additional and occasionally useful matter, I have referred both to it and to the original.
4. *Symbolik des Mosaischen Cultus.* By the same author. Heidelberg, 1837. For all that concerns the Temple and its ritual, this work is indispensable, and though occasionally somewhat fanciful, is a monument of Bähr's profound and varied learning.

\* Scrivener, “Introduction to New Testament Criticism,” pp. 12, 13.

† Rawlinson, “Speaker's Commentary,” p. 476.

5. *Die Bücher der Könige*. Von Otto Thenius. Leipzig, 1849. This work, I regret to say, I only know indirectly. But some proofs of its suggestiveness, and some of its destructive tendencies, will be found in the Exposition.

6. *Holy Bible with Commentary*. ("Speaker's Commentary.") *The Books of Kings*, by the Rev. Canon Rawlinson. London, 1872. This, though perhaps somewhat meagre in its textual criticism and exegesis, is especially rich, as might be expected from the well-known learning of its author, in historical references. I have also occasionally cited his "Historical Illustrations of the Old Testament" (S. P. C. K.), and his "Bampton Lectures."

7. *The History of Israel*. By Heinrich Ewald. English Translation. London, 1878. Vols. III. and IV.

8. *Syntax of the Hebrew Language*. By the same author. London, 1879. The citations from this latter work are distinguished from those from the "History of Israel" by the sectional number and letter, thus: 280 b.

9. *The Holy Bible*. Vol. III. By Bishop Wordsworth. Oxford, 1877. The great feature of this commentary, it is hardly necessary to say, in addition to the patriotic learning which it reveals, and the piety which breathes through it, is the moral and spiritual teaching which the author never fails to draw from the text. There is perhaps a tendency to over-spiritualize, and I have been unable to follow the writer in many of his mystical interpretations.

10. *Lectures on the Jewish Church*. Vol. II. By Dean Stanley. London, 1865. Though differing repeatedly and very widely from his conclusions, I am very sensible of the great charm of picturesqueness and the graphic power which marks everything that this highly gifted author touches.

11. *Sinai and Palestine*. By the same. Fifth Edition. London, 1858.

12. *Biblical Researches in the Holy Land*. By the Rev. Dr. Robinson. 3 vols. London, 1856.

13. *Handbook for Travellers in Syria and Palestine*. By the Rev. J. L. Porter. London, Murray, 1858.

14. *The Land and the Book*. By the Rev. Dr. Thomson. 2 vols. London, 1859

15. *Tent-work in Palestine*. By Lieut. Conder, R.E. This is by far the most readable and valuable work which the recent Exploration of Palestine has produced. New Edition. London, 1880.

16. *Handbook to the Bible*. By F. R. Conder and C. R. Conder, R.E. London, 1879. This is cited as "Conder, Handbook." "Conder" alone always refers to the "Tent-work."

17. *Narrative of a Journey through Syria and Palestine*. By Lieut. C. W. M. Van de Velde. 2 vols. Edinburgh and London, 1854.

18. *Contemplations on the Historical Passages of the Old Testament*. By Bishop Hall. 3 vols. S. P. C. K.

19. *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians*. By Sir J. Gardner Wilkinson. New Edition. London, 1880.

20. *Elias der Thisbiter*. Von F. W. Krummacher. Elberfeld, 1835.

21. *Gesenii Thesaurus Philologicus Criticus Linguae Hebraeae Veteris Testamenti*. Lipsiae, 1835.

22. *Gesenius's Hebrew Grammar*. Fourteenth Edition, enlarged and improved by R. Boediger. London, 1846.

# THE FIRST BOOK OF THE KINGS.

## EXPOSITION

### CHAPTER I.

**THE REVOLT OF ADONIJAH AND THE ACCESSION OF SOLOMON.** — The first chapter of this book is occupied with the accession of Solomon and with the circumstances which preceded, marked, and followed that event. The author, or compiler, evidently considered that his work properly began with the reign of Israel's third king, and David's illness and death are only introduced into the narrative because they necessitated a hasty and premature coronation of Solomon, and exercised an important influence on the beginning of his reign (ch. ii). In the natural order of events, Solomon would not have succeeded until his father's death, but Adonijah's attempt to possess himself of the kingdom required the immediate elevation of Solomon to the throne, and this attempt having been suggested by David's extreme feebleness, the author is compelled to begin his history with an account of David's decay and death. In the opening verses, consequently, he introduces us into the chamber of sickness. His materials for this part of the history were no doubt derived from the "Book of Nathan the prophet" (1 Chron. xxix. 29; 2 Chron. ix. 29). The date of these events is B.C. 1015.

Ver. 1.—Now [Heb. *and*, but "now" more nearly expresses the import of the original, for *ו* has here little or no connect-

ing force. It is commonly found at the beginning of a book (as in Exod., Levit., Josh., Judges, 2 Sam., Ruth, &c.), and that where there is no connection whatever with any earlier writing (as in Esther, Ezek., Jonah, &c.) It can hardly imply, therefore, "that the historian regards his work as a continuation of a preceding history" (Rawlinson), nor is there any need to suppose that it "has been taken from a writing containing the earlier history of David." Keil King [Heb. *the king*. The frequent use of this title, "*King David*," "*King Solomon*," "*King Asa*," &c., is characteristic of our author. The expression is not unknown in 2 Sam., but it occurs so rarely as to constitute a distinction (not a link, as Wordsworth) between that book and the Kings.] David was old [yet 2 Sam. v. 4, 5, shows that he cannot have been more than seventy. (He was thirty at his accession; his reign at Hebron lasted seven years and a half; at Jerusalem thirty-three years.) Rawlinson says, "the Jews at this time were not long lived." Certainly, the Jewish *kings* were not. Only David, Solomon, and Manasses exceeded threescore] and stricken [Heb. *gone*, i.e., advanced] in years. [A common expression, only found with *בן*] as in Gen. xviii. 11; xxiv. 1; Josh. xiii. 1, &c.] And they covered him with clothes [lit. *coverings*. *כִּתְוֹנוֹת* is used of any covering, whether of the person (Gen. xxxix. 12; 1 Kings xxii. 10), or the bed (1 Sam. xix. 13), or even a table (Num. iv. 6). Indeed, the outer garment was used, at least by the poor, for a covering at night (Exod. xxii. 27). The context (ver. 47) shows that *bedclothes* are

intended here] but he gat no heat. [A common experience of the aged. David's early hardships and later sorrows and anxieties appear to have aged him prematurely. Possibly he was also afflicted with disease.]

Ver. 2.—Wherefore [Heb. *and*] his servants [according to Josephus (Antiq. vii. 14, 3), his physicians] said unto him, Let there be sought [lit. as marg., “let them seek”] for my lord the king [the singular pronoun is used as representing the servant who was spokesman for the rest] a young virgin [marg., “a damsel, a virgin.” She must be young, to impart heat, and a virgin, as befitted a king. Though she was recommended as a nurse, they would naturally suppose she might be taken as a concubine] and let her stand before the king [i.e., as servant (ver. 4)]. Cf. ch. xii. 6, 8; Gen. xli. 46; Dan. i. 5; Deut. i. 38 (with Josh. i. 1) 1 Kings x. 8. In the East, servants still stand and wait their masters' pleasure. Cf. 2 Kings v. 25], and let her cherish him [So also the LXX., *kai issrau avrov thalponosa*. But Gesenius, *al.* “be a companion to him”] and let her lie in thy [or “his,” LXX. *avrov*, Vulg. *suo*] bosom [the expression is generally, but not invariably (see 1 Kings iii. 20; Ruth iv. 16) used *de complexu venero*] that my lord the king may get heat. [This close embrace of youth was an obvious way of imparting animal heat to age (“Calor a corpore juvenili ac sano maxime prodest senibus.” Grotius), and was the more favoured because other and internal remedies were not then known. It is recognized by Galen, and is said to have been prescribed by a Jewish physician to the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa (Bähr). It is stated by Roberts that it is still largely followed in the East.]

Ver. 3.—So [Heb. *and*] they sought (cf. Esth. ii. 2), for a fair [this word points to the same conclusion as “virgin” in ver. 2] damsel throughout all the coasts [i.e., borders (*costa*=rib, side). An old writer speaks of the “coasts and quarters of heaven”] of Israel, and found Abishag [= “Father of error.” Names compounded with *Ab*, “father,” were and are very common in the East. We have, e.g., *Ab-salom* in ver. 6, and *Abi-athar* in ver. 7] a [Heb. *the*] Shunammite [Shunem, a town of Issachar (Josh. xix. 18), now called Sólam, “a flourishing village encompassed by gardens” (Porter), and “in the midst of the finest cornfields in the world” (Grove), lies on the lower slope of “Little Hermon,” and has before it the wide plain of Esdrnelon. Another Shunammite appears in the sacred history (2 Kings iv. 8)] and brought her to the king.

Ver. 4.—And the damsel was very fair [lit., *fair to exceeding*] and cherished [see on ver. 2] the king, and ministered to him; but the king knew her not. [This is mentioned to explain the history of chap. ii. 13-25. Had it been otherwise, Adonijah could never have presumed to seek her in marriage, and Bathsheba would never have promised her help in his suit. Such an incestuous alliance would not only have been contrary to the law (Levit. xvii. 8), but abhorrent to all true Israelites (cf. 1 Cor. v. 1). In this fact, which the court knew, and which the nation at large did not know—they could only suppose that such a “search” for one so exceeding “fair” meant the increase of the seraglio.—Adonijah found his *point d'appui* for a second attempt on the throne. The older expositors and some of the modern, notably Wordsworth, assume that Abishag was David's wife, in the sense of being legally married to him. (Corn. & Lap. discusses the question at considerable length, and with needless prurieny.) But this idea finds no support in Scripture, which represents her as simply an attendant. It is idle to remark, consequently, that “the Jewish law allowed polygamy” (Rawlinson).

Ver. 5.—Then Adonijah [= “Jehovah is my Lord.” The fourth son of David, and now apparently the eldest surviving. It seems probable that Chileab, or Daniel (1 Chron. iii. 1), David's second son, died in infancy. For Amnon's death, see 2 Sam. xiii. 29; for Absalom's, *ibid.* xviii. 14. He must now have been between thirty-three and forty years of age (having been born in Hebron)] the son of Haggith [= “Festive” (Gesen.) “the dancer” (Stanley)] exalted himself, saying [to himself and his confederates], I will be king. [It is not difficult to trace this resolve to its sources. They were (1) his seniority (ch. ii. 22). It is true there was no “right of primogeniture” in the Hebrew monarchy. “The God-King had reserved to Himself the choice of the earthly king” (Keil). David himself was not the eldest, but the youngest brother. At the same time primogeniture, *ceteris paribus*, would have, and as a matter of fact had, considerable weight. The firstborn had the birthright; can we doubt he would expect the crown, and think it hard if he were passed over? (see 2 Chron. xxi. 3). (2) His personal attractions. Adonijah would think that his beauty and stature (Josephus mentions the latter) marked him out, as similar gifts had done Saul (1 Sam. ix. 2), for the throne. (3) He was encouraged in his pretensions, if indeed they were not suggested to him, by others, by Joab, for example (see on ver. 7). (4) Possibly

love for the beautiful Shunammite and the desire to gain possession of her may have strengthened his resolves. It is noteworthy that he and his beauty are mentioned just after her and hers]; and he prepared [Heb. *made*] him chariots and horsemen [rather horses, as in 1 Sam. viii. 11; 1 Kings v. 6, Heb. The former passage almost settles the meaning here. Keil *assumes* that a mounted escort is meant], and fifty men to run before him [as Absalom before him (2 Sam. xv. 1). Adonijah seems in every way to have imitated Absalom. Josephus says he resembled him in disposition. Chariots, horses, and outrunners are mentioned (1 Sam. viii. 11) as the very first of the king's insignia. Horses were such natural and familiar tokens of royal state (not being employed in agriculture or for travelling), that the Hebrew kings were warned (Deut. xvii. 16) against multiplying them. Outrunners again, such as the Roman emperors had (called by them *cursores*), and such as we find at the present day in Egypt, foot-men who precede the chariot at full speed, and by their shrill cries clear the way, are admirably calculated to impress the public mind. According to Morier, "runners before the king's horse in Persia are indispensable to the royal state." Adonijah hoped by this display of regal pomp to win the suffrages of the people.]

Ver. 6.—And his father had not displeased [or pained, afflicted. The LXX. has ἀπεκώλυσεν] him at any time [Heb. from his days, *i.e.*, all his days, LXX. οὐδέποτε, *vulg.* a diebus ejus. *Sein Lebtage* (Bähr). Some (Seb. Schmidt, *e.g.*) would understand "since the days of his ambition and display"] in saying, Why hast thou done so? and he also [*i.e.*, he also, as well as Absalom, mentioned presently; or, possibly, he as well as Abishag just mentioned. Bähr's rendering, "Und dazu war er sehr schön," &c. "And moreover he" was, &c. will not stand] was a very goodly man [cf. 2 Sam. xiv. 25. This accounted in part not only for his ambition, but also for his following]; and his mother [the two last words are not in the original, which simply has "and she bare," יָלְדָה. There is no need, with Thenius, to read, יָלְדָה, *genuit*, or with others, הוֹלִידָה. We have a similar ellipse in Num. xxvi. 59. The meaning is quite clear, *viz.*, that Haggith bare Adonijah to David next after Maachah bore him Absalom. This fact is mentioned to show that he was the eldest surviving son: and it shows therefore that seniority counted for something (cf. ch. ii. 25)] bare him after Absalom.

Ver. 7.—And he conferred [Heb. "his

words were" (2 Sam. iii. 17, Heb.)] with Joab [Joab's share in this conspiracy, despite his hitherto unwavering fidelity to David, is easily accounted for. He must have known that he was under David's displeasure, and he must have feared, too, that he would be an object of dislike and distrust to a successor trained, as Solomon had been, under David's and Nathan's immediate influence. He could hardly be unconscious that under a new reign his position—unless he took measures to assure it—would be a precarious one. He resolved, therefore, to secure himself by helping Adonijah to his throne. It is also highly probable that Adonijah's ambitious character was much more to his liking than that of the pious and pacific Solomon. Adonijah's physical qualities, again, would no doubt commend him to this rough soldier, who may also have sympathised with him as the eldest son. And there may have been other circumstances (such, *e.g.*, as close personal friendship), of which we know nothing] the son of Zeruah, and with Abiathar [in 2 Sam. viii. 17, we read that "Abimelech son of Abiathar" was priest. Similarly, 1 Chron. xxiv. 6. An obvious transposition] the priest. ["Abiathar's defection is still more surprising" than Joab's (Rawlinson). It is certainly remarkable, when we consider the close ties which subsisted between Abiathar and David, ties which were cemented by the blood of eighty-five persons (1 Sam. xxii. 18), and strengthened by the many afflictions which they had shared in common (*ibid.* ver. 23 to ch. xxviii.; 2 Sam. xv. 24—29), that he should have joined in a plot to defeat David's cherished hopes and plans—plans, too, which he must surely have known, had the sanction of religion (1 Chron. xxviii. 5), and there must have been some powerful motive to account for this. May we not find one in jealousy of Zadok, who had for some time been associated with him in the priesthood, who is generally mentioned first (2 Sam. viii. 17; xv. 29, 35, 36; xx. 25), as if he were the more important and influential, and whose advancement, after the prophecy of 1 Sam. ii. 33—36, Abiathar could not contemplate without suspicion and dread. Is it not highly probable that among the "words" Adonijah had with him was a promise to restore the priesthood to his family exclusively, as the reward of his allegiance: and they following Adonijah helped him (lit., as marg., "helped after Adonijah." It is a pregnant construction, "they aided having followed the side of Adonijah" (Gesenius).

Ver. 8.—But Zadok the priest [2 Sam. viii. 17. It is generally said to be difficult to explain "how Zadok and Abiathar came

both to be 'priests at this time.' Rawlinson, who adds that "the best explanation is that Abiathar was the real high priest," officiating in Zion, while Zadok acted as chief priest at the tabernacle at Gibeon. (Bähr, by a strange oversight, assigns to Zadok the care of the ark on Mount Zion, whereas 1 Chron. xvi. 39, distinctly connects his ministry with the tabernacle of witness at Gibeon.) But the precedence (see on ver. 7) generally assigned to Zadok is hardly consistent with the idea that Abiathar was "the real high priest." The fact is that a duality of high priests, associated, apparently, on pretty equal terms, was not unknown in Jewish history. The cases of Eleazer and Ithamar, Hophni and Phinehas, Annas and Caiaphas, will occur to all. 2 Kings xxv. 18, speaks of "the chief priest" and "the second priest;" 2 Chron. xxxi. 10, of the "chief priest of the house of Zadok." And a dual priesthood would be the more necessary in David's days, because of the two sanctuaries, Zion and Gibeon. We find, however, from 1 Chron. xv. 11, that Zadok was already priest at the time of the bringing up of the ark. And the true explanation, no doubt, is that Zadok had succeeded some member of his family, in all probability Jehoiada, called in 1 Chron. xii. 27, "the leader of Aaron" (Heb.), who had certainly been high priest in the time of Saul (1 Chron. xxvii. 5), and who would hardly be degraded when, with 3700 followers, he joined David at Hebron. On his decease, or cession of office, Zadok, who had joined at the same time with a large contingent, was associated with Abiathar in the priest's office. This dual arrangement, consequently, was the result of David's having taken over a high priest from Saul, together with the kingdom, when he had Abiathar as priest already, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, [i.e., Jehoiada the high priest (1 Chron. xxvii. 5). Benaiah was consequently a Levite, and of the family of Aaron; set, however, by David, because of his prowess (2 Sam. xxiii. 20, 21; 1 Chron. xi. 22) over the body-guard (2 Sam. viii. 18; 1 Chron. xviii. 17). Probably he was a near relative of Zadok,] and Nathan the prophet [a Jewish tradition makes Nathan the eighth son of Jesse. He comes before us 2 Sam. vii. 2, 3, 17; xii. 1—12, 25] and Shimei [by Ewald identified with Shammah (1 Sam. xvi. 9), or Shimeah, David's brother (2 Sam. xiii. 3; xxi. 21). Others suppose him to be the Shimei of 1 Kings iv. 18. But see note on chap. ii. 8. Josephus calls Shimei (not Bei, as Bähr states) ὁ Δαυίδου φίλος, and Rei (this name occurs here only. Ewald would identify him with Raddai (1 Chron.

ii. 14), another brother of David, but on very slender grounds], and the mighty men [or heroes. Gesen. "chiefs." Not the 600 men who formed David's band in his wanderings (1 Sam. xxv. 13; xxvii. 2) (Rawlinson), but the 30 (or 37) to whom this name of *Gibborim* is expressly given, 2 Sam. xxiii. 8; 1 Chron. xi. 15, 25; xxix. 24. Comp. 2 Kings x. 25, Heb.] which belonged to David [same expression as in 2 Sam. xxiii. 8] were not with Adonijah.

Ver. 9.—And Adonijah slew [or sacrificed, LXX. *ἐθυσίασεν*. It was a sacrificial feast, like Absalom's, 2 Sam. xv. 12 (where see Speaker's note). Religious festivity, i.e., was the apparent object of their assembling: religion was invoked, not merely to cloke their designs, but to cement them together] sheep and oxen and fat cattle by [Heb. *with*; same expression, 2 Sam. xx. 8] the stone of Zohemoth, [i.e., "the serpent" (Gesen.) "No satisfactory explanation has been given of this name" (Rawlinson). See Smith's "Dict. Bible" *sub voc.*, where the various interpretations are given. The stone, which served as "a natural altar for the sacrificial feast," the spring, which afforded "water for the necessary ablutions," and the situation with respect to the adjoining city recommended this place as a rendezvous] which is by En-Rogel [Josh. xv. 7; xviii. 16; 2 Sam. xvii. 17. Perhaps "the spring of the spy." The Chald., Arab., and Syr. render "the spring, of the fuller"—the Orientals wash clothes, &c., by treading (rogel) them. Josephus says it was without the city, in the royal garden (*ἐν βασιλικῇ παραδείσῳ*). The authorities are divided between the "Fountain of the virgin" (Ain um ed-Deraj), and the "Well of Job" (Bir Eyub.) See the arguments in Bonar's "Land of Promise," App. 5; Thomson's "Land and Book," vol. ii. p. 523; and Mr. Grove's Art. in Smith's "Dict. Bib." Porter ("Handbook of Palestine") identifies En-Rogel with Bir Eyub without remark. There is much to be said on either side. The pool of Siloam ("Bib. Museum") has nothing in its favour] and called all his brethren the king's sons [including, it would seem, even the elder sons of David and Bathsheba, who would bring up the number to fifteen (1 Chron. iii. 5). They too, if living, would naturally resent the preference of the youngest brother], and all the men of Judah, the king's servants ["all the Judeans who were serving at court, as being members of his own tribe" (Keil). The fierce jealousy between Ephraim and Judah would almost compel the king to surround himself with soldiers and attendants of the latter tribe. Some of the invited guests, no doubt, like Absalom's two hun-

dre]. "went in their simplicity and knew not anything" (2 Sam. xv. 11).

Ver. 10.—But Nathan the prophet, and Benajah, and the mighty men, and Solomon his brother, he called not. [It is clear from this verse that Adonijah perfectly understood that he had in Solomon a rival. The intentions and promises (ver. 13) of his father can hardly have been unknown to him. The name "Jedidiah," too, bestowed upon Solomon by Nathan (2 Sam. xii. 25), taken in connexion with the prophecy of Nathan (*ibid.* vii. 12; cf. 1 Chron. xxii. 9, 10), must have proved to him that Solomon was marked out for David's successor. He seems to have been well aware also who were Solomon's supporters. To some of them he may have made indirect overtures.

The historian having recorded Adonijah's preparations for a *coup d'état*, now relates the manner in which the plot was frustrated. The prophet, who had been the guardian and preceptor of Solomon's youth, and who knew the Divine will respecting the succession (1 Chron. xxii. 9, 10), takes prompt and energetic measures to defeat the conspiracy.

Ver. 11.—Wherefore Nathan spake unto Bathsheba the mother of Solomon [the person after Solomon most directly concerned and also best fitted to approach the king] saying, Hast thou not heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith [possibly there is a touch of worldly wisdom here, as Rawlinson suggests, "Haggith, thy rival." We may be sure David's harem was not without its fierce jealousies. But (see ver. 5, and ch. ii. 13) the patronymic is so common in Heb. that we cannot safely found an argument upon it. See on chap. ii. 5] doth reign [Heb. *did reign*. LXX. *ἡβασίλευσεν*, aor. = "succeeded." "Schon so gut wie König geworden ist." Bähr and Keil] and David our Lord knoweth it not.

Ver. 12.—Now therefore come, let me give [Heb. *counsel*] thee counsel, that thou mayest save [Heb. *and save*, i.e., by acting upon it] thine own life, and the life of thy son Solomon. The custom of Eastern kings—to secure their thrones by a massacre of their rivals—has received many illustrations, notably among the Ottomans, and is receiving one in Burmah at the present moment (May, 1879). We have Scripture instances in Judges ix. 5; 1 Kings xv. 29; 2 Kings x. 7, 14; xi. 1 (cf. 1 Sam. xxiv. 21). To put a royal mother to death, along with her offspring, though perhaps unusual, was not unknown. Rawlinson cites the instances of Cleopatra, widow of Philip of Macedon, who was murdered with her infant son

Caranus by Olympias; and Roxana, widow of Alexander the Great, who, with her son, was put to death by Cassander. Nathan does not say this will be, but may be, Bathsheba's fate.

Ver. 13.—Go and get thee in [Heb. *come*] unto king David, and say unto him, Didst not thou, my lord, O king, swear unto thine handmaid [this oath of David's to Bathsheba (see vers. 17, 30) is not elsewhere recorded, but it was evidently well known to Nathan, and probably, therefore, to others also] saying, Assuredly [Heb. *that*, '2, *recitantis*] Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he [emphatic] shall sit upon my throne? why therefore doth Adonijah reign?

Ver. 14.—Behold, while thou yet talkest there [the original is more graphic, "thou art yet talking . . . and I"] with the king, I also will come after thee and confirm [marg., "fill up," cf. *πληρώσω*, LXX. Still an idiom of the East. Roberts (quoted in the "Biblical Museum") cites many illustrations. The meaning is, not to add to, amplify, but to corroborate. See ch. ii. 27; viii. 15, 24] thy words.

Ver. 15.—And Bathsheba went in unto the king into the chamber [lit., inner chamber, *θάλαμος*, *cubiculum penetrabile*, Buxtorf. Same word 2 Sam. iv. 7; xiii. 10] and the king was very old [the repetition (see ver. 1) is not idle or unmeaning. Here the word refers to feebleness rather than age. It is mentioned to explain David's confinement to his chamber] and Abishag the Shunamite ministered unto the king. [This is introduced to show the king's helplessness. It does not prove that "there was a disinterested witness present" (Rawlinson), for she may have withdrawn, as Bathsheba did presently (ver. 23), and Nathan (ver. 32). It is a graphic touch, painted probably from the life, and by the hand of Nathan, from whom this narrative is derived.

Ver. 16.—And Bathsheba bowed, and did obeisance [cf. 2 Sam. xiv. 4. But we are hardly justified in seeing here "more than the ordinary Eastern salutation" (Rawlinson). The Jewish court seems to have been very ceremonious and stately (1 Sam. xxiv. 8; 2 Sam. xix. 24). The king was the representative of Heaven]. And the king said, What wouldest thou [marg., What to thee? Not necessarily, What thy supplication? (as Rawlinson). It rather means generally, "What thy business?" *Quid tibi*, not *quid petis*].

Ver. 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.

Ver. 18.—And now, behold, Adonijah

reigneth; and now my Lord the king, thou knowest it not.

Ver. 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. [Said, not to “show that Solomon had reason to fear the worst if Adonijah should succeed” (Keil), but to prove that there was a plot. It showed the cloven foot.]

Ver. 20.—And thou [instead of  $\text{וְאַתָּה}$ ], the Chald., Syr., and Vulg., with many MSS, read  $\text{וְעַתָּה}$  “and now;” but this looks like an emendation, and “*proclivi lectioni præstat ardua*.” Similarly, the second “now” in ver. 18 appears as “thou” in 200 MSS. These variations are of very little consequence, but the received text, in both cases, is somewhat the more spirited] my lord, O king [the repetition (see vers. 18, 21, 24, 27) illustrates the profound deference and court paid to the Hebrew monarch (see on ver. 16), especially when we remember that these are the words of a wife], the eyes of all Israel are upon thee (cf. ch. ii. 15) that thou shouldst tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him. This shows that there was no “right of primogeniture.” The kings of the East have always designated their successor amongst their sons. “Alyattes designated Croesus; Cyrus designated Cambyses, and Darius designated Xerxes” (Rawlinson). “The Shah of Persia, at the beginning of this century, had sixty sons, all brought up by their mothers, with the hope of succeeding” (Morier, quoted by Stanley). And the kings of Israel claimed and exercised a similar right (2 Chron. xi. 22: xxi. 3).

Ver. 21.—Otherwise [there is no corresponding word in the Heb.] it shall come to pass, when my lord the king shall sleep [strictly, “lie down:” see on ch. ii. 10] with his fathers [this phrase, so common in the books of Kings and Chronicles, only occurs “once in the Pentateuch (Deut. xxxi. 16) and once in the historical books before Kings” (Rawlinson). It was evidently the product of an age when the nation was settled, and men had their family sepulchres] that I and my son Solomon shall becounted [Heb. *be*] offenders [Heb. as marg., *sinner*s]. The primary meaning of  $\text{שָׂוִים}$  is “to miss the mark.” Like  $\text{ἀναπράνεις}$ , it came to be used of all *err*-ing and transgression. Bathsheba and Solomon would be obnoxious to Adonijah, as representing a rival cause; possibly also as guilty of high treason (Clericus, Bähr, *al.*)

Ver. 22.—And lo, while she yet talked with the king, Nathan the prophet also came in. [Heb. *came, i.e.*, to the palace. “*Came in*” almost implies that he entered the room, which he did not till summoned (ver. 23). Observe, Nathan’s words convey no *suggestio falsi*. He does not deny a previous interview with Bathsheba, nor does he confess it. If there is an appearance of artifice, there was no intention to deceive. And the artifice, such as it was, was not only harmless, but for the public good.]

Ver. 22.—And they told the king, saying, Behold Nathan the prophet [we are scarcely justified in seeing in this “solemn announcement of his approach” an “indication of the consideration in which he was held” (Stanley). It is difficult to see how otherwise he could be announced. It is clear that he was constantly spoken of as “the prophet” (vers. 10, 22, 34, 38, &c. Cf. 2 Sam. vii. 2; xii. 25)]. And when he was come in before [Heb. *and he came before*—three words instead of six] the king, he bowed himself before the king with his face to the ground [see on vers. 16, 20; and cf. ver. 31, where we have a similar expression. “In the Assyrian sculptures, ambassadors are represented with their faces actually touching the earth before the feet of the monarch” (Rawlinson). This profound reverence on the part of Nathan is the more remarkable, when we remember how he had once denounced David to his face (2 Sam. xii. 7)].

Ver. 24.—And Nathan said, My Lord, O king, hast thou said [the Heb. has no question, but a strong affirmation: “*thou hast said*,” *i.e.*, “thou must have said (Du hast wohl gesagt,” Bähr). Nathan puts it thus forcibly, in order to draw from the king a disclaimer], Adonijah shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne? [Same words as in vers. 13, 17, and possibly designedly so. The coincidence conveys the meaning, “Thou hast *sworn* Solomon shall reign,” &c. “Thou hast *said*, Adonijah shall reign,” &c.]

Ver. 25.—For [proof that the king must have decreed that Adonijah should succeed him. There appears to be an undertone of reproof in these words, Nathan assumes that Adonijah cannot have done all this without David’s knowledge and sanction, because “his father had not displeased him at any time” (ver. 6). This uprising was the result of David’s over-indulgence and want of firmness] he is gone down this day, and hath slain [see on ver. 9] oxen and fat cattle and sheep in abundance, and hath called all the king’s sons, and the captains of the host [Joab was the captain (ver. 19). The plural shows that other

high officers had followed his lead. "Under the captains of the host (ver. 25), the servants of the king (ver. 10) are included" (Bähr). Bähr's accidental miscitation (ver. 10 for ver. 9) has apparently led his American translator (p. 24) to the serious mistake of identifying these "captains of the host" with "the mighty men" (Gibborim) of ver. 10, who, it is distinctly said, "were not with Adonijah" and Abiathar the priest, and behold, they eat and drink before him [*convivia apta conjugationibus*. Grotius] and say, God save king Adonijah. [Heb. "let the king (not "king," as marg.) Adonijah live," or better, "live the king," &c. (comp. the *vivat rex*, and the *vives* and *vivas* of later days.) This was the customary acclamation wherewith the Jews greeted their kings (cf. ver. 39; 1 Sam. x. 24; 2 Sam. xvi. 16; 2 Kings xi. 12; 2 Chron. xxiii. 11).

Ver. 26.—But me, even me [Heb. I] thy servant [to Nathan this omission was most significant. He seems to say that he had not been called because he had been concerned in the appointment of a successor 2 Sam. vii. 13] and Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and thy servant Solomon [Bähr thinks that "we have in the order of these names a climax, in which Solomon, as the highest personage, is named last"] hath he not called.

Ver. 27.—Is this thing done [עֲשֵׂה = *an*, or perhaps, *num*, "Is it then the case that," &c.] by [lit., from with] my lord the king [*i.e.*, with his privity and by his appointment], and thou hast not shewed it unto thy servant [Heb. "made thy servant know." Nathan submits that he has a strong claim (2 Sam. xii. 25) to be informed, should there be any change in the king's plans], who should sit upon the throne of my lord the king after him? [Same expression as in ver. 20. The repetition was well calculated to impress upon the king the importance of nominating a successor at once.

Ver. 28.—Then king David [see on ver. 1] answered and said, Call me Bathsheba [she evidently left the chamber when Nathan entered it. "This was done, not to avoid the appearance of a mutual arrangement (Cler., *Then. al.*), but for reasons of propriety, inasmuch as in audiences granted by the king to his wife or one of his counsellors, no third person ought to be present unless the king required his assistance." Keil.] And she came into the king's presence, and stood before the king. [Here, as in numberless other instances, our translators have disregarded literalness in favour of euphony. The Hebrew has here an exact repetition, "came before the king, and stood before the king." The Authorized

Version rendering was adopted as the more spirited and rhythmical.

Ver. 29.—And the king sware [see on ver. 51] and said, As the Lord liveth [or "by the life of Jehovah." Cf. "by the life of Pharaoh" (Gen. xlii. 15). This was the common form of oath. See, *e.g.*, ch. ii. 24; Judges viii. 19; Ruth iii. 13; 1 Sam. xiv. 39; xix. 6; xx. 21; xxix. 6; and especially Jer. iv. 2; v. 2; Hos. iv. 15. It is characteristic of David to introduce into the formula some such clause as the following], that hath redeemed my soul [*i.e.*, life] out of all distress. Same expression as in 2 Sam. iv. 9. Similar expressions are found in Psa. xxv. 22, and xxxiv. 22. The repeated deliverance out of straits and danger—"out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul"—was one of the most remarkable features of David's life, and it is no wonder that he repeatedly commemorates it, converting every adjuration into an act of thanksgiving. Similarly, Jacob (Gen. xlvi. 16.)

Ver. 30.—Even as I sware unto thee by the Lord God of Israel, saying, Assuredly [Heb. עֵי *that*, often prefixed to the *oratio directa*; not lending any emphasis (= *inmo*), as Keil says the first and third עֵי of this verse do, but in English simply redundant. See on vers. 13, 17] Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne [same words as in vers. 13, 17, 24. These close repetitions are the habit of the East] in my stead, even so [Heb. *that so*] will I (certainly [not in Heb.] do this day.

Ver. 31.—Then Bathsheba bowed with her face to the earth, and did reverence to the king [see on vers. 16, 23], and said, Let my lord king David live for ever. [This hyperbolic expression is here only used of a Hebrew monarch. It was constantly addressed to the Babylonian and Persian kings. See Dan. ii. 4; iii. 9; v. 10; vi. 21; Nehem. ii. 3.

Ver. 32.—And king David said [this prompt and vigorous action shows that David's force of character and mental power were unimpaired], Call me Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada. ["the order of the names marks the position of the persons with respect to the matter in hand." Rawlinson]. And they came before the king.

Ver. 33.—The king also said [Heb. "And the king said," which is every way preferable. The "also" is somewhat confusing], Take with you the servants [*i.e.*, the Cherethites and Pelethites, ver. 35] of your lord, [Heb. *lords*; probably a *pluralis majestatis* (cf. Gen. xxxix. 2; xlii. 30; 2 Kings ii. 3, 5, 16), suggested to David by the *usus loquendi* of the court. This ex-

pression seems at first a strange periphrasis for "my servants." But David naturally adopts the language those around him were always using. See ver. 43; also 2 Sam. xi. 11, and xx. 6. Note: The latter passage, which refers to the *king*, has the plur.; the former, referring to Joab, the sing.] and cause Solomon my son to ride upon mine own mule, [lit., "the she-mule" (the most prized in the East. Cf. Judges v. 10, Heb.) "which is mine." This was not merely a mark of honour (cf. Gen. xli. 43; Esth. vi. 8, 9), but a public and very significant indication of David's will respecting his successor. The populace would perceive at once who was destined to sit in David's seat. "The Rabbins tell us that it was death to ride on the king's mule without his permission" (Rawlinson). מִלְּמִי, the fem. form is only found here and in vers. 38, 44. The mule would seem to have been a recent importation into Palestine—we never read of them before the time of David—and the Israelites were forbidden to breed them (Levit. xix. 19). Their use, consequently, was naturally restricted to royal or distinguished personages (2 Sam. xiii. 29). Wordsworth sees in the word a proof that David had not disobeyed God by multiplying horses to himself, and bring him down to Gihon. [Not Gibeon, which Thenius most arbitrarily would substitute for the received text. Where was Gihon? The popular belief (accepted by Bähr and Keil, as well as by some geographers) is that it was in the valley of the Son of Hinnom, a part of which still bears the name of Gihon, i.e., to the west of Jerusalem, and not far from the Jaffa gate. By many indeed the present *Birket-es-Sultan* is identified with the Lower Pool of Gihon. But others (Ferguson, Rawlinson, &c.) see in it the ancient name of the Tyropæon. Scripture does not speak of it as a *spring*, though the "source of the waters of Gihon" is mentioned 2 Chron. xxxii. 30, Heb. The text shows that it was *below* the city ("bring him down upon Gihon," ver. 33. Cf. also ver. 40). 2 Chron. xxxiii. 14, speaks of "Gihon in the valley," where it is very noticeable that the word used is *Nachal* (i.e. *Wady*, watercourse). But this "is the word always employed for the valley of the Kedron, east of Jerusalem, the so-called valley of Jehoshaphat; *ge* (ravine or glen) being as constantly employed for the valley of Hinnom, south and west of the town" (Grove, "Diet. Bible," art. Gihon). It is also to be noticed that the text last cited mentions Gihon in connection with *Ophel*, which lies south-east of Jerusalem. The Chald., Arab., and Syr. are probably right, therefore, in identifying Gihon here with *Siloam*

(which lies at the foot of Ophel), in favour of which it may further be said that it would be admirably suited for David's purpose—of a counter demonstration—and that whether En-Rogel is to be found at the Well of the Virgin or the Well of Job. Siloam is at no great distance from either, and quite within earshot, whereas the traditional Gihon is altogether out of the way. It must be borne in mind that this procession to and from Gihon was ordained, not because there was any special reason for anointing Solomon there—for it was not a holy place—but purely as a demonstration to the populace, and to checkmate the conspirators. It was probably a public place, and would accommodate a large concourse (Poole).

Ver. 34.—And let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet [Bähr sees in the fact that Nathan was associated with Zadok in the anointing, "the high significance David attributed to the prophetic office in Israel." But the prophets constantly performed this ceremony. Samuel anointed both Saul and David; Elisha anointed Jehu (2 Kings ix. 1), and was commissioned to anoint Hazael (1 Kings xix. 15, 16)] anoint him [the king, being a sacred personage, was set apart to the office, like the priest and prophet, by anointing. Saul was probably anointed twice (1 Sam. x. 1; xi. 15. Cf. xii. 3). David was anointed thrice (1 Sam. xvi. 13; 2 Sam. ii. 4; v. 3. Solomon was anointed twice (ver. 39; 1 Chron. xxix. 22). The Rabbins have always held that subsequent kings were not anointed, where the succession was regular. But this opinion must be taken *quantum valet*. It is true that we only read of the anointing of Jehu (2 Kings ix. 6), Joash (*ibid.* xi. 12), and Jehoahaz (*ibid.* xxiii. 30), and that in these three cases the accession was irregular. But it is obvious that other kings may have been anointed as well, though the fact is not recorded. There would be no reason for recording it in ordinary cases. It seems hardly likely, too, that any king would readily dispense with an ordinance which would so much strengthen his title] there king over Israel: and blow ye with the trumpet [the sound of the trumpet would almost seem to have been a necessary accompaniment of coronations, or the proclamation of a new king. See 2 Sam. xv. 10; 2 Kings ix. 13; xi. 14], and say, God save king Solomon. [See on ver. 25.]

Ver. 35.—Then ye shall come up (after him [not in the LXX. Cod. Vat.] that he may [Heb. and he shall] come and sit upon my throne [in every possible way his accession was to be proclaimed and confirmed], for he shall be king in my stead [David i.e.

virtually abdicates in Solomon's favour. Cf. vers. 46, 51, 53; 1 Chron. xxix. 23, 26], and I have appointed him [he and him are emphasised in the original] to be ruler over Israel and over Judah. It is possible, as Bähr thinks, that Israel and Judah were severally mentioned because David had once been king over Judah only, and because Israel had gone over to the side of Absalom. It is more probable, however, that "Israel and Judah" was even then the current designation of the two component parts of the realm (see 2 Sam. ii. 9, 10; xix. 11, 41, &c.). Besides, we can hardly suppose that the historian has in every case, though he probably has in this, preserved the exact words of the speaker; and it need cause us no surprise had he put into David's mouth the phraseology of a later age. In the nature of things he can only give us the substance of conversations such as these.

Ver. 36.—And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada [probably he spoke, not because the execution of the order depended upon him (Bähr); for both Zadok and Nathan had a much more important part to perform, but as a blunt soldier who was accustomed to speak his mind] answered the king and said. Amen: the Lord God [lit., "Jehovah, he God," &c.] of my lord the king say so too.

Ver. 37.—As the Lord hath been with my lord the king [cf. 1 Sam. xx. 13. "This phrase expresses a very high degree of the Divine favour" (Rawlinson). See Gen. xxvi. 3, 4; xxviii. 15; xxxix. 2, 21; Exod. iii. 12; Josh. i. 5; 1 Chron. xxii. 11, &c.] as so be he with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord king David. [This was said from a full and honest heart, not to flatter David's vanity (Thenius). It is thoroughly characteristic of the man so far as we know him. And the prayer was fulfilled (ch. iii. 11, 12).]

Ver. 38.—So Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites [these were the royal body-guard—*σωματοφύλακες* Josephus calls them—who were commanded by Benaiah (2 Sam. viii. 18; xv. 18; xx. 23; xxiii. 23)]. But while their functions are pretty well understood, great difference of opinion exists as to the origin or meaning of the words. By some they are supposed to be *Gentile* names. A tribe of Cherethites is mentioned 1 Sam. xxx. 14. (Cf. Ezek. xxv. 16; Zeph. ii. 5), and in close connexion with the Philistines (ver. 16). Hence Cherethite has been thought to be another name for Philistine: and as the LXX. and Syr. render the word "Cretans," it has been conjectured that the Philistines had their origin from Crete.

They did come from Capthor, and that is probably Crete (see Gen. x. 14; Jer. xlvii. 4; Amos ix. 7; Deut. ii. 23). פְּלִיִּי is again, is not unlike חֵרֶתִי. In favour of this view is the fact that David certainly had a body-guard of foreign mercenaries (2 Sam. xv. 18, where the "Gittites" are connected with the Cherethites). Nor does it make against it that "two designations" would thus "be employed side by side for one and the same people"—as if we should speak of Britons and Englishmen (Bähr). For the names look like a *paronomasia*—of which the Jews were very fond—and a trick of this kind would at once account for the tautology. [Since writing this, I find the same idea has already occurred to Ewald.] But the other view, adopted by Gesenius, is that the names are names of office and function. Cherethite he would derive from חָרַץ, cut, slay; and by Cherethites he would understand "executioners," which the royal body-guard were in ancient despotisms (Gen. xxxix. 1, Heb.; Dan. ii. 14, &c. See on ch. ii. 25). In the Pelethites (פְּלִיִּי, swiftness) he would see the public couriers (*ἀγγαροί*) of Eastern monarchies (see Herod. viii. 98 and 2 Chron. xxx. 6). We see the guard discharging the function first named in 2 Kings x. 25; xi. 4, 8; and the latter in 1 Kings xv. 27 (marg.) went down [i.e., from the palace on Mount Zion] and caused Solomon to ride upon King David's mule, and brought him to [בְּיָם; cf. ii. 26] Gihon [Chald., Syr., Arab., *Shiloha*].

Ver. 39.—And Zadok the priest took an horn of oil [Heb. *the oil*. The "holy anointing oil," Exod. xxx. 25, 31, compounded as directed in vers. 23–25, was evidently part of the furniture of the tabernacle (Exod. xxxi. 11; xxxix. 38). Eleazer was charged with its preservation (Num. iv. 16), and the Rabbins say it lasted till the captivity] out of the tabernacle [the tabernacle on Mount Zion, containing the ark (2 Sam. vi. 17; 1 Chron. xv. 1) must be meant here. There was not time to have gone to the tabernacle at Gihon (Stanley), which was three hours distance from Jerusalem (Keil). Though Abiathar had charge of this sanctuary, yet Zadok would readily gain access to it, especially in the king's name] and anointed Solomon. And they blew the trumpet [cf. 2 Sam. xv. 10; 2 Kings ix. 13; xi. 14]; and all the people said, God save king Solomon. [Notice the exact fulfilment of the threefold charge of ver. 34 and its result. Solomon was confirmed in his office by the suffrages of the people.]

Ver. 40.—And all the people came up after

him [same expression as ver. 35. The procession, the sound of the trumpets, &c., had collected a large crowd, which followed Solomon on his return], and the people piped [Heb. *were piping*] with pipes [pipes or flutes were used on occasions of rejoicing (Isa. v. 12; xxx. 29. Cf. 1 Sam. x. 5), and also of mourning (Jer. xlvi. 36; Matt. ix. 23)]. It is true that a very slight change (מִהַלְלִים בְּהַלְלִים instead of מְהַלְלִים בְּהַלְלִים) will give the meaning, "dancing with dances," which Ewald prefers, on the ground that "all the people" could not have produced their pipes at a moment's notice. But the objection loses its force when it is observed (Rawlinson) that the text implies that only *some* of the people piped. "All the people came up . . . and the people," &c. Besides, even if it were not so, some allowance is surely to be made for Eastern hyperbole. And the received text is to be preferred on other grounds. The LXX., however, has *ἐχόμενον ἐν χοροῖς*, and rejoiced with great joy [Heb. "were rejoicing a great joy"], and the earth rent [this is certainly a strangely hyperbolic expression. For עָרַץ strictly means to cleave asunder, tear open (see, e.g., Num. xvi. 31; Amos i. 13; 2 Chron. xxv. 12). And Thenius suggests a slight emendation of the text, viz., עָרַץ אֶרֶץ (i.e., "resounded") for עָרַץ אֶרֶץ] which would obviate this difficulty. He points out that while the LXX. Cod. Vat. has *ἰσάγγη*, some versions have *ἡχησεν*, and the Vulg. *insonuit*. But perhaps it is safer to keep to the *lectio ardua* with the sound of them [Heb. "with their voices"].

Ver. 41.—And Adonijah and all the guests that were with him heard it [it is probable they "were listening with some anxiety to hear if anything would occur." Rawlinson] as they had made an end [Heb. "and they had finished"] of eating. And when Joab heard the sound of the trumpet [the original almost implies that Joab's practised ear was the first to catch the note of the trumpet. He seems to have been the first to suspect its significance], he said, Wherefore is this noise of the city being in an uproar? [More exactly, "in commotion." מוֹמָה, an onomatopoeitic word, like our English "hum." We speak of the "hum of the city," "the buzz of business," &c.]

Ver. 42.—And while he yet spake, behold, Jonathan the son of Abiathar the priest [Cf. 2 Sam. xv. 36; xvii. 17. His experience had marked him out for the post of watchman] came [That he had not arrived before shows how prompt, and ever hurried, had been the measures taken by

Solomon's party] and Adonijah said unto him [Heb. and LXX. omit "unto him"] Come in [Heb. *come*. See on ver. 22. "Come in" suggests the idea of a house or tent, whereas the feast was *al fresco*]; for thou art a valiant man [it is Adonijah (not Joab, as Bähr—of course by an oversight—says) who speaks thus. Perhaps "able," "honest," or "worthy man" (cf. ver. 52; same word in Heb.; also Prov. xii. 4) would be nearer the mark. "Valiant" is clearly out of place] and bringest good tidings. [A similar expression 2 Sam. xviii. 27. It was evidently a familiar saying. The idea, "a good man will bring good news" corresponds with that of the proverb of 1 Sam. xxiv. 13. Adonijah's misgivings reveal themselves in these words. He fears the worst, but strives to put on a cheerful face and to encourage his guests.]

Ver. 43.—And Jonathan answered and said to Adonijah, Verily [Rather, "nay but," "on the contrary" (*immo vero*). See Gen. xvii. 19, Heb., "Nay, but Sarah thy wife," &c., and Gesen., Thesaurus, *sub voce* וַיֵּלֶךְ. This particle has not "always an objecting force" (Rawlinson)—see Gen. xlii. 21, and especially 2 Sam. xiv. 5; 2 Kings iv. 14—but only in the later Hebrew, e.g., 2 Chron. xix. 3; xxxiii. 17] our Lord king David hath made Solomon king.

Ver. 44.—And the king hath sent with Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites [see on ver. 38], and they have caused him to ride upon the king's mule.

Ver. 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 [יְרוּשָׁלַיִם] same word as in ver. 41. Elsewhere almost exclusively found in poetry] rang again [rather, "is in commotion." Same expression in ver. 41 and Ruth i. 19, where it is translated, "the city was moved"]. This is the noise [Heb. *voice*] that ye have heard.

Ver. 46.—And also [the same two words are found at the beginning of vers. 47, 48. They accord well with the breathless and excited state of the speaker, and suggest how each successive detail told on the hearers] Solomon sitteth [rather, "sate, took his seat," *εκαθισ* (LXX.) aorist. See ver. 35] on the throne of the kingdom [rather, "the royal throne." So Gesen. All David's directions were now fulfilled].

Ver. 47.—And moreover [וְ] as before] the king's servants [see on ver. 33] came to bless our lord king David [Jonathan here refers in all probability to the words of Benaiah, vers. 36, 37. He does not know

the exact particulars, and ascribes to the "servants" the words of their commander. Of course it is possible that "the body-guard took up the words of Jehoiada (Benaiah?) their captain and repeated them with some slight alteration." Rawlinson] saying, God "so the Keri. The Cethib has "thy God"] make the name of Solomon better than thy name and make his throne greater than thy throne [This prayer was fulfilled (chap. iii. 12; iv. 21—24). And the king bowed himself [in worship. Cf. Gen. xlvii. 31] upon the bed.

Ver. 48.—And also thus saith 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. [These last words are added because it is quite an exceptional thing for a king to see his successor on the throne.]

Ver. 49.—And all the guests [Heb. called, LXX. καλητοι] that were with [Heb. to] Adonijah were afraid [Heb. trembled] and rose up [LXX. omits] and went every man his way. [This fear and flight betray a consciousness of guilt. They cannot have believed in the right of primogeniture.]

Ver. 50.—And Adonijah feared because of Solomon and he arose and went and caught hold of the horns of the altar. [Cf. chap. ii. 28. Probably the altar of Mount Zion, chap. iii. 15; 2 Sam. vi. 17. Though it is impossible to say positively whether this or the altar at Gibeon (chap. iii. 4) or that recently erected on the threshing floor of Araunah (2 Sam. xxiv. 25) is meant. For the "horns," see Exod. xxvii. 2; xxxviii. 2; and compare xxx. 2. They were of shittim (*i.e.*, acacia) wood overlaid with brass, and served a double purpose. Victims were bound to them (Psa. cxviii. 27), and blood was put upon them, Exod. xxix. 12. As to the altar as a place of sanctuary, see on chap. ii. 28. Evidently a right of sanctuary existed amongst both Jews and Gentiles at the time of the Exodus, and probably from time immemorial. It is referred to in Exod. xxi. 14, but it was much circumscribed by the appointment of the cities of refuge (Num. xxxv. 10 sqq.) By "laying hold of the horns the offender thereby placed himself under the protection of the saving and helping grace of God" (Bähr, "Symbolik," i. 474)

Ver. 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 [this repetition of the title is striking. Both courtiers and criminals hasten to give the

young king his new honours. In Adonijah's mouth it is also a virtual abdication of his claim to the throne and a direct acknowledgment of the new monarch. But see on vers. 1 and 35.] swear unto me to-day [Cf. 2 Sam. xix. 23. This is one of many passages which show how lightly the Jews esteemed promises in comparison with oaths. The sentiment possibly took its rise in the oaths sworn by the Divine Being (Gen. xxii. 16; xxiv. 7; Exod. xvii. 16, &c.), though it is possible, on the other hand, that these asseverations were made in deference to the popular sentiment. Be that as it may, the oath held a much more conspicuous and important place in the Jewish than the Christian economy. See Gen. xxi. 23; xxxi. 23; Num. xiv. 2; xxx. 2; Judges xv. 12; xxi. 1; 1 Sam. xiv. 28; Jer. v. 2, and, to omit other passages, 1 Kings i. 13; ii. 8, 23, 42. Even our Lord, who rebuked the habit (Matt. v. 34—37; xxiii. 16—22) respected the adjuration of Caiaphas, and St. Paul frequently appeals to God (Acts xxvi. 29; 2 Cor. i. 23; xi. 31; Phil. i. 8.) The Christian religion, as it has gradually begotten a reverence for *truth*, has made the simple word into a bond] that he will not slay his servant [Cf. "I will be King," ver. 5.] with the sword [the usual form of capital punishment, ch. ii. 8, 25, 31, 46. Adonijah indirectly confesses that he had merited death].

Ver. 51.—And Solomon said [*i.e.*, he refused to swear], if he will shew himself a worthy man [לַיָּדָוָה, cf. לַיָּדָוָה, ver. 42], there shall not an hair of him fall to the earth [*i.e.*, not a single hair shall be injured. Same expression 1 Sam. xiv. 45; 2 Sam. xiv. 11; Acts xxvii. 34. It was evidently a familiar saying] but if wickedness shall be found in him, [*i.e.*, if he shall commit any fresh crime] he shall die [Heb. תָּמָּוּת, "then he shall die," emphatic.]

Ver. 53.—So King Solomon sent and they brought him down [The altar was elevated: probably a slope, not steps (Exod. xx. 26) led to it] from [Heb. from upon. H<sup>c</sup> was still clinging to it] the altar. And he came and bowed himself to king Solomon [*i.e.*, made obeisance to him as king. Cf. vers. 16, 23, 31] and Solomon said unto him, Go to thine house. This was not a sentence of banishment from court, but merely a dismissal to a private life, involving a tacit admonition to live quietly and be thankful that his life was spared him. "*Vad in domum tuam, ibi quiesce et res tuas age, nec te publicis regni mei negotiis immisce*" (Corn. & Lapide).

## HOMILETICS.

**Ver. 1.**—*The chamber of sickness.* This opening chapter of 1 Kings introduces us into the privacy of a sick room. Stretched upon a couch, covered with many folds of rich Eastern drapery, we see a feeble, decrepit, attenuated man. At his side stands a fair young girl, assiduously ministering to his wants. From time to time the door opens, and prophet, priest, and warrior enter to receive his instructions; for happily the mind is not a wreck like the body. Its vigour is hardly abated, though the bodily strength is well-nigh exhausted. He has but reached the appointed threescore years and ten, and yet—such have been the hardships of his life—the vital force is spent. They cover him with clothes, but he gets no heat. The flame of life is slowly but surely expiring. But we see at once that this is no ordinary room; that this is no common patient. The gorgeous apparel, the purple and fine linen, the “attendance of ministers, the standing of servants,” proclaim it a king’s court. And the insignia, the pomp, the profound homage proclaim that this sick man is a king. Yes, it is David, second king of Israel, but second to none in goodness and true greatness, who lies here. His chequered life, so full of romance, of chivalry, of piety, is drawing near its close. But the hour of death is preceded by a period of feebleness and decay. For sickness is no respecter of persons. It, too, like death, “thunders at the palace gates of kings and the dwellings of the poor.” There is no release in that war,

“Sceptre and crown must tumble down,  
And in the dust be equal made  
With the poor common scythe and spade.”

The sickness of David, then, may fittingly suggest some thoughts as to sickness in general. What, let us ask, is its purpose, what its uses? Why is it that, as a rule, a period of gradual decay precedes death? For it is worthy of remark that man alone, of all the animals, dies of disease. Among all the myriad forms of life, that is, he alone dies gradually. The lower animals, as a rule, prey upon each other. Beasts, birds, fishes, insects, all die a violent death. No sooner is one of them attacked by sickness, or enfeebled by old age, than it is dispatched and devoured by its fellows. It is thus the balance of the species is preserved. But in the case of men, sudden death is the exception. For them there remains, as a rule, a discipline of pain prior to dissolution. It is well to ask why this is. The general answer is, of course, obvious. It is because of that other life, that future reckoning which awaits men after death. Let us consider, however, in what ways sickness and pain are a preparation for the life and the judgment to come.

I. SICKNESS IS GOD’S NOTICE TO QUIT. We should think it hard to be ejected from our home and turned into the street without due notice. We want a little time to make preparations. Especially is this the case when we are leaving our earthly tabernacle—leaving not a *home*, but a *world*. Now God has given us abundant and repeated notice in the various accidents and occurrences of life. Too often, however, both the lessons of Providence and the warnings of the preacher are unheeded. So the Lover of souls will give men a final warning, and one that they cannot mistake, cannot well disregard. They shall *feel* it in their own persons. Sickness shall bid them set their house in order and prepare to meet their God. A German fable tells us that once upon a time Death promised a young man that he would not summon him until he had first sent several messengers to apprise him of his coming. So the youth took his fill of pleasure, and wasted health and strength in riotous living. Presently, a fever laid him low. But as no messenger had appeared, he had no apprehensions; and when he recovered, he returned forthwith to his former sins. He then fell a prey to other maladies, but, remembering his covenant with Death, made light of them. “I am not going to die,” he cried; “the first messenger has not yet come.” But one day some one tapped him on the shoulder. He turned, and saw Death standing at his elbow. “Follow me.”

said the King of Terrors; "the hour of thy departure is come." "How is this?" exclaimed the youth; "thou art false to thy word! Thou didst promise to send me messengers, and I have seen none." "Silence!" sternly answered the Destroyer. "I have sent thee messenger after messenger. What was the fever? What was the apoplexy? What was each sickness that befel thee? Each was my herald; each was my messenger." Yes, the first use of sickness is to remind men of death. And how much they need that reminder we may learn from the case of David. He had long been familiar with death. He was no stranger to "th' imminent deadly breach," had known many "hairbreadth 'scapes," and often there had been "but a step between his soul and death." Nay, he had once seen the Destroyer himself, seen him standing with his drawn sword ready to smite. And yet the man who had faced death, who had long carried his life in his hand, receives a final warning ere its close. That sickness, perhaps, first brought home to him his mortality, first cried to him, "Thus saith the LORD God. Remove the diadem and take off the crown" (Ezek. xxi. 26). But

II. SICKNESS IS GOD'S WAY OF WEANING MEN FROM THE WORLD. It is natural to cling to life; but it is necessary we should be made willing to leave it. The wrench is felt the less when some of the ties which bind us to earth have been sundered: when life loses its attractions. It is the office of pain and sickness to make life valueless, to make men anxious to depart. How often it happens that men who at the beginning of illness will not hear of death are presently found praying for their release. Such are the "uses of adversity." An old writer compares affliction to the bitter unguent which nursing mothers who would wean their offspring sometimes put upon their breast. A few weeks on the couch of pain, and we soon cry out that life is not worth the living.

III. SICKNESS IS GOD'S DISCIPLINE FOR PARADISE. True it is that all "earthly care is a heavenly discipline." All the ills that flesh is heir to are designed to be the instruments of our perfection. Like the Captain of our salvation, we are "made perfect through sufferings." For us, as for Him, "the cross is the ladder to heaven." Those are two suggestive words, which only differ by one letter—*παθήματα*, *μαθήματα*, "afflictions, instructions." But while all affliction is a school, the last illness should be the finishing school. At the last assay the furnace must be heated more than it has been wont to be. "I have learnt more," said Mr. Cecil, "within these curtains in six weeks than I have learnt in all my life before." The chamber of sickness is an enforced *Retreat*. There, ears "that the preacher could not school" are compelled to listen. There, "lips say 'God be pitiful' which ne'er said 'God be praised.'" There, many have learnt for the first time to know themselves. And how necessary is this last discipline David's sick-chamber may teach us; for he had already had his share of troubles. His life had been largely spent in the school of adversity. "In journeyings often, in peril of robbers," &c. (2 Cor. xi. 25, 26), these words aptly describe his early career. And even since he ascended the throne, how often has the sword gone through his soul. Amnon, Absalom, Tamar, Abner, Amasa, what tragedies are connected with these names. Few men have experienced such a long and bitter discipline as he; and it would seem, too, to have accomplished its work. If we may judge by some of his later Psalms, full of contrition, of humility, of devout breathings after God, that sweet and sanctified soul had "learned obedience by the things which he suffered." But he is not spared the final chastening. The sweet singer of Israel, the man after God's own heart, must go awhile into the gloom and the silence of the sick-room, there to be made fully "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." Men often pray to be spared a long sickness, often commiserate those who experience one. But we have learned that it has its uses. We see that it is a last chance given to men: a last solemn warning, a final chastening to prepare them for the beatific vision. The Neapolitans call one of the wards of their hospital *L'Antecamera della Morte*—the ante-chamber of death. It is thus that we should regard every "chamber of sickness."

Ver. 5 sqq. with ch. ii. 13 sqq.—*Adonijah's history and its lessons.*

I. HE WAS A SPOILT CHILD.—"His father had not displeased him at any time."

(ch. i. 7). There is no greater unkindness and injustice to a child than over-indulgence. The child is the father of the man. The boy who has all his own way will certainly want it in after life, and will not get it, to his own disappointment and the unhappiness of all around him. He that loveth his son chasteneth him betimes. David was probably so engrossed with public cares and duties that his first care, after God—his family—was neglected. How unwise are those parents who devote the care of their children at the most critical and impressionable time of life on domestics, who are often ill-suited or unequal to the charge. One of the first duties a child demands of its parents is that it should be corrected and conquered. The will must be broken in youth. The sapling may be bent, not so the trunk. David's unwise indulgence, his sparing the rod, prepared a rod for his own and Adonijah's back. It was the sin of Eli that "his sons made themselves vile and he restrained them not." And one sin of David was that he had not checked and "displeased" this wilful son.

II. HE WAS ENDOWED BY NATURE WITH A DANGEROUS PROPERTY. "He also was a very goodly man." Gifts of form and feature, much as all admire them, and much as some covet them, are frequently a snare to their possessor. Perhaps, upon the whole, personal beauty has oftener proved a curse than a blessing. "For the most part," says Lord Bacon, "it maketh a dissolute youth." Oftener still it spoils the character. The conceit of the Platonists, that a beautiful body loves to have a beautiful soul to inhabit it, is unhappily not borne out by facts. "A pretty woman," it has been said, and it is often true, "adores herself" (Eugénie de Guérin). The natural tendency of this possession is to engender pride, selfishness, conceit, ambition. A striking exterior has often cost its possessor dear. It did both Absalom and Adonijah no good. It is worthy of notice that it was David's "goodly" sons conspired against him, and it was his "fair" daughter Tamar was dishonoured. Adonijah's face was an important factor in his history: it contributed to his ruin. It favoured, perhaps it suggested, his pretensions to the throne. He thought, no doubt, "the first in beauty should be first in might." Had he been blessed with an insignificant appearance he would probably have saved his head. As it was, courted and admired, he thought the fairest woman of her time was alone a fit match for him; and pride whispered that a man of such a presence was marked out for a king, and so urged him to his ruin. Let us teach our children to covet only "the beauty of the soul."

III. HE WAS CURSED WITH AN INORDINATE AMBITION. "I will be king." "Cursed," for it has cursed and blighted many lives. Like the *ignis fatuus*, it has lured men to their destruction. It has been well called "a deadly tyrant, an inexorable master." "Ambition," says the most eloquent of divines, "is the most troublesome and vexatious passion that can afflict the sons of men. It is full of distractions, it teems with stratagems, and is swelled with expectations as with a tympany. . . . It is an infinite labour to make a man's self miserable; he makes his days full of sorrow to acquire a three years' reign." What a striking illustration of these words does Adonijah's history supply. If he could but have been content to fill the second place he might have lived honoured, happy, and useful. But ambition soured and then cut short his life. How much of the misery of the world is caused by despising "that state of life unto which it has pleased God to call us" and stretching out after another for which we are not fitted. Adonijah's history teaches this lesson—Solomon may have partly drawn it from his life and death—"Pride goeth before destruction," &c.

IV. HE STOOPED TO UNWORTHY MEANS TO ATTAIN HIS OBJECT. "Chariots," "horses, fifty men to run before him." It is much like the Roman device, "Panem et circenses." History repeats itself. But these things were almost innocent compared with the measures he took when these failed. The smooth intrigue of a marriage, the employment of the king's mother as his tool, the plausible words, the semblance of resignation to the Divine will—and all this to overthrow a brother who had generously spared his life. And all this was the outcome of ambition—ambition which makes men trample on the living and the dead. Alas! we never know to what base courses we may be reduced if we once embark in immoral enterprises.

Adonijah's "I will be king" led to conspiracy, rebellion, intrigue, ingratitude; to defiance of a father, of a brother, of God.

V. HE WAS NOT WITHOUT WARNING, BUT IT WAS IN VAIN. The failure of his first conspiracy, the abject terror which followed, the flight to the sanctuary, the terrified clinging to the horns of the altar, the piteous entreaty for life—these things should have been remembered, should have "changed his hand and checked his pride." Still more, his brother's magnanimity, "there shall not an hair of him fall to the earth;" or, if not that, his message, "If wickedness be found in him he shall die." All are of no avail. The passion for empire, like the passion for play, is almost incurable. Adonijah was playing for a throne: he staked honour, safety, piety—and lost. He played again—and this time a drawn sword was suspended over his head—he staked his life, and lost it.

VI. HE WAS SUDDENLY CUT OFF, AND THAT WITHOUT REMEDY. And this was the end of the spoiled child, of the "curled darling;" this the end of his pomp and circumstance, of his flattery and intrigue, of his steadfast resistance of the will of heaven—that the sword of the headsman smote him that he died. Instead of the throne, the tomb; instead of the sceptre, the sword. Chariots and horses, visions of empire, visions of love—one fell thrust of the steel put an end to all that. Died Adonijah as a fool dieth, ingloriously, ignobly. "When we are dead, all the world sees who was the fool." Adonijah's death was the fitting and natural conclusion of his life. He has sowed to the wind: what wonder if he reaps to the whirlwind.

**Ver. 5.—Adonijah and the Lord's Anointed.** The conspiracy of Adonijah and its issue may suggest some lessons as to the kingdom of Christ and those who oppose His reign. For consider—

I. SOLOMON IS A TYPE OF OUR BLESSED LORD. This is universally allowed. The true "son of David" is the Son of God. He is the Divine Wisdom, the true Anointed One, the eternal King of Israel. Solomon "the peaceful" prefigured the great "Prince of Peace."

II. THE KINGDOM OF SOLOMON FORESHADOWED CHRIST'S REIGN. This is taught "by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture" (see *e.g.*, Luke i. 32, 33, and cf. 2 Sam. vii. 11, 12; Ps. lxxii. 11, sqq.; Isa. ix. 7; xvi. 5; Jer. xxiii. 5).

III. THE OPPOSITION TO SOLOMON'S RULE PREFIGURED THE RESISTANCE OF THE POWERS OF THIS WORLD TO CHRIST. The second Psalm, the primary reference of which is to Solomon, has its absolute fulfilment in our Lord (Acts iv. 25-27). Note here (1) As against Solomon were leagued princes, priest, and general, so against the Christ were gathered tetrarch, priests, and proconsul. (2) As the aid of religion was invoked against Solomon by Adonijah and Abiathar (note on ver. 9), so it was invoked against our blessed LORD by Annas and Caiaphas (St. Matt. xxvi. 65; St. John xix. 7). In both cases, religion was used as a cloke. Now observe—

IV. THE COURSE OF ADONIJAH'S CONSPIRACY FORESHADOWS (1) THE BRIEF SUCCESS, AND (2) THE SUDDEN OVERTHROW, OF THE POWERS OF EVIL. (1) *The brief success.* As for a time everything seemed to favour the conspirators—David's indecision, Adonijah's following, &c.—so now the powers of this world seem to have their own way. The silence of God, a corrupt priesthood, physical force, the chariots and horses of the world, the pomp and glitter of wealth—all seem to promise success. The cause of Christ, like that of Solomon, seems to be desperate. But (2) *The sudden overthrow.* In the very hour of apparent success, amid cries of "God save King Adonijah," the trumpet blast proclaimed the destruction of their hopes, and the trembling and terrified guests hurriedly dispersed to their homes. So, at the trump of the archangel, if not before, the "gates of hell" shall be overcome and the enemies of our Lord shall be put to confusion, and flee to the mountains and hills to cover them (St. Luke xxiii. 30). Meanwhile the Church and her ministers, like Bathsheba and Nathan, must cry to the Eternal Father, "Lord, how long" (Rev. vi. 10)?

V. THE DURATION OF THE CONSPIRACY PREFIGURES (1) THE BRIEF REJECTION AND (2) THE ETERNAL REIGN OF CHRIST. The conspiracy lasted at the longest a few weeks; the peaceful reign of Solomon extended over forty years. The conspiracy

against Christ has lasted over 1800 years—for “we see not yet all things put under him”—but what is this compared with eternity, and “He shall reign *for ever and ever*” (Rev. xi. 15; cf. Dan. vi. 26).

VI. THE END OF THE CONSPIRATORS FORESHADOWS (1) THE JUDGMENT AND (2) THE DOOM OF THE ENEMIES OF CHRIST. (1) *The judgment*. No sooner was Solomon anointed king than he sate in judgment upon Adonijah (ver. 52), and no long time afterwards upon Joab and Abiathar. (2) *The doom*. He condemned Abiathar to banishment (ch. ii. 26), and appointed Adonijah and Joab to be slain. Even so our Lord will presently sit upon the judgment throne and will in like manner banish (“Depart, ye cursed”) and deliver to death (“These mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and *slay* them before me”) the opposers of His glorious reign.

Ver. 11 sqq.—*The Jewish prophet: an example to the Christian pastor*. The dealings of Nathan with David may suggest some thoughts as to (1) the office, and (2) the duties of the Christian minister. For observe—

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER OCCUPIES IN THE NEW DISPENSATION A POSITION SOMEWHAT ANALOGOUS TO THAT OF THE PROPHET IN THE OLD. Prophecy, that is to say, is *one* of his functions. For *prophecy* does not, strictly and properly, mean *prediction* (or foretelling), but *preaching* (or fortelling). The *prophètes* was the spokesman or interpreter of God. (See Introduction, note.) The “prophesyings” of the New Testament (1 Cor. xi. xiv) were preachings or expositions; and in this sense the word is used by Lord Bacon, and others. So the prophet was, and the preacher is, an ambassador for God, an expounder of his laws, a herald of his kingdom. The former, therefore, may well serve as a pattern to the latter. Now the dealings of the prophet Nathan with King David were of two kinds: 1. *He admonished him in health*; 2. *He counselled him in sickness*. Hence let us learn that we owe doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness; in other words, “both public and private monitions and exhortations, as well to the sick as to the *whole* within our cures.” (See “The Ordering of Priests,” Book of Common Prayer.) The latter are liable to be overlooked. But the prophet further suggests to us (1) *what are the ministrations or admonitions the pastor owes to his flock*, and (2) *what is the spirit in which he should offer them*. He teaches the former by his dealings with David in health, and the latter by his dealings with David in sickness.

I. Under the first head, observe that, 1. *He boldly denounced David's sin* (2 Sam. xii. 7) at the risk, perhaps, of his life, and fearlessly threatened him with shame (ver. 11) and sword (ver. 10). 2. *He proclaimed forgiveness on David's repentance* (ver. 13). 3. *He ministered comfort in David's sorrow* (ver. 25). 4. *He encouraged and advised David in his undertakings* (2 Sam. vii. 3—17). Behold here, the principal duties of the pastoral office—to rebuke sin, to pronounce absolution, to comfort the sorrowing, to guide the conscience. And note: in all these functions, Nathan merely echoed the word the Lord had given him. We must take care not to “go beyond the word of the Lord, to do more or less.”

II. Under the second category, we find that, 1. *He was faithful to his God*. He had been employed by God to declare Solomon the heir to the throne. He would have been unfaithful had he permitted another to usurp the crown. 2. *He was faithful and deferential to his king*. As keeper of the king's conscience, as trusted adviser and counsellor, he owed it to the king to apprise him of Adonijah's plot. It is a sacred duty to speak, and he speaks—speaks with the profound reverence which even the Lord's prophet owes to the Lord's anointed (ver. 23). (A great churchman confessed that he had not served his God as faithfully as he had served his king. Nathan was true to both.) 3. *He was disinterested*. He asks no favours for himself. It is for the Hebrew commonwealth, for the Jewish Church, that he acts and speaks. He does not abuse his position to extort gifts from a dying man. (Compare Savonarola dictating the terms of absolution to Lorenzo de' Medici.) 4. *He was discreet*. “Wise as serpent, but harmless as dove.” He approaches Bathsheba (ver. 11), excites her alarm (ver. 12), uses her

as the most likely agent to prevail with the king, instructs her (ver. 13), follows her (ver. 22). "The policy of Nathan was of use as well as his prophecy" (Bp. Hall). Thus the prophet teaches the pastor to use all fidelity, to show true loyalty and courtesy, to act purely and unselfishly, to use the means God has put within his reach with consideration and discretion.

*The Benedictus of the Old Testament, and the Benedictus of the New* (Ver. 48; Luke i. 68).

On two memorable occasions this doxology has been found on the lips of the saints. No doubt the formula, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel," was a favourite one with the people of Israel; no doubt the words were often used (cf. Ps. xii. 13; lxxii. 18). But there are two occasions of pre-eminent interest and importance when this thanksgiving broke from joyful lips. Let us consider them. 1. It was used (as we see) by the aged King David on the day that he saw his son Solomon (Peace) a forerunner of the Messiah, seated on the throne of Israel. 2. It was used by the aged priest Zacharias on the day that he saw his son John (Grace), the forerunner of Messiah, brought into the commonwealth of Israel. It is just possible, but hardly probable, that the words, as used by the latter (under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, Luke i. 67) had a reference to their use by the former. But it may be instructive, nevertheless, to compare these two ascriptions of praise, for they are more or less characteristic, the one of the old dispensation, the other of the new. Let us observe,

I. THEIR POINTS OF CONTACT. II. THEIR POINTS OF CONTRAST.

I. They are alike in three particulars. 1. *Each Benedictus was in some sort the "Nunc Dimittis" of an aged saint.* Each proceeded from a man "old and stricken in years" (1 Kings i. 1; Luke i. 7); each from a man of fervent piety (1 Kings xi. 4; Luke i. 6); each was suggested by the speaker's son rising up to take his place, and to carry on his and God's work. 2. *Each Benedictus was connected with a son of David.* The first was a grateful acknowledgment of the anointing of a Son of David to be King; the second was in thankful anticipation of the coming of the Son of David to be Prophet, Priest, and King. Note: all the praises of Scripture connect themselves directly or indirectly with Christ. 3. *Each Benedictus was elicited by God's gracious fulfilment of His promise.* The first commemorated the realization of the promise of a successor made through the prophet Nathan (2 Sam. vii. 12); the second, the (proximate) fulfilment of the promises of a Saviour, made by "all the holy prophets since the world began" (Luke i. 70), and of which the promise of 2 Sam. vii., was a foretaste and pledge. Note: in all ages the faithfulness of God has elicited the thankfulness of his people.

II. But let us now consider their points of contrast. These are four in number, and show how the thanksgiving of David was for temporal, and that of Zacharias for spiritual benefits. 1. The Benedictus of David celebrated the ascent of the throne of Israel by his Son; that of Zacharias, the leaving of the throne of Heaven by the Son of God. Solomon was beginning his glory: Jesus had laid His aside. Solomon was going to be ministered unto: Jesus to minister to others. 2. The Benedictus of David commemorated the gift of a son to rule His people: that of Zacharias, the gift of a Saviour to redeem the world (vers. 68, 77, 79). 3. The Benedictus of David proclaimed that the succession to the throne was preserved in his house: that of Zacharias, that through the "house of David" a "horn of salvation" was raised up for men. The aged king, doubtless, thought that in Solomon God had "made the horn of David to bud" (Ps. cxxxii. 17); but Zacharias celebrated the true fulfilment of that promise—its blossoming into salvation. 4. The Benedictus of David celebrated the reign of a son who should be a man of peace (1 Chron. xxii. 9): that of Zacharias, the coming of one who should guide men's "feet into the way of peace" (ver. 79). We said each Benedictus was a sort of *Nunc Dimittis*. That last sentence of David's—"Mine eyes also seeing it"—carry our thoughts to another of the Evangelical Hymns, the *Nunc Dimittis* of Simeon—"Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." Zacharias was not a greater poet than David. And David, as well as he, spake by the Holy Ghost (2 Sam. xxiii. 2). Yet

how much grander, and every way nobler, is the Benedictus of the latter than that of the former; of the New Testament than the Old. It is because the theme is so much higher, and the benefits are so much greater, because "a greater than Solomon is here."

*The two triumphal entries.*—Twice in the history of Jerusalem has a Son of David ridden through her streets, sitting on ass or mule, amid the shouts and praises of the people. Let us compare the two occasions. They will furnish a further proof and illustration of the typical character of Solomon; a further proof that a "greater than Solomon is here." Observe—

I. THE TRIUMPHAL RIDE THROUGH THE CITY WAS IN EACH CASE AFTER AN ANOINTING.—Solomon had been anointed by prophet and priest: JESUS, the Divine Solomon, by God himself. Solomon's anointing was with holy oil out of the tabernacle (ver. 39); that of Jesus with the Holy Ghost (Luke iv. 18; Acts iv. 27; x. 38). Solomon was anointed to be king: Jesus to be King, and Priest, and Prophet.

II. EACH RODE THROUGH THE CITY AS KING (vers. 34, 35).—"God save King Solomon," cried the populace. "Blessed is the king that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Luke xix. 38). In each case the words were true, "Behold thy King cometh" (Matt. xxi. 5; John xii. 15). And

III. EACH RODE AS THE SON OF DAVID (1 Kings i. 43; Matt. xxi. 9)—Did the populace remember the triumphal progress of Solomon, one thousand years before, through those same streets, as they cried, "Hosanna to the Son of David" (Matt. xxi. 9—15).

IV. EACH RODE AMID THE ACCLAMATIONS OF THE PEOPLE.—Each, that is to say, was acknowledged as king by popular acclaim. In each case, a curious Oriental hyperbole expresses the enthusiastic rejoicing and the deafening cries of the throng. "The earth rent" (1 Kings i. 40). "The stones would immediately cry out" (Luke xix. 40; cf. Matt. xxi. 10). But here the resemblance ends. Henceforward how great and striking is the contrast.

I. ALL THE GREAT PEOPLE SURROUNDED SOLOMON: OUR LORD WAS PRECEDED AND FOLLOWED BY THE POOR. The dignitaries of the realm, both in church and state, prophet and priest, soldier and civilian, all assembled to do Solomon honour. But our Lord had none of these to do Him reverence. "Master, rebuke Thy disciples" (Luke xix. 39). The pomp and grandeur were all on the side of Solomon.

II. SOLOMON WENT TO SIT ON HIS THRONE: JESUS TO SUFFER AND REIGN ON THE CROSS. The former rode to ease and glory and pomp and unparalleled magnificence; the latter to shame and spitting, to denial and death. But, *cruce scala caeli*.

III. SOLOMON RODE TO GLORY: JESUS TO BRING OTHERS TO GLORY. The triumphal entry of Solomon was an ordinary thing. Such royal progresses have often been before and since. But never has the world seen such an entry as that of our Redeemer. He might have reigned as a king, but He chose to suffer as a felon: He might have lived for self, He chose to die for others. Shall we deny Him our hosannas? Shall not earth and heaven ring with His praises?

#### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 5.—*The sin of ambition.* Ambition is not always wrong. It is a common inspiration; and when the desire for distinction is associated with fitness for it, the call to effort and advance is from God. But for such ambition the world would stagnate. When the schoolboy is working for a prize, when the writer or speaker resolves to be amongst the foremost men of his age, when the man of business presses on towards the front ranks in the commercial world, we see what should be applauded and not condemned, so long as lawful objects are sought by lawful means. Let us, in all our pursuits, remember God's laws for exaltation. Men are to go higher, when they have fulfilled the duties of the lower sphere. They are to rise on performances, and not on discontent. Hence, if ambition be conscientious, it will prompt to the minutely faithful performance of trivial duties. With a tireless hand crooked things will be made straight, and rough places plain, before the glory is revealed. If, however, ambition be not ruled by righteousness,

or modified by love, if it is regardless of the rights of others and of the will of God, then it is a sin; the sin which was the herald of disobedience and death, the source of the tyranny and bloodshed which have desolated the world. It was this sin of which Adonijah was guilty when he "exalted himself, saying, I will be king!"

Let us see wherein the sinfulness of his sin lay.

I. THIS AMBITION PROMPTED ADONIJAH TO AN INFRINGEMENT OF THE DIVINE ORDINANCE. It has been said that his act was natural, though foolishly precipitate; for, according to the usual law of primogeniture, he had a right to expect the throne. But the law of primogeniture was never the law of the kingdom of Israel, which in spirit was a theocracy throughout. The invisible King distinctly reserved to himself the right of appointment (Deut. xvii. 14, 15). True, seniority was a tacit indication of the Divine will, but this was always overruled by any special revelation of God's choice. He who had chosen David from amongst his brothers, chose Solomon, and there was fitness in the choice; not only because as a man of peace he was qualified to build the Temple (1 Chron. xxii. 8, 9), but also because his succession was a pledge to his parents, and to all the people, that after the death of their first child the sin of David and Bathsheba was buried in oblivion (comp. Psa. li. 2, 7, 9, with Isa. xliii. 25, &c.). This Divine choice was publicly known. Nathan sided with Solomon not as "the leader of a court cabal," but as the prophet of the Lord; and Adonijah himself was well aware of the election of his brother (ch. ii. 15). When Adonijah said "I will be king," he deliberately set up his will against God's. A deep significance underlies God's choice of men. He elects according to fitness and fits according to election, so that there is ultimate harmony between circumstances and character. The two sons of Zebedee were taught this. They had as much seeming right to the place of honour which they sought as had Adonijah to the throne. They belonged to "the twelve," were personally beloved of their Lord, and their mother was related to the Virgin Mary, and was of those who ministered to Jesus. But Jesus said, "to sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give, but it shall be given to those for whom it is prepared of my Father." In other words, honours would be given by law and not by favour; not from arbitrary impulse, but from a knowledge of what was right and fitting. Draw lessons of contentment from the assurance that our lot is appointed by God. Show the necessity for our own sakes of submissiveness in prayer, lest God should give us our request and send leanness into our soul.

II. THIS AMBITION WAS A CRAVING FOR OUTWARD HONOUR, AND NOT FOR INWARD WORTH. "*He prepared him chariots and horsemen and fifty men to run before him.*" His ambition was to have these for their own sakes, not to increase his influence for good. Nor was he the last man who cared for glitter and show. The candidate for a competitive examination, who seeks only for honours, and cares nothing for the learning and studious habits which may be acquired, will never be a true student. So with the professional man who works for money only, &c. Honours thus won are unsatisfying and transient. Their worth is fitly represented in the ceremonies observed at the coronation of a Pope. The M. C. holds in one hand a lighted taper, and in the other a reed surmounted by a piece of flax. The flax is ignited and flashes up into light, but in a few moments the flame dies out and the thin ashes fall at the Pontiff's feet, while a sonorous voice chants the words, "Pater sanctus, sic transit gloria mundi." The pagans understood to some extent the lesson we seek to enforce. Their temple of honour had only one entrance, and that was through the temple of virtue. Over the gates of the kingdom of Christ these words are written, "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted, and he that exalteth himself shall be abased." In the day when spiritual realities shall be revealed there shall be not the glorification, but the "*manifestation of the sons of God,*" and in the outcome of character inwrought by God's Spirit true and lasting glory shall be found.

III. THIS AMBITION ASSERTED ITSELF WITH A COMPLETE DISREGARD FOR THE RIGHTS OF OTHERS.—David still reigned; Solomon was his appointed successor; but Adonijah trampled their rights beneath his feet as he mounted the throne. Selfishness is the chief of those elements in ambition which constitute its sinfulness.

Hence we may test ambition, by asking ourselves how we regard our competitors. If a man envies others; if, without compunction, he will crush another to the wall that he may pass him by; if he refuses to help another in sore straits, who is within his reach, on the ground that every man is for himself; then his ambition is a sin. This is more clearly revealed by our Lord than by the old dispensation. He has taught us not only to love our neighbours, but our competitors, and even our foes. He has urged us to "bear one another's burdens," to deny ourselves, and take up our cross to follow Him. The Christian Church has a sacrifice for its basis, and a cross for its banner.

IV. THIS AMBITION WAS NURTURED IN DEFIANCE OF SIGNIFICANT WARNING. Adonijah repeated his brother's offence. (Comp. 2 Sam. xv.) He knew how that bright young life had closed in darkness, when Absalom died helpless and unpitied by the hand of Joab. He had often seen his father sitting looking at himself with a far-off look in his eyes, as if he still were saying, "O, Absalom, would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" Yet the same sin which had been so signally punished he resolved to commit. History is crowded with illustrations of the fact that men who have lived as Adonijah did have found their honours unsatisfying, and have died in disappointment and despair. Alexander, who conquered the world, died, after setting fire to a city, in a scene of awful debauchery. Hannibal, who at one time could fill three bushels with the gold rings of fallen knights, died by poison, administered by his own hand, unwept in a foreign land. Cæsar, who conquered eight hundred cities, fell stabbed to the heart by his friends, in the place of his noblest triumph. Napoleon, the conqueror of Europe, died a heart-broken captive. It has been writ large, in letters of blood, so that he who runs may read, "the expectation of the wicked shall be cut off!"

*Conclusion.*—Will you, with the nobler possibilities set before you in the gospel, whom angel voices are calling to higher things, whose conscience is whispering of duty and love, to whom Christ, the suffering Saviour, the King of Glory, says, "Follow Me!" will you, like Adonijah, turn to the ways of self-indulgence and vainglory, to prove as he did that "the wages of sin is death."—A. R.

Ver. 6.—*Moral ruin in a religious home.* It is a notorious fact that the sons of devout men sometimes prove a curse to their parents, and bring dishonour on the cause of God. When sin entered the world, it caused the earth, on which flowers had aforesaid blossomed, to bring forth thorns and briars. This is a picture of a sad truth, known in the first home, and in many another since. Eve rejoiced over the fair child she had "gotten from the Lord," and did not suspect that passions were sleeping within him which would nerve his arm to strike the fatal blow which slew his brother and destroyed his mother's peace. Such sorrow has been experienced in subsequent history. Isaac's heart was rent by the deceit of Jacob and the self-will of Esau. Jacob found his own sin repeated against himself, for he who had deceived his father when he was old and blind, suffered an agony of grief for years, because he was falsely told by his sons that Joseph was dead. Probably few have had more domestic sorrow than David. He experienced, in its bitterest form, the grief of a parent who has wished that before his son had brought such dishonour on the home, he had been, in the innocence of his childhood, laid to rest beneath the daisies. Of David's sons, Amnon, the eldest, after committing a hideous sin, had been assassinated by the order of Absalom, his brother. Absalom himself had rebelled against his father, and had been killed by Joab, as he hung helpless in the oak. Chileab (or Daniel) was dead. And now of the fourth son, the eldest surviving, Adonijah, this sad story is told. Adonijah's sin seems so unnatural at first sight that we must try and discover the sources whence so bitter and desolating a stream flowed. We shall find them in THREE ADVERSE INFLUENCES AROUND HIM AT HOME, which are hinted at in our text.

I. ADONIJAH INHERITED A CONSTITUTIONAL TENDENCY TO AMBITION AND SELF-CONCEIT. His association with Absalom is not without significance. The two brothers were alike in their sin and in the tendencies which led to it. These were inherited.

(1) *The law that "like produces like,"* which is proved to demonstration in the breeding of lower animals (illustrations from horses bred for speed or endurance, dogs for fleetness or scent, pigeons for swiftness or beauty, &c.), asserts itself in man. Not only are *physical* qualities inherited, so that we recognise a "family likeness" between children of the same parents; but *mental* qualities are inherited too; statesmanship, heroism, or artistic gift, reappearing in the same family for generations. *Moral tendencies* are transmitted too; and Scripture exemplifies it. If Isaac is so luxurious that he must have his savoury dish, we do not so much wonder that Esau, his son, sells his birthright for a mess of pottage. If Rebekah, like Laban her brother, is greedy and cunning, her son Jacob inherits her tendency, and must live a life of suffering, and present many an agonising prayer before he is set free from his besetting sin. So is it still. The drunkard gives to his offspring a craving for drink, which is a disease. In more senses than one, "The evil that men do lives after them." Surely, then, when not only future happiness, but the destiny of children depends on the choice of a life partner, there should be regard paid not merely to physical beauty, or mental endowment, or social position, but, above all these, to moral and spiritual worth.

(2) *It is argued that this law of moral heritage affects personal responsibility;* that it is hardly fair to condemn a man for a sin to which he is naturally prone. But "shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Whatever your parentage, you are not "committed to do these abominations." If the *disposition* be evil, it need never become the *habit* of life. It is something you may yield to, but it is something you may resist; for "He is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able to bear." Rather should any tendencies to evil be recognised as God's voice calling attention to the weak places of character, that there we may keep most eager watch and ward. And because we are weak, He has sent His Son to bring deliverance to the captives, that through Him we may be inspired with hope, and fitted with strength, and rejoice in the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free.

II. ADONIJAH WAS MISLED BY ADULATION. "*He was also a very goodly man.*" Physically, as well as morally, he was a repetition of Absalom. His parents were guilty of partiality. David loved him the more because (like the lost boy) Adonijah was so fair, so noble in mien, so princely in stature. Courtiers and soldiers (who looked, as they did in Saul's time, for a noble-looking king) flattered him. Joab and Abiathar joined the adulators. Intoxicated with vanity, Adonijah set up a royal court, as Absalom had done (see ver. 5). Every position in life has its own temptations. The ill-favoured child who is the butt at school and the scapegoat at home is tempted to bitterness and revenge. His character is likely to be unsightly, as a plant would be, which grows in a damp, dark vault. There can be little beauty if there is no sunshine. On the other hand, if the gift of physical beauty attracts attention and wins admiration, or if conversational power be brilliant, &c., it is a source of peril. Many a one has thus been befooled into sin and misery, or entrapped into an unhappy marriage, and by lifelong sadness paid the penalty of folly, or venturing too far, prompted by ambition, has fallen, like Icarus when his waxen wings melted in the sunshine. When that time of disappointment and disenchantment comes, happy is it when such an one, like the prodigal, comes to himself, and says, "I will arise, and go to my father!"

III. ADONIJAH WAS UNDISCIPLINED AT HOME. "*His father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so?*" This refers not only to the special act of rebellion, but to the tendencies and habits leading up to it, which David had not checked, for fear of vexing the high-spirited lad. The weak indulgence of children (such as that which Eli exhibited) is the cause of untold misery. Not many parents blazon abroad the story of their domestic grief. Loyal hands draw down the veil over the discord at home, and that agony of prayer which is heard by "the Father who seeth in secret." You do not see the girl who mars the beauty of her early womanhood by a flippant disregard of her parents, and whose own pleasure seems to be the only law of her life. You do not see the child whose hasty passion and uncontrolled temper are the dread of the household; who, by

his ebullitions of rage, gets what he wishes, till authority is disregarded and trodden underfoot. You do not see the son who thinks it manly to be callous to a mother's anxiety and a father's counsels, who likes to forget home associations, and is sinking in haunts of evil, where you may weep over him as a wreck. But, though you see them not, they exist. Far otherwise, in some of these sad experiences, it might have been. Suppose there had been firm resolution instead of habitual indulgence; suppose that authority had been asserted and used in days before these evil habits were formed; suppose that, instead of leaving the future to chance, counsels and prayers had moulded character during moulding-time—might there not have been joy where now there is grief? Heavy are our responsibilities as parents. Yet splendid are our possibilities! These children who may prove our curses may, with God's blessing on our fidelity, grow up to be wise, pure-hearted, courageous men of God, who will sweeten the atmosphere of the home, and purge this nation of its sins, and make the name of "the King of saints" honoured and praised throughout the world! "Train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."—A. B.

**Vers. 39-41.**—*The dethronement of the false by the enthronement of the true.* When Bathsheba and Nathan brought David news of Adonijah's revolt, and told him that Joab and Abiathar were at the coronation feast at En-rogel, it is noteworthy that the king made no direct attack on the conspirators. He merely commanded that Solomon should be seated on the royal mule, that he should ride in state to Gihon, and that there Zadok should anoint him king, and proclaim by the sound of trumpet that he was appointed ruler. It was this which paralysed the traitorous assembly. The sound of the trumpet was to their scheme what the blast of the rams' horns was to the walls of Jericho, when they fell in irreparable ruin. David's method was the wisest, the surest; for it not only removed a present evil, but provided a future good. The lesson is obvious, and is susceptible of wide application; that the false is most surely dethroned by the enthronement of the true. The strong man armed keeps his goods in peace, until a stronger than he shall come. (See Luke xi. 21, 22.) Suggest: applications of this principle.

I. **VAIN THOUGHTS ARE TO BE EXPELLED BY THE INCOMING OF WHAT IS WISE AND GOOD.** The Psalmist hated "vain thoughts," because he loved God's law (Psa. cxix. 113). When the heart is empty, swept, and garnished, there is room for worse evils to come (Matt. xii. 44). The full mind and heart are safe. Apply to the conquest of wandering thoughts in worship, of vanity in children, &c.

II. **SELF-WILL IS TO BE CONQUERED BY A NOBLER AND STRONGER WILL.** We are early taught this. Every child carries out his own wishes without regard to others, till he recognizes that the parent's will is authoritative. Sooner or later there is a struggle, and only when it is decided in one way is there rest. Similarly we have to learn to subordinate our thoughts to God's revelation, our wishes to His will, and this lesson is more painfully learnt as the years pass by and the habit of self-rule grows stronger.

III. **UNWORTHY AFFECTIONS ARE TO BE OVERCOME BY A WORTHY LOVE.** When love is set on the unworthy, force is useless, argument is vain. But if the love is diverted to a nobler object, it naturally disentangles its tendrils from the unworthy. In the highest sphere it may be said of love to our Lord, "that love shall all vain love expel."

IV. **ERROR IS TO BE SUBDUED BY TRUTH.** The hatred of artisans to machinery when first introduced was not conquered by dragoons, nor by prisons, but by the discovery on their part of the mistake they had ignorantly made. So with all errors. We shall not destroy heathenism by the abuse of the idols, but by the presentation of Christ.

V. **CARE IS TO BE EXTIRPATED BY PRAYER.** In many hearts care is enthroned. To many a one our Lord might say, "Thou art careful and troubled about many things." We cannot reason away our anxieties, nor force them from our minds, but we can have the rest our children have, who never trouble about the morrow, because they trust in us. It would be vain to say, "Be careful for nothing," unless the apostle could add the alternative, "*but* in everything, by prayer and supplica-

tion, with thanksgiving, make your requests known unto God; and the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds."

VI. EVILS REIGNING IN SOCIETY ARE TO BE OVERTHROWN BY WHAT IS NOBLER THAN THEY.—Apply this broadly, *e.g.*, wholesome literature must defeat pernicious. Low amusements, intoxicating drinks, &c., will pass away when there is the establishment of nobler substitutes for these.

The whole subject is summed up in Christ—the true King of humanity, the incarnation of all that is worthy of being loved and enthroned. Draw the analogy between Solomon the anointed king, as he rides on the mule into Jerusalem amid the acclamations of the people, and the entry of our Lord into Jerusalem as described Matt. xxi. If worldliness, or selfishness, or ambition, or lust has been reigning in your heart, the usurped will be dethroned when you welcome Christ as King and say, "O Lord our God, other lords besides thee have had dominion over us, but now we acknowledge Thee to be our Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

' Descend to Thy Jerusalem, O Lord,  
Her faithful children cry with one accord;  
Come, ride in triumph on; behold, we lay  
Our guilty lusts and proud wills in Thy way.

Thy road is ready, Lord; Thy paths, made straight,  
In longing expectation seem to wait  
The consecration of Thy beauteous feet,  
And, hark, hosannas loud Thy footsteps greet.—A. B.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER II. 1—11.

#### THE LAST WORDS AND DEATH OF DAVID.

—The death of David, and of course the charge which preceded it, did not follow immediately (as the casual reader might be tempted to suppose) on the events related in chap. i. We find from 1 Chron. xxiii.—xxix. 23, that the aged king recovered sufficient strength to leave his sick room, to gather round him the princes of Israel (1 Chron. xxiii. 2), to make a number of fresh arrangements respecting the priests and Levites and the services of the sanctuary, and even to "stand up upon his feet" (1 Chron. xxviii. 2) and address a large assembly respecting the erection and adornment of the Temple. And once more, in strains which are among the noblest and sweetest which the sweet singer of Israel ever penned, he "blessed the Lord before all the congregation" (ch. xxix. 10. sq.); he also instituted festal sacrifices on a scale of great magnificence, and witnessed a second and probably more formal and public consecration of his son to the kingly office (vers. 21, 22; cf. 1 Sam. xi. 15; 2 Sam. v. 3). But the recovery cannot have been otherwise than transient—it was

but the sudden brightening of the flame before it dies out in the socket—and we see him in this second chapter, once more in the ante-chamber of death. Now, he has already given his parting charge to the princes of the realm, and has publicly exhorted Solomon to discharge his duties faithfully (2 Chron. xxviii. 9, 10); but as he feels the end approaching, he summons him to his side to impart to him his last and private instructions, and addresses him thus:

Ver. 1.—I go the way [lit., I am walking (same word as in ver. 3) in the way] of all the earth [*i.e.*, of all the sons of earth, all mankind (cf. 1 Sam. 17, 46; 1 Kings x., 24; Psa. lxxvi. 4, &c.)]. The path to Sheol, the path which all his forefathers, and untold millions more, have trod, he is treading it now. The words sound like a reminiscence of Josh. xxiii. 24. Perhaps, too, the thought of Joshua suggested to his mind the next words]: but be thou strong, and be a man. [Similar, though not identical, words were four times addressed to Joshua (Josh. i. 6, 7, 9, 18), and David may well have thought that his son, in entering upon his difficult duties, was not at all unlike Joshua when he succeeded Moses in the leadership of Israel, and that he needed similar encouragement. It is not necessary to sup-

pose, as Canon Rawlinson does ("Speaker's Com.," vol. ii. p. 469), that in the words, "show thyself a man," we have a reference to Solomon's youth; for words precisely similar were addressed to each other by the Philistines at Aphek (1 Sam. iv. 9). The age of Solomon at his accession is very doubtful. David said, "Solomon my son is young and tender" (1 Chron. xxii. 5; xxix. 1); and Solomon says of himself, "I am a little child" יָדָאֲרָאֲרָא (1 Kings iii. 7). Josephus, probably reflecting the tradition of his time, fixes his age at fourteen; Eupolemus at twelve. I incline to think that the words "young and tender" almost forbid the favourite opinion that he was about twenty.]

Ver. 3.—And keep the charge [lit., "watch the watch" (*custodies custodiam Jehovae*), or, "serve the service." Bähr paraphrases, "be a true watcher in the service of Jehovah." The words are constantly employed to denote a strict performance of the service of the tabernacle or of the duties of the priests and Levites (Lev. viii. 35; xviii. 30; Numb. i. 53; iii. 7, 8, 25, 28, 32, 38; xxxi. 30; 1 Chron. xxiii. 32, &c.; also Gen. xxvi. 5). "The reference," says Rawlinson, "is to the charge given to all the kings in Deut. xvii. 18—20." But there is no necessity for restricting it to that one injunction. What the charge is is explained presently] of the Lord thy God to walk in His ways, to keep [same word] His statutes, and His commandments, and His judgments, and His testimonies [it is impossible to draw any clear and sharp distinction between these four words, as the older expositors do. "The phrase is derived from the Pentateuch" (Wordsworth). The force of the accumulation of practically synonymous terms is to represent the law in its entirety ("Die Totalität des Gesetzes," Keil); cf. Deut. v. 31, viii. 11, and especially Psa. cxix.], that thou mayest prosper. [The marginal rendering, "do wisely," is preferred by some (Keil, *e.g.*); but the translation of the text has the authority of Gesenius and others on its side, and gives a better meaning. "The context evidently requires 'prosper' here, as in Josh. i. 7" (Rawlinson). "That thou mayest . . . do wisely" is a very lame and impotent conclusion to ver. 3. We have here an evident reminiscence of Josh. i. 7; possibly also of Deut. xxix. 9. David was unquestionably well versed in the Scriptures of that age, of which every king was commanded to make a copy.

Ver. 4.—That the Lord may continue [rather, "establish" (*ut confirmet*), as it is rendered in 2 Sam. vii. 25, where this same

word of promise is spoken of. Cf. 1 Kings viii. 26] His word which He spake concerning me [by the mouth of Nathan, 2 Sam. vii. 12—17 (cf. Psa. lxxxix. 4); or David may refer to some subsequent promise made to him directly. In the promise of 2 Sam. vii. there is no mention of any stipulations, "If thy children," &c. But both here and in Psa. cxxxii. 12, and in 1 Kings viii. 25, special prominence is given to the condition (*dum se bene gesserint*), which no doubt was understood, if not expressed, when the promise was first made], saying, If thy children take heed to [lit., "keep," same word as in vers. 2, 3] their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul there shall not fail thee [lit., "be cut off to thee," as marg. (cf. 1 Sam. ii. 29; Josh. ix. 23)]. This word does not occur in the original promise made through Nathan. But it *does* occur in subsequent versions of the promise, 1 Kings viii. 25, ix. 5, as well as here—a strong presumption that the promise must have been repeated to David in another shape], said he, a man on the throne of Israel.

But this thought—that the permanence of his dynasty depended on the faithful observance of the law as it is written in the book of Moses (*i.e.*, in all its details), seems to have reminded the dying man that he himself had not always kept the statutes he was urging his successor to keep. It had been his duty as king, as the power ordained of God, to visit all violations of the law of God with their appropriate penalties; and this duty, in some instances at least, had been neglected. For the law of Moses, reaffirming the primæval law which formed part of the so-called "precepts of Noah" (Gen. 6)—that ix. blood must be expiated by blood—enjoined, with singular emphasis and distinctness, the death of the murderer (Numb. xxxv. 16, 17, 18, 19, 30—33; Exod. xxi. 14). It declared that so long as murder remained unpunished, the whole land was defiled and under a curse (Numb. xxxv. 33). And it gave the king no power to pardon, no discretion in the matter. Until the red stain of blood was washed out "by the blood of him that shed it" the Divine Justice was not satisfied, and a famine or pestilence or sword might smite the land. Now, David knew all this: he could not fail to know it, for he had seen his country, a few years before, visited by a famine because of the un-

avenged blood of the Gibeonites (2 Sam. xxi. 1). And yet, one notorious and infamous murderer had *not* been put to death. The assassin of Abner and of Amasa still polluted the earth, still occupied a distinguished position, and defied punishment. But if the law of Moses was to be kept, then, whatever it might cost, and however painful it might be (Deut. xix. 13), he must die; and David, for the welfare of his kingdom, the stability of his throne, and above all, the honour of God, must require his death. No doubt it had often burdened his mind, especially during these last days of feebleness, the thought that punishment had been so long delayed; and therefore, as he sees the end approaching, he feels that he must enjoin upon his successor the fulfilment of that duty which he had been too "weak" to discharge (2 Sam. iii. 39). Hence he proceeds,

Ver. 5.—"Moreover, thou knowest also what Joab, the son of Zeruiah [there is no "emphasis on these words: he who was mine own sister's son," as Wordsworth, see on i. 11], did to me and [this last word has no place in the original, and should be left out, as it is misleading. It makes David demand the death of Joab partly because of the *private injuries* he had suffered at his hands, and partly because of his two brutal murders mentioned presently. But this is just what David did not do; for he is careful to *exclude* all mention of his private wrongs. It is true, he says, "what Job did to me," but that is because "the sovereign is smitten in the subject" (Bp. Hall), and because the first of these murders had caused David to be suspected of complicity, while each had deprived him of an able officer. And the words that follow] what he did to the two captains of the hosts of Israel [these words are clearly explicative of the "what he did to me." Only thus can we explain the absence of the "and"] unto Abner the son of Ner [2 Sam. iii. 27. This was one of those foul murders to which the law expressly denied any right of sanctuary, for it was "with guile" (Exod. xxi. 14). Joab "took Abner aside in the gate to speak with him peaceably, and smote him there in the abdomen"], and unto Amasa the son of Jether [or Ithra. In 2 Sam. xxvii. 24, Ithra is called "an Israelite," an obvious mistake for "Ishmaelite," as indeed it stands in 1 Chron. ii. 17. Amasa's mother, Abigail, was sister of David and Zeruiah; Amasa, consequently, was Joab's first

cousin. This murder was even fouler than that of Abner. Here there were ties of blood; they were companions in arms, and there was no pretence of a *vendetta*], whom he slew and shed [lit., "put," a somewhat strange expression. It almost looks as if וְיָצַק, "upon him," had dropped out. The meaning "make," which Keil assigns to דָּבַשׁ is not borne out by his references, Deut. xiv. 1; Exod. x. 2. "Showed," "displayed," is nearer the original], the blood of war in peace [the meaning is obvious. Blood might lawfully be shed in time of war, in fair fight; and Joab might have slain the two captains in battle without guilt. But he slew them when they were at peace with him and unprepared, by treachery], and put the blood of war [the LXX. has αἷμα ἀθῶνον, "innocent blood"] upon his girdle that was about his loins and in his shoes that were on his feet [we are not to suppose that the girdle and sandal are mentioned as "*die Zeichen des Kriegerstandes*" (Bähr), *i.e.*, military insignia; nor yet that the idea is "*from the girdle to the sandal*" (Ewald), *i.e.*, copiously. These are usual (hardly "principal," as Keil) articles of Eastern dress, of the civilian's as well as of the soldier's, and these two are mentioned because, no doubt, the horrible details of the two murders, and especially of the last (see 2 Sam. xx. 8), had been reported to David. He had been told at the time how the blood of Amasa had spurted on to the girdle of Joab, and streamed down into his sandals, and these details, which no doubt made a deep impression upon his mind, are recited here to show how dastardly and treacherous was the deed, and how thoroughly Joab was stained with innocent blood, blood which cried to heaven for vengeance (Gen. iv. 10)].

Ver. 6.—Do therefore according to thy wisdom [cf. Prov. xx. 26. It needed great discretion in exacting the punishment of death in the case of one who was so powerful, who had such influence with the army and the people, whose crimes had been passed over for so long a time, to whom David was so much indebted—Joab had partly won and had twice preserved for him his crown—and to whom he was allied by ties of blood. To act precipitately or unwisely might provoke a revolution], and let not his hoar head [see on ver. 9. Joab, though David's nephew, could not have been much his junior, and David was now seventy] go down to the grave in peace. [He must die a violent, not a natural death, as Corn. à Lap. This expression, no doubt, looks vindictive, but that is solely because

we forget the character of the Old Testament dispensation (as one of *temporal* rewards and punishments. See the "Expositor," vol. iii. p. 114), the position of David as king (as the authorized dispenser of punishments, and as responsible to God for dispensing them without fear or favour), and the principles of the Mosaic code (as a *lex talionis*, demanding blood for blood, and requiring the magistrates and people to purge themselves of the guilt of blood by demanding "the blood of him that shed it"). Let these considerations be borne in mind, and there is absolutely no warrant for charging David with malevolence. Wordsworth lays stress on the fact that Joab had not repented of his crimes. But we need have recourse to no such suppositions. The Jewish law afforded no place of repentance to the murderer. No amount of contrition would cleanse the land of blood. The *temporal* penalty must be paid. In the case of David himself, it was only commuted by special revelation (2 Sam. xii. 10, 13, 14), not remitted.

Ver. 7.—And to the sons of Barzillai [the "Beni-Barzillai" would include son, or sons, and all other descendants. It is highly probable, though it is not expressly stated, that Chimham was the son of Barzillai (2 Sam. xix. 37). Rawlinson says, "Who the other sons were is not known." It would be more correct to say that we do not know whether there were any other sons. The family was still existing *temp.* Ezra (Ezra ii. 61), where, it is worth noticing, we read of the *daughters* of Barzillai (cf. Nehem. vii. 63). In Jeremiah xli. 17, we read of the "habitation (כַּרְמֵל, caravanserai, khan) of Chemohan," where the Keri has Chimham. It has been argued from the mention of this name, and the fact that their khan was near Bethlehem, that David or Solomon gave the family land there], and let them be of those that eat at thy table [i.e., of those who have their sustenance from the royal table, not necessarily at it (Keil); cf. Dan. i. 5; 2 Kings xxv. 29. Presence at the table is expressed by  $\text{לֶלֶךְ בַּמֶּלֶךְ}$  (2 Sam. ix. 11, 12). It was esteemed an essential part of royal munificence throughout the East that the king should feed a large number of retainers and dependants. Cf. the account of Solomon's daily provision in 1 Kings iv. 22, 23; also 2 Sam. xix. 28; Judges i. 7]; for so [i.e., in like manner, with *food*]; they came to me [lit., "came near." The Hebrew  $\text{בָּרַךְ}$  often includes, as here, the idea of succour. Cf. Ps. lxix. 19; Lam. iii. 57. Barzillai certainly came (2 Sam. xvii. 27), and probably Chimham, but the Speaker's Com-

mentary is mistaken when it says that "Chimham is mentioned as present." He was present at the return of David (2 Sam. xix. 31, 38, but not necessarily before] when I fled because of [lit., "from the face of"] Absalom thy brother.

The mention of Absalom, and those terrible days of revolt and anarchy, when he was constrained to flee for his life, seems to have reminded the dying king of one of the bitterest ingredients of that bitter cup of shame and suffering—the cruel curses of Shimei. He remembers that the sin of Shimei, which was nothing else than treason and blasphemy, has so far escaped punishment. In a moment of generous enthusiasm, he had included Shimei in the general amnesty which he proclaimed on his return (2 Sam. xix. 23). He had thought, no doubt, at the time only of the offence against himself; he had forgotten his sacred and representative character as "the Lord's anointed;" or if he had remembered it (ver. 21) the emotions of that memorable day had obscured or perverted his sense of justice and duty. But he has since realized—and the thought weighs upon his conscience in the chamber of death—that he then pardoned what he had no power to pardon, viz., a sin to which the Mosaic law attached the penalty of death. For blasphemy, as for murder, there was no expiation short of the death of the blasphemer (Lev. xxiv. 14—16; cf. 1 Kings xxi. 10, 13); and blasphemy, like murder, though not perhaps to the same extent, involved those who heard it in its guilt, until they had discharged themselves of their sin upon the head of the guilty (Lev. xiv. 14; cf. Lev. v. 1). But Shimei, so far from having suffered the penalty of the law, had been twice protected against it; twice preserved alive, in defiance of law, by the supreme magistrate, the executor of law. And David, who has been charging his son to keep the law, now realizes that he himself has been a law-breaker. He has kept his oath, sworn to his own or his people's hurt, and he will keep it to the end. But Solomon is under no such obligation. He can demand the long arrears of justice, none the less due because of the time that has elapsed and the royal *laches*

("nullum tempus occurrit regi"); he can deal with the blasphemer as the law directs, and this David now charges him to do.

Ver. 8.—And, behold, thou hast with thee [Bähr understands by גֵּרָא, "near thee," (in *deiner Nähe*) because Bahurim was near Jerusalem. Keil gathers from this word that Shimei "was living at that time in Jerusalem," and refers to ver. 36, which, if anything, implies that he was not. But it is worth suggesting whether Shimei may not be the Shimei to whom reference is made in ch. i. 8. (Dean Stanley notices this as a possibility, but alleges nothing in support of it: "Jewish Church," vol. ii. p. 171, note.) We there find Shimei and Rei mentioned as firm adherents of Solomon at the time of Adonijah's rising, and in these words, they "were not with Adonijah." Surely it is not an unfair presumption—if there is nothing to rebut it—that the Shimei subsequently mentioned as "with" Solomon is the same person. But it has been objected (*e.g.*, by Kitto) that the false part that Shimei played at the time of Absalom's revolt would have for ever prevented his being recognized and mentioned as one of Solomon's supporters. I very much doubt it. The great influence which Shimei possessed must be taken into account. Nothing shows that influence more clearly than the fact that on the day of David's restoration, despite the part he had taken, and the possible disgrace and danger that awaited him, he could still command the attendance of one thousand men of Benjamin (2 Sam. xix. 17). Probably the secret of his influence lay in the fact that he was "of the family of the house of Saul," and possibly, owing to the insignificance of Saul's descendants, was the mainstay and chief representative of that house. And if so, there is nothing at all surprising in the mention of the fact that he was "not with Adonijah," and was subsequently "with" Solomon. It may have been a matter of great consequence at that critical time, which side Shimei—and the thousand or more Benjamites at his back—espoused. And if he *did* then declare for Solomon, it could hardly fail to procure him some amount of favour and consideration. He would thenceforward rank amongst the friends of the young king, and the words "thou hast with thee" would accurately describe his position.] Shimei, the son of Gera [another Shimei, the son of Elah, is mentioned (1 Kings iv. 11) as Solomon's officer in Benjamin. Gera must not be thought of as the "father" of Shimei, except in the sense of ancestor. He was removed from him by many generations, being the son of Bela

and the grandson of Benjamin (Gen. xlv. 21; cf. 1 Chron. vii. 6). Ehud, three hundred years earlier, is also described as "a son of Gera," Judg. iii. 15], a Benjamite [lit., the Benjamite, meaning that Gera, not Shimei, was the Benjamite. He was well known as the son of Benjamin's firstborn (1 Chron. viii. 1), and the head of a house in Benjamin. Professor Gardiner (American translation of Lange, textual note, p. 29), following the LXX. and Vulg., insists that, גֵּרָא בֶן־יָמִי (with the article) can only mean "son of the Jaminite, *i.e.*, of the descendants of Jamin, a son of Simeon." But this is directly contrary to what we read 2 Sam. xvi., viz., that Shimei was of "a family of the house of Saul," *i.e.*, a Benjamite. And to this the grammar agrees. Judges iii. 15 is an exact parallel, and compare גֵּרָא בֶן־יָמִי, 1 Sam. vi. 14, 18, and גֵּרָא בֶן־יָמִי, 1 Sam. xvi. 1, 18; xvii. 58] of Bahurim [the name means "The young men." It was some six miles distant from Jerusalem, in Benjamin, and on (or off, as Josephus, Ant. vii. 9, 7, implies) the main road to Jericho and the Jordan valley. It may have lain in one of the wadies branching out from the ravine which runs continuously alongside the steep descent to Jericho. The event narrated in 2 Sam. iii. 16 as happening at Bahurim may well have served to inflame Shimei's hatred. In spite of his rancorous hostility, however, we gather from 2 Sam. xvii. 18, that David had some faithful adherents there], which [lit., "and he"] cursed me with a grievous [acc. to Gesenius, *al.*, "strong," *i.e.*, sweeping; Keil, vehement; Thenius, "heillos," flagitious. LXX., *καράαν ὀδύνην*. Vulg., *maledictio pessima*] curse in the day when I went to Mahanaim [2 Sam. xvi. 5]; but he came down to meet me at Jordan [lit., the Jordan, *i.e.*, the descender, so called from the rapidity of the stream (it has a fall of 1400 feet in about 100 miles) or from the steep descents which lead to it. The word always has the defn. art.], and I swore to him by the Lord, saying, I will not put thee to death with the sword [2 Sam. xix. 23].

Ver. 9.—Now therefore [lit., "and now." Possibly the "now" is a note of time in apposition to the "day" of ver. 8, or rather the time of David's oath. "I then unadvisedly swore unto him, but now the law must have its course." Probably it is merely inferential,—*quæ cum ita sint*] hold him not guiltless [rather, *thou shalt not leave him unpunished* (Vatablus, Gesen., Bähr, *al.*); cf. Exod. xx. 7; Jer. xxx. 11]; for thou art a wise man [ῥόδιμος rather than σοφός (LXX.) Gesen. renders here, "endued with ability to judge." David clearly desires

that wisdom and justice, not malice or passion, should be Solomon's guide], and knowest what thou oughtest to [lit., *shalt* or *shouldst*] do to him; but [Heb. *and*] his hoar head [mentioned, not maliciously, but with the idea that punishment, which had been long delayed, must overtake him nevertheless. The age of Joab and Shimei would make the Divine Nemesis the more conspicuous. Men would "see that there was a God that judgeth in the earth"] bring thou down to the grave with blood. The Auth. Version here needlessly alters the *order* of the original, which should be followed wherever it can be (and it generally can) without sacrifice of idiom and elegance. In this case the alteration, by the slight prominence it gives to "hoar head" and to "blood," gives a factitious harshness to the sentence. The Hebrew stands thus: "And thou shalt bring down his hoar head with blood to Sheol." This order of the words also exhibits somewhat more clearly the sequence of thought, which is this: "Thou art wise, therefore thou knowest what by law thou shouldst do. What thou shalt do is, thou shalt bring down," &c. It is clear from these words that if David was actuated by malice, by a "passionate desire to punish those who had wronged him" (Plumptre, Dict. Bib., art. "Solomon"), or by "fierce and profound vindictiveness" (Stanley, "Jewish Church," vol. ii. p. 135), he was profoundly unconscious of it. If it was "a dark legacy of hate" (*ibid.*) he was bequeathing to Solomon, then he stands before us in these last hours either as an unctuous hypocrite, or as infatuated and inconsistent to the last degree. That the man who, in his opening words (ver. 3), enjoined upon his son, in the most emphatic manner, a strict and literal obedience to the law of Heaven, should in these subsequent words, delivered almost in the same breath, require him to satiate a long-cherished and cruel revenge upon Joab and Shimei (the latter of whom he had twice delivered from death), is an instance of self-contradiction which is almost, if not quite, without parallel. But as I have showed elsewhere, at some length, it is a superficial and entirely erroneous view of David's last words, which supposes them to have been inspired by malice or cruelty. His absorbing idea was clearly this, that he had not "kept the charge of the Lord;" that he, the chief magistrate, the "revenger to execute wrath," by sparing Joab and Shimei, the murderer and the blasphemer, both of whose lives were forfeited to justice, had failed in his duty, had weakened the sanctions of law, and compromised the honour of the Most High. He is too old and too weak to

execute the sentence of the law now, but for the safety of his people, for the security of his throne, it must be done, and therefore Solomon, who was under no obligation to spare the criminals his father had spared, must be required to do it. Of the Jewish king it might be said with a special propriety, "*Rex est lex loquens*," and seldom has the voice of law spoken with greater dignity and fidelity than by David in this dying charge. To say, as Harwood does, (Lange, American Trans., p. 32) that "nothing but sophistry can justify his [David's] charge to Solomon, not to let the unfortunate man [Shimei] die in peace," merely shows how imperfectly the writer has entered into the spirit of the theocratic law, that law under which David lived, and by which alone he could be governed and govern others.

Ver. 10.—So [Heb. *and*] David slept [Heb. *lay down*]. The idea of  $\text{נָשָׁא}$  is not that of *sleep* so much as of the recumbent posture of the dead. It points to the grave rather than to Sheol (Gesen.), though the latter idea is not excluded. Wordsworth (after à Lapide) finds here "an assertion of the doctrine of the existence of the soul after death, and of the resurrection of the body," but it is not in the text] with his fathers (cf. the Latin expression *abiit ad plures*, and the Greek  $\epsilon\zeta\ \pi\lambda\epsilon\acute{o}\nu\omega\upsilon\ \iota\kappa\acute{\iota}\sigma\theta\alpha\iota$ ), and was buried in the city of David (*i.e.* the hill of Zion, which he had fortified, His citadel became his sepulchre, and thenceforward bore his name. Intramural interment was permitted only to prophets and kings. Jerusalem is completely undermined by caves and caverns, and Zion is no exception to the rule. One of these, possibly enlarged, probably became the burying-place of the kings. It was known, not only in Nehemiah's day (Nehem. iii. 15, 16), but down to the age of the apostles (Acts ii. 29). Probably owing to a misunderstanding of St. Peter's words, "his sepulchre is with us," &c., the *Coenaculum* is now shown as David's tomb. Josephus says Solomon placed a vast quantity of treasure with the body, three thousand talents of which were taken out by Hircanus (Ant. xiii. 8. 4). He has also a curious story of an attempted plunder of the tomb by Herod (Ant. xvi. 7. 1).

Ver. 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 [as elsewhere (1 Chron. xxix. 27), the historian has disregarded the fraction of a year in giving the length of David's reign. He reigned at Hebron, according to 2 Sam. v. 5, "seven years and six months."

## HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—11.—*A Jewish deathbed.* A brilliant poet and essayist once summoned his stepson, the young Earl of Warwick, to his bedside, and with perfect dignity and composure bade him mark “how a Christian man can die.” In this section, one far greater, and yet in one sense far less, than Addison,—greater as a poet, as a statesman, as a patriot; less, inasmuch as “he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he,”—beckons us to the chamber of death, and bids us witness the departure of a pious Jew—of a typical Hebrew of the Hebrews. In one sense, David is the greatest figure in the Old Testament. He alone, of all that are born of women, has been called a “man after God’s own heart.” And more: If Solomon is of all Old Testament characters the most secular, certainly David is by far the most *spiritual*. Proof: His songs are still chanted in church as well as synagogue, and Christian souls find no fitter expression for their devout longings and aspirations than in the language of his exquisite Psalms. Let us hear his last recorded words. The last utterances of great men are allowed to have a special interest. They have often been intensely characteristic. Let us listen to “the last words of David.” Let us carefully notice (1) *What he does say*, and no less carefully (2) *What he does not say*.

1. WHAT HE DOES SAY. 1. *He says he is not afraid to meet death.* His conduct, his demeanour says this. See how calmly he looks it in the face. “I go the way,” &c. He hardly knows what death means; knows but little of the life beyond; his hopes and fears are bounded by the pale and shadowy realm of Sheol, but he can trust the living God, and he thinks—he believes—“*they cannot cease to live whom God does not cease to love.*” And so he goes into the gloom and the shadows with the trust of a child that holds the father’s hand; he approaches the grave

“As one who wraps the drapery of his couch  
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.”

*We have a far nobler creed—a livelier hope than his.* Jesus Christ has “brought life and immortality to light.” We have heard of the rest of Paradise; of the resurrection; of the beatific vision. Shall we then dread to die? Shall we be put to shame by a Jew? The Mohammedan calls death the “terminator of delights and the separator of companions.” Socrates said, “Whether it is best to live or die, the gods only know.” Shall we act as if we had no better belief? Surely our beneficent religion, and its gospel of immortality, should make us brave to die. 2. *He bids us be mindful of our mortality.* There are Christians who will not think, will not speak of death. Not so David. He saw the end approaching, and he faced it. It is well we should have from time to time, as we constantly have in daily life, in the dispensations of God’s providence, a *memento mori*. Pagan and Moslem monarchs have had their heralds daily and publicly remind them of their frailty. The ancient Egyptians would bring a mummy to their feasts. The Kaffirs ever keep the boards for their coffins in their houses. With their dismal and often hopeless creeds, they yet remember death. Shall we, who know that death is but the gate of life, ostrich-like, shut our eyes to it, and all “think all men to be mortal but ourselves?” 3. *He teaches us in death to think of duty;* to remember those who will come after us—our friends, enemies, church, and country. He leaves a son “young and tender.” He is concerned for his piety, for his prosperity; and through him, for the piety and prosperity of the nation. He knows that the words of the dying have weight. He will not depart without a solemn dying charge. It is the last best gift he can bestow. The Christian must not die selfishly. Even in pain and feebleness, he must care for others. If he can, he ought to charge his children and connexions; to warn them, to bless them. Should he be less jealous for their present and eternal welfare, or less concerned for the honour and glory of God, than was this dying Jew? 4. *He reminds us that men die as they have lived.* David has kept the law, “save in the matter of Uriah,” &c. His death is of a piece with his life—

it is the natural outcome, the good fruit from a good tree. During life, he has been very zealous for the Lord God of Israel. The ruling passion displays itself in death. The great desire of the man who has kept the law is that his son may keep it. To die well, one must live well. The last struggle works no change in the character. Deathbed repentance is generally delusive. They deceive *themselves*, who,

"Dying, put on the weeds of Dominic,  
Or as Franciscans think to pass disguised."

5. *He warns us to set our house in order*, to pay our debts and square our accounts before we die. David, we read, "prepared abundantly (for the temple) before his death." He has made royal provision for the house that should be built. But he remembers at last that three debts of his are still undischarged; a debt of gratitude to the sons of Barzillai, a debt of retribution to Joab, and another to Shimei. "Due punishment of malefactors is the debt of authority" (Bp. Hall). He will not, like some, "go on sinning in his grave;" he will have these debts discharged. He cannot depart in peace while they burden his conscience. And we, too, go where "there is neither work, nor device, nor knowledge," where wrongs cannot be redressed, where accounts cannot be settled. Have we any crime unconfessed, or injury unrepaid, any enemy unforgiven? "What thou doest, do quickly." But let us now consider—

II. *WHAT DAVID DOES NOT SAY.* The silence of Scripture is often golden, is sometimes as instructive as its voices. Here is a case in point. The most spiritual of Old Testament saints—the man after God's own heart—is dying, and he knows it. He gives his son his parting counsels, and what are they? They are all of this world. Observe—1. *There is no mention of a future life*; no "hope full of immortality," no talk of reunion, but rather a sad "*vale, vale in aeternum vale.*" The most remarkable feature in David's last words is, that there is not one word about another life. The Christian could not die thus. Even "half-inspired heathens" have expressed a livelier hope—witness Cicero's "O præclarum diem cum ad illud divinum animorum concilium coetumque proficiscar"—and how immeasurably higher than this, again, is St. Paul's desire to depart and be with Christ! "I go the way of all the earth"—it is like the sound of the clods upon the coffin, without the faintest whisper of a "*Resurgam.*" What a contrast between this and the apostle's exultant cry, "Death is swallowed up in victory!" And the very humblest Christian could hardly depart as David did, with absolutely no reference to the realm of the future. There would assuredly be some comforting word about the many mansions, the rest for the weary, the gates of pearl, the streets of fine gold. Of all this David said nothing, neither in life nor death, because he knew nothing. He had hopes, anticipations, convictions almost, as some of the Psalms show, but he had not what the Christian has, the "full assurance of faith," the "sure and certain hope of a resurrection to eternal life." In this respect how much greater was Addison, how much more "full of all blessed conditions" his death. In this respect, every Christian deathbed has a glory and a consecration and a triumph which we miss in the death chamber of the sweet Psalmist of Israel, the most saintly and spiritual of all the Jews. As Coleridge,

"Is that a deathbed where the Christian lies?  
Yes, but not his; 'tis death itself there dies,"

2. *There is no idea of a future recompense.* Hence, partly, his urgent demand for the punishment of Joab and Shimei. He does not know of a "judgment to come;" of any distribution of rewards and punishments after death. He has been taught that the righteous and the wicked alike are to be "recompensed in the earth," and therefore Joab and Shimei, albeit old and greyheaded, must not die in peace. If they do, justice, he thinks, will be robbed of its due. How different the conception of the Christian! He views with calmness the miscarriage of justice; he sees the wicked in great prosperity; he "bears the whips and scorns of time," "suffers the stings and arrows of outrageous fortune," knowing that this world is

not all; that "God is patient because he is *eternal*," and that "the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain," at the judgment-seat of Christ. 3. *There was no hope of a kingdom and a crown.* David's idea was that he was leaving a kingdom; St. Paul's that he was going to one. "Remove the diadem and take off the crown"—this was the message of death to the Hebrew kings. And to us death brings a crown (Rev. ii. 10, iii. 11; 2 Tim. iv. 8; James i. 12, &c.), a throne (Rev. iii. 21), a sceptre (Rev. ii. 27), a kingdom (Dan. vii. 18; Luke xxii. 29; Heb. xii. 28, &c.) To the Jew death was practically the end of life and of glory; to the Christian it is the beginning of both.

Vers. 1—11.—*Eikon Basiliké.* The king, the close of whose chequered and romantic career is narrated in this section, was the pattern king of the Hebrew people, and is in many respects a model for all kings. The portrait drawn here and in the Psalms is a veritable *Eikon Basiliké*, both truer and worthier of regard than that "Portraiture of his sacred Majesty," so famous and so influential in the history of our own country. We see him gathered to his fathers. Let us honestly frame his *eulogium*.

I. HE WAS ONE OF NATURE'S KINGS. The first king of Israel seems to have been chosen because of his physical, the second because of his moral, qualifications. His was a kingly soul. "Kind hearts are more than coronets"—yes, and more than crowns. Few nobler and greater men have ever lived. Witness his magnanimity, his chivalry, his loyalty, his bravery, his tenderness, his forgiveness of wrongs. See the records of 1 Sam. xvi. 12, 21; xvii. 32—37, 50; xviii. 14—16; xxii. 23; xxiv. 5, 22; xxv. 16; xxvi. 9—25; 2 Sam. i. 11—15; ii. 5, 6; iii. 31—39; iv. 9—12; ix. 1; xvi. 10, 12; xviii. 33; xix. 22. Such a man, had he lived and died among the sheepfolds, would have been "king of men for all that."

II. HE WAS ONE OF HEAVEN'S KINGS. "The powers that be are ordained of God." All legitimate monarchs reign *de jure divino*. But not all equally so. He was expressly chosen of God (1 Sam. xvi. 1; Psa. lxxxix. 20), was taken from the sheepfolds and from perilous watches against the lion and the bear to be the viceroy of Heaven. And he proved himself a king after God's own heart. He is the standard with which subsequent monarchs are compared, and by which they are judged. (2 Kings xi. 4, 33; xv. 3—5, 11; 2 Kings xiv. 3, &c.)

III. HE WAS FAITHFUL TO THE KING OF KINGS. "He did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from anything that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only," &c. (1 Kings xv. 5). "His heart was perfect with the Lord his God" (1 Kings xi. 4). He kept God's commandments and statutes (ver. 34). He was qualified to govern by having learnt to obey. He required nothing from his subjects which he did not himself render to his sovereign Lord.

IV. HE FAITHFULLY EXECUTED THE JUDGMENTS OF A KING. The powers that be are appointed "to execute wrath on him that doeth evil." The Church at her altar prays "that they may truly and indifferently minister justice, to the punishment of wickedness and vice." "A wise king scattereth the wicked and bringeth the wheel over them." "The execution of justice on the guilty is essential even to the exercise of mercy to those whose safety depends on the maintenance of the law" (Wordsworth). David was never more kingly than when he "cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord" (Psa. ci. 8).

V. HE WAS A KING TO THE LAST. "David did never so wisely and carefully marshal the affairs of God as when he was fixed to the bed of his age and death" (Ep. Hall). It is the king speaks in this dying charge. It was because he was king, and as such owed obedience to the King of kings, and owed protection and the vindication of law to his subjects, that he could not pardon Joab and Shimei. A private person can forgive private wrongs; a king may not forgive public injuries, for he may not give away what is not his to give. It is true the son of David prayed for the forgiveness of his murderers. It is true that *we* are to forgive those who have wronged us. But we are not to defeat the ends of justice, and bid the malefactor go free. Nor will the Son of David forgive conscious and inveterate

rebellion. He it is, the fount of all mercy, who will say, "Those mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me" (Luke xix. 27).

VI. HE SOUGHT AND FOUND MERCY FROM THE KING OF KINGS. He was not perfect, not sinless. "Save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite." It is not the "fierce light that beats upon a throne" discloses David's imperfections; it is his own confessions. In Psalm li. he has himself recorded his sin and his profound penitence; in Psalm xxxii. he tells us of his pardon. The king of Israel tells us how the King of Heaven forgives. And here most of all, perhaps, is he a pattern for all kings, for all men, to the end of time. This *Eikon Basiliké* has many goodly and noble features, but the fairest lineament of all is the story of his sin and its forgiveness (2 Sam. xii. 1-13).

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—11.—Holy Scripture gives us many a touching and pathetic description of the death of the father of a family, showing how it at once sanctions and sanctifies natural affection. The farewells of David remind us of those of Jacob. Death sometimes seems to fill the men of God of the old covenant with the spirit of prophecy, as if the summit of the earthly life was illuminated with a purer radiance falling upon it from a higher sphere. Death is indeed to all the messenger of God to reveal to us great truths; it is a great prophet.

I. DEATH SHOWS TO US WHERE ENDS THE WAY OF ALL THE EARTH (1 Kings ii. 2). Pascal says, "However brilliant the tragedy may have been, the end is always death. From every grave which is dug comes a voice crying, *Memento mori.*"

II. DEATH TEACHES US TO LOOK AT OUR PAST EXISTENCE AS A WHOLE, AS FROM A HEIGHT WE LOOK DOWN ON THE PLAIN BELOW. It brings out the great object of life, the essential truth too often drowned in the busy hum of the world. David thinks no more at this hour of the glory or of the pleasures of life. Its one great end stands out more clearly before him—to walk in the ways of the Lord, to keep His statutes and His commandments. This is wisdom and prudence.

III. DEATH REMINDS THE SERVANTS OF GOD THAT THEIR WORK DOES NOT PERISH WITH THEM; that none of them, not even the greatest, is an indispensable instrument of the work; that they are only links in the chain. Thus the torch which is to enlighten the world is passed from hand to hand.

IV. THE INHERITANCE OF A HOLY WORK TO BE CARRIED ON is the best of those blessings which, according to God's promise, are to rest upon His people to the third and fourth generations (Exod. xx. 6). A great responsibility rests upon a Christian family, and their education ought to be conducted with a view to it. This succession in piety, in living and acting faith, is more important and more real than the succession by means of official ordination.

V. Every servant of God, in his death, may say with Jesus Christ, "It is expedient for you that I go away;" "YE SHALL DO GREATER THINGS THAN THESE." It is well to know, when our work is done, that it will be carried on by another. With Solomon, the Jewish theocracy received a new development, such as it had never known in the time of David. It is well for us to die, even for the sake of the work of God, which we are called to accomplish up to a certain point, but no further.

VI. How much BETTER STILL IS IT FOR US TO DIE, when we look at it in the light of eternity. "David slept with his fathers (ver. 10), but only like them to be carried home to God, to rest in Abraham's bosom" (Luke xvi. 22). For ourselves, we may say with St. Paul, "To depart, and be with Christ is far better" (Phil. i. 18).—E. DE P.

Ver. 2.—"Show thyself a man." The religion of God is the religion of man. True religion is the perfecting of our humanity.

I. MAN WAS MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD. This is His essential characteristic.

The more He reflects this image, the more truly manly He is. The religion of the Bible restores His manhood.

II. THERE IS NO FACULTY IN MAN WHICH DOES NOT FIND ITS COMPLEMENT AND ITS DEVELOPMENT IN GOD. His reason finds in God alone the truth which it seeks. His heart only finds an object adequate to its power of loving in the God who is Love. His conscience has for its ideal and its law the Divine holiness. "*Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect*" (Matt. v. 48). His will derives its power alone from God. 1. The Son of God was the Son of man, and realized the true idea of humanity in His holy life. 2. The religion of God honours and exalts man, even as falsehood and error degrade and debase him. 3. The Divine morality is in profound harmony with true human morality, that law which is written in the natural conscience. The petty religiousness which says, "Touch not, taste not, handle not" (Col. ii. 21), and creates all sorts of artificial duties, is not in accordance with true piety, the one great commandment of which—love to God and man—approves itself at once to the gospel and to the conscience. 4. *Be a man* means, finally, Do thy duty like a man. Be one of the violent who take the kingdom by force. Let us be careful not to effeminate our Christianity by a soft sentimentalism. Let us learn from the Son of God to be truly men "after God's own heart."—E. DE P.

Vers. 1—4.—*A royal father's last words.* David's eventful life is drawing to a close. He has proved himself to be "a man after God's own heart." Not a perfect man, for he had grievous defects. But, in the main, he recognized the grandeur of his position as "the Lord's anointed." He lived by the inspiration of a Divine purpose. He "served his own generation by the will of God" (Acts xiii. 36). His very faults bore witness to the native force of his character. The height of the precipice measures the depth that frowns beneath it. Great natures are most capable of great temptations, great sorrows, and great sins. But now great David dies, and the sovereignty of Israel must pass into other hands.

I. THE CALMNESS OF A GOOD MAN IN THE FACE OF DEATH. "I go the way of all the earth." There is a tone of quiet composure and satisfaction in these words—remarkable feature of the way in which most of the Old Testament saints confronted death. More than mere Oriental courage, mere passive submission to the inevitable,—faith in the Unseen and Eternal—fortitude of a soul that has found a nobler inheritance than earth supplies—peaceful self-surrender into the hands of the Living God. Yet not like the clear and certain vision of *Christian* faith. Compare this, "I go the way," &c., with St. Paul's "I have fought a good fight," &c. (2 Tim. iv. 7, 8). He who has a living hold on Christ can say, not merely "I go the way of all the earth," but "I go my way to the eternal home of the redeemed." "Absent from the body; present with the Lord." Composure in the face of death very much a matter of natural temperament—dependent on physical conditions—to be distinguished from the higher triumph of faith. Men of faith sometimes in "bondage through fear of death." Live much with Christ, and when the fatal hour comes the sting and the terror shall be taken away.

II. THE CARE OF A GODLY FATHER FOR THE WELL-BEING OF HIS SON. Often in the life of David we see, through the garb of his kingly character, the throbbing of the true fatherly heart. The spirit of fatherhood here takes the form of wise and solemn counsel befitting the time. Fine touch of nature in this. The true father desires that his sons should be nobler, better, happier than himself. He lives over again in their life, and would have them to avoid the errors and evils into which he has fallen. David's yearning for Solomon is at once intensified and hallowed by the remembrance of his own wrong-doing. "Be strong and shew thyself a man." Solomon's youth, gentle disposition, heavy responsibilities, alike demanded such counsel. Supreme lesson of life for the young—the path of obedience to the Divine law is that of safety and prosperity. The wisdom and strength God gives will enable the "little child" in the noblest sense to "play the man." Each generation on a vantage ground as compared with those that went before it—children "heirs of all the ages." Best legacy the fathers leave them—

the great principles of truth and righteousness, as illustrated by their own living history. Chart of the ocean of life in the children's hands; rocks and shoals and hidden currents traced by the care and toil and suffering of those who sailed before them. Let them use it wisely if they would have a safe and prosperous voyage.

III. THE STEADFASTNESS OF GOD'S PURPOSE AMID ALL THE CHANGES OF HUMAN HISTORY. David dies in the faith that "the Lord will continue His word." The "everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure" is not fluctuating and perishable as the things and beings of earth. Steadfast order of the heavenly bodies and of the seasons a symbol of the sure covenant (Jer. xxxiii. 20). The frailty of man often serves to deepen our impression of the eternity of God. Human life a tale soon told, but "the counsel of the Lord standeth fast," &c. This is our security for the triumph of the cause of truth and righteousness in the world, "All flesh is grass," &c. (1 Peter i. 24). Man dies, but God lives; and the hope that stays itself upon His word can never be put to shame.

IV. THE CONDITIONAL NATURE OF DIVINE PROMISES. "If thy children take heed," &c. All Divine promises are thus conditional. Faith and practical submission needed to place us in the line of their fulfilment. God "continues His word" to those who continue in His ways. The promises are "Yea and amen" in Christ. Be "in Him" if you would realize them.—W.

Vers. 2, 8.—*A charge from a dying king.* The utterances of dying men naturally have weight. Those who stand on the border line between time and eternity have less temptation to disguise the truth, and are more likely than others to see things in their true relations. When those who speak to us thence are men who have long loved us, and who have ever proved worthy of our love, we must be callous indeed if their words are powerless. Exemplify by the mention of any whose whole future destiny turned upon the wish and the counsel of a dying father or friend. David's counsel to Solomon had this double value. He spoke as a dying man, and as a wise and loving father. Happy would it have been for the son had this counsel always been the law of his life. 1. *The anxiety of David for the moral and spiritual welfare of his son.* Some parents deem their duty done if they see their sons and daughters fairly "settled in life," without much consideration for character. David cared first for character, and next for circumstances. He believed that if the heart were right with God, things would of themselves go right with men. 2. *The willingness of Solomon to receive such counsels.* How different was his spirit from that of Adonijah (1 Kings i. 5). Though young, high-spirited, of princely rank, and already anointed king, he bows to listen to his aged father. Lessons of reverence for age, and respect to parents, to be drawn from this. In his charge to Solomon, David inculcates—

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF COMPLETE OBEDIENCE TO GOD. He had seen the terrible effects of partial obedience in Saul, his own predecessor. (Illustrate from Saul's life.) 1. *This implies the recognition of God as King.* He is King of kings, and Lord of lords, and even princely Solomon was to remember that he had a Master in heaven. This would be not only for his own good, but for the welfare of his kingdom. The tyrannies, the exactions, the cruelties of an ordinary Eastern despot would be impossible to one who habitually acknowledged that he was responsible to God, and that wrongs which no human court could avenge would receive just retribution from "the Judge of all the earth." The wishes of his dying father might somewhat restrain him, but these could not have the abiding power of the law of the ever-living and ever-present God. What safety belongs to him who, like Joseph, says in the hour of temptation, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" That thought may be ours in the darkness as well as in the light, amid strangers as well as in the precincts of home. To the lad setting out from his father's house, to the man undertaking new responsibilities, the message comes, "Keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in His ways." 2. *This involves thoroughness in obedience.* David uses no vain repetitions when he speaks of "statutes, commandments, judgments, and testimonies." The whole law, not a part of it only, was to be remembered. We are all tempted to partial obedience.

It is easy, natural, profitable to obey some commands. Disobedience will bring disease, or shame, or loss of reputation, and, fearing such penalties, some refrain from transgression. But there are other laws of God, obedience to which brings dishonour rather than glory, impoverishment and not advantage; and these also are to be obeyed if we would "walk before God in truth, with all our heart." Again there are some precepts which seem of trifling value, and we are tempted to say we need not be too precise. But we forget that God's laws, even the least of them, are terribly precise. Science is proving this in every department of nature. The tide, for example, will not stop short a foot in space, nor a moment in time, to save the life of the helpless man penned in between the rocks. And are moral laws less inexorable? Besides, the crucial test of obedience is found in relation to *little* things. If your child obeys your important command, because he sees its importance, you are glad; but you are much more pleased when he does something you told him to do, merely because you wished it, for this is a higher proof of genuine obedience than that.

II. THE NECESSITY OF PERSONAL RESOLUTION. "Be thou strong, therefore, and show thyself a man." This sounds like an echo of God's own words to Joshua (i. 7). The occasions too were similar. Joshua was entering on his leadership, and Solomon was on the steps of his throne. David would evoke the manly resolution of his son. There was the more necessity for this, because his honoured and heroic father could no longer stand beside him. One of God's reasons for taking away our parents by death is to develop and strengthen our character. When the saplings grow under the shelter of the parent tree, they are weakly; but when the giant of the forest falls, and the winds of heaven begin to buffet those which have had its protection, their strength becomes greater, and their roots strike deeper. "Show thyself a man," says David to Solomon. Some suppose they show their manhood by aping the airs of the elders (smoking, swearing, &c.) But in David's sense, to show yourself a man is to prove yourself wise, valorous, virtuous, and above all, loyal of heart to God. This exhortation then implies the manifestation of moral courage and strength. These are required in order to the obedience we have described, for such obedience implies struggle. 1. *There is conflict with self.* We have to check the uprising of passion, to fight against the pride which would make us refuse to submit to the revelation, and to the righteousness of God, &c. 2. *There is resistance to the evil influences of others.* When Solomon was misled by his wives, and began to worship their gods, he was forgetting the command, "Be strong and show thyself a man." Point out the necessity for moral courage, and for the renewal of strength, by waiting on God, to those surrounded by evil associates. 3. *There is antagonism to popular customs.* In school, in business, in national policy, in church routine, it is easier to float with the stream than to contend against it. He must needs "be strong, and show himself a man," who would say, "We must obey God rather than man!" Show where Solomon found this strength, and where he lost it. Give examples of both from sacred history. *E.g.*, the disciples were cowards when Christ was away, but they became heroes when the promise was fulfilled at Pentecost: "They were endued with power from on high."

III. THE ASSURANCE OF RESULTING BLESSEDNESS. "That thou mayest prosper," &c. As an historical fact, this promise was fulfilled. The kingdom of Solomon prospered as long as he was faithful to the God of his father. His apostasy sowed the seeds of its decay. God's promises are contingent, not absolute. They have attached to them implied conditions. This, which was shown in material blessings under the covenant of the old economy, is abidingly true. It is not that man merits the blessings of God by his obedience, but that he unfits himself to receive them by disobedience. This is yet more clearly seen under the light of the new dispensation. God gives a man that which he is fit for, on earth and in heaven. In and through Jesus Christ He has broadened our views of recompense. Beyond death the fulfilment of this promise extends, and he who is faithful with the few things shall be at last a ruler over many. In a spirit of humble obedience and prayerful dependence, let us seek to keep the charge and win the **blessedness** revealed in these dying words of the sweet Singer of Israel.—A. R.

## ADONIJAH'S INTRIGUE EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER II. 12—25.

**Ver. 12.**—And Solomon sate on the throne of David his father, and his kingdom [*i.e.*, dominion, sway] was established greatly. [Cf. 2 Chron. i. 1, 2. This verse serves as a kind of heading or introduction to the rest of the chapter. It was principally by the removal of rivals and disaffected persons that his sway was established.]

**Ver. 13.**—And Adonijah, the son of Haggith, came to Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon. [The LXX. adds *καὶ προσεκύνησεν αὐτῇ*, but the words are probably inserted from ver. 19. The historian now relates the plot of Adonijah and its defeat. Foiled in his purpose to mount the throne by direct means, Adonijah and his advisers have recourse to intrigue and subtlety. By the aid of Abishag, he hopes to accomplish what his chariots and horsemen (ch. i. 5) had failed to effect. And he first addresses himself to the queen mother (“*Aggreditur mulierem, ut regnandi ignaram ita amoribus facilem.*” Grotius). The position of the queen dowager in the Hebrew kingdom was an influential one; not unlike that of the Validé sultana amongst the Ottomans. Hence the constant mention of each king’s mother (1 Kings xiv. 31; xv. 10, where notice ver. 13; 2 Kings xi. 1; xii. 1; xiv. 2; xv. 2, &c.; hence, too, the part which such a queen mother as Athaliah found it possible to take. This pre-eminence was a natural result of the polygamy of Eastern sovereigns (and the consequent intrigues of the harem), coupled with the high estimation in which the mother was held in the East.] And she said, Comest thou peaceably. [Heb. *Is it peace thy coming?* Bathsheba was evidently surprised by his visit. Owing to the part he had taken against her son, there would naturally have been but few dealings, if not positive alienation, between them. Her first thought, consequently, is, “What can this coming mean?” The prominence of the idea of *peace* in all Eastern salutations has often been noticed. Cf. 1 Sam. xvi. 4; 2 Kings ix. 22; iv. 26; v. 21; Luke x. 5; John xx. 19—21, &c.] And he said, Peaceably [Heb. *peace*.]

**Ver. 14.**—He said moreover [Heb. *And he said*] I have somewhat to say unto thee [lit., “a word to me (cf. *est mihi*) for thee.” This expression throws some light on the New Testament phrase, *τι ἔχω καὶ σοί*, John ii. 4, &c.] And she said, Say on.

**Ver. 15.**—And he said, Thou knowest that

the kingdom was mine [*schon so gut wie mein* (Bähr). Adonijah evidently mad much of the right of primogeniture (cf. ver. 22), which was not unrecognized among the Jews. There is possibly in these words too, a hint at the part Bathsheba had tak in defeating his claims] and that all Isra set their faces [*i.e.*, eyes] upon me that should reign [Heb. *upon me all Israel set*, &c. The “*me*” is emphatic by its position. So is the “*mine*” just before used. Several commentators remark that Adonijah’s words were not strictly true. But we hardly expect to find truth on such an occasion. Adonijah was adroit and diplomatic, and puts the case as it best serves his purpose. In order to propitiate Bathsheba, he exaggerates his loss and disappointment, just as in the next words, in order to put her off her guard, he plays the saint and obtrudes his piety and resignation]: howbeit [lit., *and*] the kingdom is turned about and is become my brother’s, for it was his from the Lord. [This verse shows pretty clearly that Adonijah had not renounced his pretensions to the throne. Despite the pitiful failure of his first conspiracy, and notwithstanding Solomon’s generous condonation of his treason, he cannot forget that he was, and is, the eldest surviving son, and had been very near the throne. And as to the kingdom being his brother’s by Divine appointment, he cannot have been ignorant of that long ago (2 Sam. xii. 25), yet he conspired all the same. And it is not difficult to read here between the lines, that he has not relinquished his hopes, and does not acquiesce in Solomon’s supremacy.]

**Ver. 16.**—And now I ask one petition of thee [Heb. *request one request*] deny me not [marg., “turn not away my face.” Better, Turn not back, *i.e.*, repulse not. Rawlinson paraphrases, “Make me not to hide my face through shame at being refused;” but this is not the idea of the original, which means, Reject me not; send me not away. In the Heb. “face” often stands for “person,” for eyes (ver. 15), looks, mien]. And she said unto him, Say on.

**Ver. 17.**—And he said, Speak, I pray thee, unto Solomon the king; for he will not say thee nay, [will not repulse thee. Same words as ver. 16. There is a spice of flattery in these words. He now exaggerates her influence with the king] that he may give me Abishag the Shunammite to wife. [We are hardly justified in concluding, as some commentators have done, that love had nothing

to do with this request. It is not improbable, on the contrary, that a passion for the beautiful Shunammite, perhaps the fairest woman of her time, may have first given a powerful impulse to Adonijah's ambition (see on ch. i. 5). At the same time, he must have had ulterior motives (see on ver. 22).

Ver. 18.—And Bathsheba said, Well [there is no reason why the strict rendering "good," should not be preserved here. The A.V. follows the LXX, *καλῶς*. Similarly Luther, *wohl*; but Bähr, *gut*], I will speak for thee [LXX. *περὶ σοῦ*] unto the king.

Ver. 19.—Bathsheba therefore [lit. *And Bathsheba*] went unto king [Heb. *the king*] Solomon, to speak unto him for Adonijah. And the king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, [the LXX. reads, "and kissed" her (*καὶ κατεφίλησεν αὐτήν*). There is not necessarily a pregnant construction, as Keil insists: "rose up and went down to meet her." We get here a glimpse of the stateliness of Solomon's court] and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat [lit. *throne*, same word] to be set [most probably the servants of Solomon placed the seat for the queen mother, as the LXX. (*ἐπέθη θρόνος*) and most translators. The reception was clearly a public one, if the interview was private. But the original is simply, "and he set," &c., suggesting that Solomon *may* have done it, as a mark of respect, with his own hands. He "received his mother as *הַיָּמִינִי*" (ch. xv. 13). Bähr] for the mother of the king, and she sat on his right hand. [The place of honour. Cf. Psa. cx. 1; Matt. xx. 21; xxv. 33; Acts vii. 56; Rom. viii. 34; Heb. i. 3; viii. 1, &c. It was also the place of honour amongst Arabians (Keil), Greeks, and Romans, as the very names *ἐξώνυμος*—an euphemism for *ἀριστερός*—and *sinistra*, show.

Ver. 20.—Then she said, I desire one small petition of thee. [So it seemed, no doubt, to her, in her inexperience and ignorance of Adonijah's real motives. She thought she held the threads of a love story in her hands, and that it would be a small thing for Solomon to make these handsome lovers happy]: I pray thee, say me not nay. And the king said unto her, Ask on, my mother: for I will not say thee nay. [The readiness of the king to grant *whatever* she asked proves that the reasons which induced him to deny her request must have been weighty; i.e. Adonijah's suit cannot have been devoid of political consequences.

Ver. 21.—And she said, Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to Adonijah thy brother to wife. [For the construction (*וְאֵשֶׁת* with a nominative, or, as some think, *וְאֵשֶׁת* used impersonally—*man gebe*), cf. Gen.

xxvii. 42; Exod. x. 8; and especially Num. xxxii. 5; and see Gesen., *Lex. s. v.* *וְאֵשֶׁת*, and Ewald, *Syntax*, 295 b.]

Ver. 22.—And king Solomon answered and said unto his mother, And why dost thou ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? [Professor Plumptre (*Diet. Bib.*, art. "Solomon") says this "narrative is not a little perplexing." He then specially remarks on the strangeness of Bathsheba's interceding for Adonijah, and also on Solomon's "flashing into fiercest wrath" at her request. He explains the facts, however, by "Mr. Grove's ingenious theory identifying Abishag with the Shulamite (*Cant. vi. 13*), the heroine of the *Song of Songs*." It is "the passionate love of Solomon for 'the fairest among women' that has made Bathsheba, "hitherto supreme, to fear a rival influence, and to join in any scheme for its removal." The king's vehement abruptness is in like manner accounted for. He sees in the request at once an attempt to deprive him of the woman he loves and a plot to keep him still in the tutelage of childhood. Of the ingenuity of this theory no one can doubt, nor yet that it may *possibly* represent the actual facts. But it is not necessary, nor does it help much to the explanation of the narrative. Bathsheba's intervention may easily be accounted for by (1) her desire to conciliate her son's most formidable rival; (2) her feminine interest in a love match; and (3) her pride, which could not but be flattered, on being assured that her influence with the king was so great. Nor is it any more difficult to assign a reason for Solomon's sudden outburst of anger. This request is evidence to him of a fresh plot against his throne, a plot so skilfully laid that its abettors have been able to deceive his own mother, and have made her a tool for its advancement. Surely this is quite enough to account for Solomon's indignation. And the theory of a love story has this disadvantage, that the young king completely ignores it in what follows, all his concern being about the kingdom, and not one word being said about the woman; and again—and this is almost fatal—his mention of Joab and Abiathar, and his subsequent dealings with them, prove conclusively that he suspected a conspiracy against his crown, not a scheme, in which these latter could have had no interest, and therefore no part, to rob him of a mistress] ask for him the kingdom also [Heb. *and ask for him*—and (you will next) ask for him; or, Aye, ask for him, &c. It was quite natural that Solomon should see in Adonijah's suit for Abishag an indirect, but none the less real or dangerous, attempt to compass his own downfall. For it was one of the customs of

Oriental monarchies that the harem of a sovereign descended to his successor. Thus the impostor Smerdis took possession of the harem of Cambyzes (Herod. iii. 68), while Darius in turn had some of the wives of Smerdis (iii. 88). And what is much more to the point, a similar custom obtained amongst the Jews. David, for example, succeeded to the wives, along with the kingdom, of Saul (2 Sam. xii. 8). And we see from the case of Abner and Rizpah (Ibid. iii. 8), and still more from that of Absalom (ch. xvi. 22), that to "take possession of the harem was the most decided act of sovereignty" (Lord A. Hervey, *Speak. Com.* on 2 Sam. xvi. 21). Now all these instances were of too recent a date, and had attracted far too much attention at the time, to have made it possible for them to have escaped either Solomon's or Adonijah's observation. They manifest "such a close connection in public opinion between the title to the crown and the possession of the deceased monarch's wives, that to have granted Adonijah's request would have been the strongest encouragement to his pretensions" (Rawlinson *in loco*). It may be said that Abishag had not really been the concubine of David (ch. i. 4), which is true, and which explains what would otherwise have been the astonishing impiety of Adonijah (Lev. xviii. 8, xx. 11; cf. 1 Cor. v. 1), and the wonderful complaisance of Bathsheba. There is no warrant for charging Adonijah (as is done by à Lapide, Wordsworth, *al.*) with defying the Divine law and seeking an incestuous alliance, for the historian is careful to represent Abishag as David's attendant, and *not* as his wife. But it is hardly probable that the nation at large knew this. People generally could only suppose that this fair young girl, chosen out of all the thousands of Israel because of her beauty, had become to all intents and purposes one of the royal seraglio. It is almost a certainty, therefore, that Adonijah's request concealed a plot for using Abishag as a stepping-stone to the throne, and Solomon certainly is not to be blamed if he interpreted it by the light of contemporaneous history, and by the usages of his time and country. He knew that his brother had made one deliberate effort to supplant him, and therefore he could only conclude that this was a second, though veiled, attempt to deprive him of his kingdom; even for him, and for Abiathar the priest, and for Joab the son of Zeruah. [The LXX. and other translators appear to have had a slightly different text before them. The LXX. renders, *καὶ ἀντὶ τῆς Ἀβιάθαρ καὶ ἀντὶ τῆς Ἰωαβ, ε. ρ. λ;* the Vulgate, "*et habet Abiathar,*" &c. The Chald. paraphrases, "*nonne is*

*consilio fuerunt ille et Abiathar,*" &c. Keil well remarks that "the repetition of *is* answers entirely to the emotional character of the words." We can hardly believe, however, that in these conversations we have the *ipsissima verba* of the speakers. If so, how were they preserved and handed down to the author? Even a "court scribe" would hardly catch every turn of expression. And possibly this interview with Bathsheba was private. It would almost seem, from the immediate mention of Joab and Abiathar, as if Solomon had received some prior intimation of this second conspiracy. Possibly his remarkable penetration had divined that mischief was brewing from the bearing of the three, who no doubt would be narrowly watched. Or he may have heard of frequent meetings on their part. Anyhow, Adonijah's suit is to him conclusive proof of a plot.]

Ver. 23.—Then king Solomon swore by the Lord, saying, God do so to me, and more also [a common form of adjuration (Ruth i. 17; 1 Sam. xiv. 44; xx. 13; 2 Sam. iii. 9; xix. 13, &c.) = *Gott soll mich fort und fort strafen*. Bähr], if [or "that." *is* constantly follows formulæ of swearing, as in all the passages just cited. Cf. the use of *is* in New Testament. The order of the next words in the Hebrew is noticeable] against his life spake Adonijah this word. [שׁוּבָה. "at the peril or cost of his life." Cf. 2 Sam. xxiii. 17; Josh. xxiii. 11.]

Ver. 24.—Now therefore [Heb. and now], as the Lord liveth, which hath established me, and set me [a ' has here crept into the text; obviously owing to the fact that this same letter both precedes and follows] on the throne of David my father, and who hath made me an house [Keil and Wordsworth understand by this expression, "hath given me issue." "Solomon," says Keil, "had already one son, viz., Rehoboam, about a year old (comp. xi. 42 with xiv. 21, and 2 Chron. xii. 13)."] But some doubt seems to attach to the "forty and one years" mentioned as the age of Rehoboam at his accession. Bähr says Solomon's "marriage did not occur till afterwards (iii. 1). And we find from 1 Kings xi. 38; 2 Sam. vii. 11, 27, that to 'make,' or 'build an house,' means to found a lasting dynasty"], as he promised [Heb. *spake, i.e.*, at 2 Sam. vii. 11-13], Adonijah shall be put to death this day.

Ver. 25.—And King Solomon sent by the hand [*i.e.*, the instrumentality; not necessarily *eigenhändig*, as Thenius. Cf. Exod. iv. 13; 1 Sam. xvi. 20, Heb.; 1 Kings xii. 15; xiv. 18; Jer. xxxvii. 2 ("which he spake by the hand of Jeremiah"), &c. The same expression is found in ver. 46 of this chapter] of Benaiah

[in the East the captain of the king's body-guard has always been the "chief of the executioners," the title given to Potiphar, Gen. xxxvii. 36, Heb.; in 2 Kings xxv. 8 to Nebuzar-Adan; and in Dan. ii. 14 to Arioch "the captain of the king's guard, which was gone forth to slay the wise men, &c.] and he fell upon him so that he died. [Solomon has been accused of "a cold-blooded vengeance" and of "that jealousy so common in Oriental despots," in ordering the execution of his brother. But unjustly. It is to be remembered that on the occasion of Adonijah's first rebellion the young monarch had displayed the greatest magnanimity towards him. He might then have justly decreed against him the death which no doubt the conspirators had designed against him (1 Kings i. 12.) Adonijah, by fleeing to the altar, showed that he had good grounds for fearing the avenging sword. He was clearly conscious that he had merited the death of the traitor. But Solomon spared him, during good behaviour. He warned him that "if wickedness were

found in him" he should die (1 Kings i. 52.) His first treason, consequently, was not to be lost sight of, in case he were guilty of a fresh offence. And now that he is found conspiring again; now that he abuses the royal clemency, and seeks by chicanery and intrigue to snatch his brother's crown, the sentence of death takes effect. This renewed attempt, after failure and forgiveness, must have convinced the king that Adonijah's pretensions would be a standing menace to the peace and prosperity of his empire, and therefore he owed it to himself, to his subjects, and above all to God, who had entrusted him with the crown, to put this restless and dangerous plotter out of the way. To pass over a second offence would be a virtual encouragement of sedition, for it would show that the king was weak and might be trifled with. Adonijah therefore must die, not only in expiation of his treason, but as an example to the subjects of Solomon, that the disaffected, including all Adonijah's partizans, might be awed into obedience.

### HOMILETICS.

Vers. 22—25.—*The Brothers.* It may be instructive if, after the manner of ancient writers, we draw out a comparison between the two brothers whose history is recorded in part in this section, and who here appear as rivals. Their careers were very different. The one reigned with almost unparalleled magnificence for forty years; the other fell in the very May-morn of his life by the sword of the executioner. What were the causes which produced such different results? Let us consider some few of them.

I. ADONIJAH WAS ENDUED WITH BEAUTY, SOLOMON WITH WISDOM. The first had goodliness; the second goodness. Men admired Adonijah; the Lord loved Solomon (2 Sam. xii. 24). To the elder brother the Allwise Providence allotted the gifts of face and form—exterior advantages—to the latter He gave "wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart"—the quiet, unobtrusive adornment of the spirit. Wisdom is better than rubies; yes, and better than beauties.

II. ADONIJAH WAS AMBITIOUS; SOLOMON WAS PIOUS. The first loved self, and sought his own advancement. The second "loved the Lord" (1 Kings iii. 8). The first, by his own showing, resisted and defied the will of Heaven (1 Kings ii. 15); the latter "walked in the statutes of David his father." Adonijah desired riches, honours, the life of his enemies; Solomon asked for none of these things, but for an understanding heart (chap. iii. 9, 11). Their lives consequently were regulated on totally different principles. The first acted as if he were master (chap. i. 5); the second remembered he was but a servant (ver. 9). And Adonijah lost everything, even his life, while Solomon gained everything—the wisdom for which he asked; the "richest honour" for which he did *not* ask. Verily "godliness is profitable unto all things" (1 Tim. iv. 8).

III. ADONIJAH SOUGHT TO FORCE EVENTS; SOLOMON WAITED PATIENTLY FOR THE LORD. Adonijah would not wait till his father was dead; he would snatch the sceptre from the old man's feeble grasp; he would be king at any cost, and *at once*. It is worth noticing that Solomon on the other hand took no part in the measures which placed him on the throne. "He that believeth shall not make haste." The one sought to frustrate the designs of Providence, the other "committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." And *he* was crowned and Adonijah was executed.

IV. ADONIJAH REBELLED AGAINST HIS FATHER; SOLOMON REVERENCED HIS MOTHER. Treatment of parents is a test of character. To honour father and mother is "the first commandment with promise." Adonijah repaid his father's indulgence with treason against his throne; Solomon, when seated on his throne, had a throne set for his mother. If he were king, his mother should be queen. He received her with the profoundest respect, though she was his subject; for he "counted her uncrowned womanhood to be the royal thing." The fortunes of these two brothers were not more diverse than their characters, as revealed by their treatment of their elders. And their histories accorded with their principles; their lives and deaths illustrated the commandment.

V. GOD CHOSE SOLOMON AND REFUSED ADONIJAH. As in the case of Esau and Jacob, as in the case of Manasseh and Ephraim, the younger is preferred to the elder. And yet the elder was apparently the popular favourite. "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart." It is the case of David and his brethren over again. In all these cases "the Lord hath set apart *him that is godly* for himself." The meek, pacific Solomon, the rejected of Joab and Abiathar, is the accepted of Jehovah. And the brilliant and beautiful Adonijah, his advantages, his influence, his efforts, all these avail him nothing, for "the proud"—and we may add, the selfish, the disobedient—"the LORD knoweth afar off" (Psa. cxxxviii. 6), while "the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth" (Psa. xi. 5).

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER II. 26—35.

#### THE DEPOSITION OF ABIATHAR AND THE DEATH OF JOAB.

Ver. 26.—And unto Abiathar the priest [see note on 1 Kings i. 8. The historian now relates the end of Adonijah's confederates] said the king, get thee to Anathoth [The Heb. is extremely curt and authoritative, corresponding well with the anger and determination of the speaker. Anathoth, the home of Abiathar, was also the residence of another high priest, Hilkiah (Jer. i. 1). It was in Benjamin, a priests' city, and had suburbs (Jos. xxi. 13, 17, 18). It has been identified by Robinson with Anâta, a village 1½ hrs. N.N.E. of Jerus. The name (= Answers) according to Gesenius, means, "answers to prayer," but according to the Talmud, "echoes"], unto [וְיָ] is here almost the equivalent of וְנָ. Cf. 2 Sam. xv. 4, 20, Heb. &c.] thine own fields [the patrimony of his family] for thou art worthy of death; [Heb. a man of death; LXX. ἀνὴρ θανάτου, i.e., ἐνοχὸς θανάτου, Matt. xxvi. 66.] but I will not at this time [Heb. in this day] put thee to death [i.e., the sentence of death was deferred during good behaviour. It is hardly correct to say that Abiathar was "spared for a time, but only for a time" (Stanley). More correctly Corn. à Lapide: "Misit eum in patriam ut ibi vitam, quam ei condonabat, quiete traderet." For aught we know, he died in peace [because thou barest the ark of the Lord God before David my father [Thenius, quite needlessly would read for "ark," "ephod" (1 Sam.

xxiii. 6). Zadok and Abiathar had borne the ark (not of course in person, but *per alios*, viz., the Levites Uriel, Joel, &c.: 1 Chron. xv. 11), when David brought it up to Jerusalem, and also during his flight from Absalom (2 Sam. xv. 24—29). Abiathar had thus been associated both with David's joys and sorrows] and because thou hast been afflicted in all wherein my father was afflicted. [See 1 Sam. xxii. 17—23; 2 Sam. xv. 24, &c.]

Ver. 27.—So Solomon thrust out Abiathar from being priest unto the Lord, that he might fulfil [Heb. to fulfil. "An addition of the narrator, not the intention of Solomon. It is the *ἵνα πληρωθῆ* of the New Testament." Bähr] the word of the Lord, which he spake concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh [1 Sam. ii. 31—35. Abiathar was the last descendant of the house of Ithamar. With his deposition the high priesthood reverted to the house of Eleazar, and so another "word of the Lord" had its fulfilment (Num. xxv. 15).]

No one can justly accuse Solomon of unnecessary severity or of cruelty in his treatment of Abiathar. On the occasion of his first conspiracy, Abiathar seems to have escaped even censure. And yet that conspiracy, had it succeeded, would almost certainly have involved Solomon's death (ch. i. 12). He is now found plotting again, for the action of Solomon proves that there had been a second plot. Oriental usages would have justified his death. He is simply warned and banished.

Ver. 28.—Then tidings [Heb. *And the re-*

port, &c. Not necessarily of Abiathar's deposition, but certainly of Adonijah's death) came to Joab, for Joab had turned after [same expression as in Exod. xxiii. 2; Judges ix. 3] Adonijah, though [lit., and] he turned not after Absalom. [The LXX. (Cod. Vst.), Vulg., and all ancient versions except the Chald., here read *Solomon*, which Ewald and Thenius adopt. This reading is perhaps too summarily dismissed by most commentators, as involving a statement which would be self-evident and superfluous. But it is not so. The meaning would then be that Joab had inclined to Adonijah, and had not, subsequently, gone over to the side of Solomon — information which is much less obvious than that he had not "gone after Absalom." The Arabic version may thus be nearest the truth, which reads, "Neither did he love Solomon." Somewhat similarly Josephus.] And Joab fled unto the tabernacle of the Lord, and caught hold of the horns of the altar. [As Adonijah had done before him (ch. i. 50). His flight is almost certain evidence of his guilt. ("Joab vero seipsum prodidit." Münster.) Why should he flee, if conscious of innocence? Solomon had acted generously before, and Joab would not be aware of David's dying instructions. His two assassinations had remained so long unpunished that he would hardly expect to be called to an account for them now. We have here, therefore, another indication of a second conspiracy, and it is an old belief (Theodoret, *al.*) that Joab had suggested to Adonijah the plan of marriage with Abishag. Some have asked why Joab should flee to the altar when his crimes deprived him of the right of the sanctuary. But a drowning man grasps at a straw. It is probable that he never thought of his murders, but only of his treason. According to the Rabbis, death at the altar ensured him burial amongst his fathers (Münster). But, if this were so, it would hardly enter into his calculations.

Ver. 29.—And it was told king Solomon that Joab was fled unto the tabernacle of the Lord; and, behold, he is by the altar. [The LXX. here inserts, "*Anà Solomon the king sent to Joab, saying, What has happened thee, that thou art fled to the altar? And Joab said, Because I feared before thee, and I fled to the Lord.*" This is only a gloss, but it is an instructive one. It shows that the author regarded Joab's flight as betraying a guilty conscience.] Then Solomon sent Benaiah, the son of Jeholada, saying, Go, fall upon him. [The LXX. adds, "*and bury him.*"]

Ver. 30.—And Benaiah came to the tabernacle of the Lord, and said unto him [Benaiah evidently "hesitated to stain the

altar with blood." It was only the sanctity of the altar which made it an asylum. There was strictly no "*right of sanctuary*"]. Thus saith the king, *Come forth.* [Probably Solomon had directed that Joab should, if possible, be induced to leave the altar. Every Jew would dread its profanation by strife and bloodshed.] And he said, *Nay; but I will die here.* [Heb. "*here will I die.*" Joab may possibly have thought that Solomon would hardly venture to put him to death there, and that so he might somehow escape with his life. But it is more probable that he counted on death, and that a feeling of superstition, or of defiance, had decided him to meet his doom there. It should be borne in mind that gross superstition not uncommonly accompanies irreligion and brutality; and it is quite conceivable that Joab hoped for some indefinite benefit from the shadow of the altar, much as the poor Polish Jew expects from burial in Jerusalem. Or his motive *may* have been defiance, thinking he would "render Solomon odious to the people, as a profaner of the Holy Place" (M. Henry). It can hardly have been to put off for ever so short a time the execution, as Bishop Hall imagines.]

Ver. 31.—And the king said unto him, *Do as he hath said, and fall upon him* [the law decreed (Exod. xxi. 14) that, if a man had slain his neighbour with guile, he should be *taken from the altar to die.* Possibly the desperate character of Joab made literal compliance with this command well-nigh impossible. The attempt to drag him from his place of refuge might have led to a bloody encounter. And the king evidently felt that Joab's crimes justified exceptional measures], *and bury him* [why this injunction? Possibly because the *spirit* of Deut. xxi. 23 seemed to Solomon to require it. Both Bähr and Keil think it was that Joab's services to the kingdom might be requited with an honourable sepulture. Was it not rather that the corpse might be removed with all possible haste from the sanctuary, which it defiled, and hidden from view, as one accursed of God, in the earth? So Bishop Hall: "He sends Benaiah to take away the offender both from God and men, from the altar and the world"; that thou mayest take away [LXX. "*to-day,*" *σήμερον*] the innocent blood [for the construction cf. 1 Sam. xxv. 31; Neh. ii. 12; and Ewald, 287*d.* Innocent blood, *i.e.*, blood not shed in war, or forfeited to justice, rested upon the community, or the authorities responsible for its punishment (Num. xxxv. 33; Dent. xix. 10, 13; xxi. 9. Cf. Gen. iv. 10) until satisfaction was made. See on ver. 5], which Joab shed, *from me, and from the house of my father.* [Heb.

"from upon me." Solomon evidently believed that the guilt of blood was upon him and his house so long as Abner's and Amasa's blood remained unavenged ("The blood that is not required from the murderer will be required from the magistrate." Henry), and that he and his seed might have to answer for it, as Saul's seed had done (2 Sam. xxi. 1, 9). This is one of the many considerations which show that both David and Solomon were actuated not by "cold-blooded vengeance" or "long-cherished resentment" (Stanley), but by a sense of duty. In fact, Jewish law imperatively demanded the death of Joab, and to spare him was to violate all law, and to imperil the throne and the people. "Only a superficial observer," says Ewald, "can here reproach Solomon with needless severity."

Ver. 32.—And the Lord shall return [LXX. ἐπιστρέψει, returns, or returned] his blood [LXX. τὸ αἷμα τῆς ἀδικίας αὐτοῦ, i.e., the blood he had shed. Cf. vers. 33, 41] upon his own head, who fell upon [same word as in vers. 29, 31. So that it was strictly a *re-taliation*. The *lex talionis* was carried out to the letter] two men more righteous and better than he, and slew them with the sword, my father David not knowing. [Heb. "and my father David knew not," i.e., was not privy thereto. Solomon thinks of the unjust suspicions which these crimes cast upon his father.]

Ver. 33.—Their blood shall therefore return upon the head of Joab, and upon the head of his seed [according to Exod. xx. 5; xxxiv. 7; Lev. xx. 5; xxvi. 39. There is an obvious reference to David's curse 2 Sam. iii. 29, which thoroughly agreed with the spirit of the Old Testament in comprehending the children in its sweep. And it is to be noticed that the sins of the fathers are still, by the operation of natural laws, and by the constitution and laws of society, visited upon the children, to the third and fourth generation] for ever: but upon [Heb. *to*] David, and upon his seed, and upon his house, and upon his throne, shall there be [or "be," optative; LXX.

γένοιτο] peace [i.e., prosperity] for ever from the Lord. [So persuaded is Solomon that he is fulfilling a religious duty in decreeing the execution of Joab; so little thought has he of malice, revenge, or any baser motive, that he counts on the Divine blessing in perpetuity for the deed.]

Ver. 34.—So Benaiah, the son of Jeholada, went up [not because the altar "stood higher up Mount Zion than Solomon's house" (Keil), but because Gibeon, where the tabernacle and brazen altar then were, stood higher than Jerusalem. It is remarkable that retribution thus overtook Joab on the very scene of his last murder, for it was "at the great stone which is in Gibeon" (2 Sam. xx. 8), that he slew Amasa. Cf. 2 Kings ix. 26: "I will requite thee in this plat, saith the Lord"], and fell upon him, and slew him: and he was buried in his own house [possibly in the courtyard: hardly in the garden. The same is recorded of Samuel (1 Sam. xxv. 1). It was evidently an exceptional occurrence. Remembering the estimation in which the Jew held the corpse and the grave (Num. xix. 11, 16, 22; cf. Matt. xxiii. 27), it must have been a singular honour to make of the house a mausoleum. No doubt it was designed to be such in Joab's case. Whatever his crimes, his services had deserved well of his country. Possibly his friends were led to pay him this special honour as a kind of counterpoise to the ignominy of his death] in the wilderness [i.e., of Judah. Joab's mother was of Bethlehem, which was on the border of the desert. The "wilderness of Tekoah" (2 Chron. xx. 20), according to Jerome, was visible from Bethlehem, being but six Roman miles distant.

Ver. 35.—And the king put Benaiah the son of Jeholada in his room over the host: and Zadok the priest did the king put in the room of Abiathar. [It is hardly likely that Joab would be retained in command of the army after the conspiracy of chap. i., nor is this implied in this verse, the meaning of which is that Benaiah took the place of Joab, and that Zadok henceforward was sole high priest.]

## HOMILETICS.

Vers. 26, 27.—*The Degraded High Priest.* We may find in this section a sermon on *Cæsarism*. The relations of the world-power to the Church; the province of the State and the prerogatives of the clergy; what are the proper limits of the temporal power and what is the exclusive domain of the spiritual; these have been vexed questions for many centuries. They are prominent topics at the present day. We may perhaps find in this history a few principles to guide us. For we learn

I. THAT PRIESTS HAD BETTER NOT MEDDLE WITH POLITICS. No one can deny their abstract right to do so. They are men, if they are clergymen, and "*nihil humani*," &c. As citizens, they may have convictions. Having convictions, they may surely

give effect to them. No one can deny again that they have often interfered to good purpose. Witness the case of Jehoiada. It may sometimes be a duty to interfere. But all the same, their plane is not the plane of politics. Their *πολίτευμα* is the Church. And what is lawful, is not always expedient. Their meddling has often cost not only them, but the Church, dear. Well had it been for Abiathar; well for the Wolseys, Richelieus, and many more, had they never given up "to party what was meant for mankind." There are questions—imperial questions of right and wrong—where the clergy must speak out; there are other questions—party questions—where, for their own and their flocks' sake, they had better hold their peace.

II. THAT PRIESTS ARE MEN OF LIKE PASSIONS WITH OTHER MEN. Abiathar apparently was not free from that "last infirmity of noble minds." It was probably jealousy of Zadok impelled him to conspire against Solomon, and to join hands with the murderer Joab against the prophet Nathan. Neither the holy anointing oil nor the discharge of the priest's office destroys the *phronema sarkos* (see Art. IX.) It is worthy of note that the first high priest was guilty of idolatry, envy, and murmurings; that the sons of Eli committed abominable crimes; and that the high priests Annas and Caiaphas condemned the Lord of Glory. Every high priest needed to "make atonement for *his own sins*" (Lev. xvi. 6, 11). Abiathar, the minister of God, was a traitor against God and His anointed. Having the frailties, temptations, and passions of other men, priests often commit sins, sometimes commit crimes.

III. THAT PRIESTS MAY BE PUNISHED FOR THEIR CRIMES BY THE SECULAR POWER. For centuries the Latin Church contended with our forefathers for the exemption of ecclesiastics from the authority of civil tribunals. But the Jewish priests enjoyed no such exemption. Abiathar was threatened by Solomon with death, and was thrust out of his office. Our Great High Priest respected the tribunal of Pontius Pilate. And His apostle answered for himself before Felix and Festus, and before great Cæsar himself. (Cf. Art. xxxvii. of the "Articles of Religion.") But

IV. PRIESTS ARE TO BE TREATED WITH THE REVERENCE DUE TO THEIR OFFICE. "Because thou barest the ark of the LORD God." Criminous clergy are not to be so punished as to bring their sacred calling into contempt (not, *e.g.*, to be set to sweep the streets, as General Butler forced one of the American bishops to do in New Orleans). If the man is entitled to no consideration, the office is. He wears the livery of the Great King. The vessel is "earthen," but the treasure "heavenly" (2 Cor. iv. 7). "As men are to God's ministers, they will find Him to them."

V. PRIESTS MAY BE DEGRADED FROM THEIR POSITION, BUT CANNOT BE DEPRIVED OF THEIR PRIESTHOOD. They did not derive their authority from the civil power. It did not give, and it cannot take away. David did not make Abiathar priest, and Solomon could not unmake him. We find from chapter iv. 4 that he was still called "priest." He that is "called of God, as was Aaron," can only be recalled of God. When Solomon "thrust out Abiathar," he "deprived him of his dignity, but did not strip him of his priesthood" (Theodoret). The state may fine, imprison, banish, put to death Christ's ambassadors according to their deserts, but it may not alter their message, tamper with their creeds, confer their orders, or prescribe their ordinances. "To Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's."

VI. IN REMOVING THE UNWORTHY PRIEST THE CIVIL POWER IS FULFILLING THE WILL OF THE LORD. The "sure word of prophecy"—indeed a double prophecy—had its fulfilment when Solomon banished Abiathar. The secular power thereby accomplished the good pleasure of God declared four hundred years before (Num. xxv. 13). And the magistrate who, in the exercise of the authority conferred on him by God for the punishment of evil doers, degrades the criminous priest, silences him, visits him with appropriate pains and penalties, is doing God service; is fulfilling the will of God, who would have evil ministers above all others brought to justice and chastised; the more influential their example, the more need of conspicuous and exemplary punishment.

Vers. 26—35.—*The Death of Joab.* "Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel"—so might men say as they heard, so may we

say as we read, the history of Joab's death. After David, he was by far the greatest man—the ablest general, the bravest soldier, the most capable statesman—of that age. He was “the Marlborough, the Belisarius of the Jewish empire.” He had fought David's battles, won his conquests, captured his citadel, and twice preserved for him his crown. It is a sad and tragic ending of such a brilliant career. The idol of the army, the man who was first in the deadly breach (2 Chron. xi. 6), the ever victorious hero, dies miserably, by the thrust of an old comrade. For him the sanctuary of God has no protection. Though he clings to the horns of the altar, it avails him nothing. No, the blood of the white-headed warrior, winner of a hundred well-fought fields, streams round the consecrated structure and stains the place of the Divine Presence. What are the lessons, let us ask, of such a death? And, first—

I. WHY IS HE HERE? It is (1) *because his conscience has made him a coward.* He who never turned his back on the foe, has fled before a breath, a mere rumour. He has not been attacked, not even threatened; but the secret is out, the conspiracy is discovered, his head is forfeited. He betrays his guilt by his flight. Time was when he would have faced almost any danger, when he would have died rather than fled. But then he had a support and stay, in the consciousness of rectitude, which he has not now. Now, his own heart denounces him.

“None have accused thee; 'tis thy conscience cries.”

The man whose conscience is burdened with crime has an enemy, a traitor, within the camp. But why has he fled to the *sanctuary*; why chosen the tabernacle of God for his refuge? For Joab has not loved the habitation of God's house. The tabernacle of the Lord could not be “amiable” to that guilty heart. *His* choice would be “the congregation of evildoers.” A stranger to the tabernacle and its services, why is he here? It is (2) *because men often betake themselves in adversity to the religion they despised in prosperity.* Yes, Joab's is no solitary case. It is too common. Witness the so-called deathbed repentances; witness the cries and prayers which go up in the hour of peril from lips which never prayed before. Men who have neglected God and contemned the ordinances of religion in health often turn to Him and to them in sickness. “It is the fashion of our foolish presumption to look for protection where we have not cared to yield obedience.” But (3) *the altar of God is for sacrifice, not for sanctuary.* The purpose of the altar, its *raison d'être*, was that sacrifices, *i.e.*, that worship, might be offered thereon. It was an accident, so to speak, that made of it a sanctuary; the accident of its sacredness. Because it was ordained of God, fashioned after a Divine pattern and employed in the Divine service, it was naturally and rightly regarded as holy, as a structure not to be profaned, and hence the manslayer fled thither for protection. But this use of the altar was quite beside its original intention. It was made for *worship*, for the service of God, not for the defence of man. Joab disregarded its proper use; he used it for his own convenience. And have we not seen something like this in our own days? Religion is ordained for man to live by. Its primary purpose is the glory of God. It exists that man may offer “spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God;” that man may be himself “a living sacrifice.” But there are those who would use it only as a sanctuary, as a place to flee to when they can sin no longer. They want the benefits of religion without its obligations; they pervert it from its proper and holy, to a purely selfish purpose; they want it for *death* and it was meant for *life*. They act, *i.e.*, much as Joab did, and it is to be feared their last end will not be unlike his. The altar they have slighted will not shelter them in the day of evil.

II. But let us now ask, secondly, *WHY IS HE PUT TO DEATH HERE?* The altar was never meant to be stained with *human* blood. If it was not for sanctuary, still less was it for slaughter. And it has sheltered many; why may it afford *him* no asylum? It is (1) *Because he has come to it too late.* Had he come before, and come as a worshipper, he would not have needed to come now as a fugitive. Had he even come, after his great crimes, as a sincere penitent, he might, perchance, have found forgiveness. David was delivered from blood-guiltiness, and why not Joab?

But he only comes to the altar because he is driven to it; because he can do nothing else. Yes, "it is too late to cry for mercy when it is the time of justice." Those who put off repentance till they can sin no longer find that such feigned repentance profits them nothing. There is a time when "the door is shut." 2. *Because "he shall have judgment without mercy that showed no mercy."* Joab's murders could not have been more treacherous, more cruel. "The blood of war in peace." "Took him aside in the gate to speak with him peaceably" (2 Sam. iii. 27, marg.). "Took Amasa by the beard with the right hand to kiss him" (ib. xx. 9). There is a *lex talionis* which governs the dealings of God with transgressors. The cruel murderer shall be cruelly murdered. The assassin shall be executed at the altar. He that "showed no pity" shall receive none. 3. *Because God pays sure, even if he pays slowly.* It was thirty-four years—an entire generation—since Abner's blood first cried from the ground. Eight years had elapsed since Amasa's death. And Joab, meanwhile, had maintained his position. Still "over all the host of Israel," still second only to the king. If ever he or others had dreamed of punishment, they must by this time have given up all fear, or all hope. David had died and Joab still lived. Joab had conspired once and yet he was spared. Is there, men would ask, a retributive Justice? is there a "God that judgeth the earth"? Yes, though Joab has "hoar hairs," though he has all but gone down to the grave in peace, his sin has found him out. And the blood which reddens those gray hairs, the blood which crimsones the sanctuary, proves that there is a Nemesis for crime: that if Justice has a halting foot, she nevertheless overtakes the fleetest offender; that "if the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceedingly small." 4. *Because "without shedding of blood there is no remission."* Only the blood of Joab could expiate the bloodshed he had wrought. Nothing else could cleanse the land. For innocent blood guilty blood; this was the law. How different is the gospel. The blood of Christ speaketh better things than the blood of Abel, ay, than the blood of Joab. The blood of Joab made an atonement for the land. There the guilty died because of the innocent. The blood of Jesus made an atonement for the world. Here the innocent dies because of the guilty. The blood of Joab tells of vengeance, of retribution, of death. The blood of Jesus speaks of mercy, of restitution, of life and love and peace. Yes, the death of Joab may surely speak to us, but it speaks to little purpose, unless it tells us of "the precious blood of Christ."

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER II. 36—46.

**THE END OF SHIMEI.**—This fresh intrigue of Adonijah's warns the king that he must be on his guard and keep a watch over suspected persons. Prominent among these, from his antecedents and connexions, would be Shimei.

Ver. 36.—And the king sent and called for Shimei [probably from Bahurim. But see on ver. 8] and said unto him, Build thee [Not necessarily as "a guarantee for his residence there" (Wordsworth). Jewish law would make a purchase difficult. Lev. xxv. 23. Cf. 1 Kings xxi. 3] an house in Jerusalem and dwell there [where he would be under *surveillance* and where his sinister influence with the men of Benjamin would be neutralized] and go not forth thence any whither [or, "hither and thither." *Weder dahin noch dorthin.* Bähr.]

Ver. 37.—For it shall be, on the day thou goest out and passest over the brook [lit.,

watercourse, *wäd.* The Kidron is quite dry, except during and for a short time after the winter rains] Kidron [The Kidron is mentioned specially because that was the direction which, it might be presumed, Shimei would take, his old home being at Bahurim], thou shalt know for certain that thou shalt surely die [The Hebrew is, if possible, still more striking and emphatic, "To know thou shalt know that to die thou shalt die." Shimei could not say that he had not been plainly warned]: thy blood shall be upon thine own head. [Cf. Lev. xx. 9, and especially Joshua ii. 19; also ver. 31 of this chapter.]

Ver. 38.—And Shimei said to the king, The saying [or thing, matter, דָּבָר, like λόγος ῥῆμα, in Greek (cf. *Sache*, in Germ., from *sagen*) means (1) word and (2) deed] is good [Shimei cannot complain of the condition, remembering what he had done (2 Sam. xv. 5-7) and that Solomon was not bound by his father's oath (2 Sam. xix. 23)]:

as my lord the king hath said, so will thy servant do. And Shimei dwelt [in obedience to this behest] in Jerusalem many days.

Ver. 39.—And it came to pass at the end of three years that two of the servants of Shimei ran away [it has been thought by some that their flight was preconcerted with their master. But the narrative does not favour this supposition] to Achish, son of Maachah, king of Gath. [This may well have been the “Achish, son of Maach” (1 Sam. xxi. 11; xxvii. 2), to whom David fled fifty years before. Longer reigns than this are not unknown to history. Or it may have been his grandson]. And they told Shimei, saying, Behold, thy servants be in Gath.

Ver. 40.—And Shimei arose and saddled his ass [not necessarily himself. *Qui facit per alium, facit per se.* Matthew Henry thinks Shimei did it himself for the sake of secrecy. Many expositors also think that he went by night. The text rather suggests the idea that both the going and the return were perfectly open and undisguised] and went to Gath. [It is impossible to avoid the question, What can have led to this infatuated disregard of his oath and life? Now his perversity may of course have been judicial—*quos Deus vult perdere, prius dementat*—but as to the means which led to this issue, it is enough if we may believe he had been *dared* to it either by his servants or others. The fierce Benjamite would naturally be galled to the quick by the thought that his slaves could thus openly set him at defiance; he may have heard from those who came from Gath that they were exulting over him; and he may have resolved at all hazards to teach them a lesson. He cannot have *forgotten* either Solomon’s explicit warning or his own solemn oath (ver. 42); he must have gone to Gath with his eyes open, and nothing but a great provocation, such as mockery and defiance, will account for his going.] And Shimei went and brought his servants from Gath.

Ver. 41.—And it was told Solomon that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath and was come again. [He, no doubt, persuaded himself that his immediate return, especially when taken in connexion with the object of his journey, would excuse him to the king. He would perhaps argue that a magnanimous sovereign like Solomon could never deal hardly with one who thus placed his life in his hands. He can hardly have built his hopes on his not having crossed the *Kidron*, for he must have perfectly understood that he was to go “no whither.”

Ver. 42.—And the king sent and called

for Shimei, and said unto him, Did I not make thee swear by the Lord [it thus comes out quite incidentally that Solomon had bound Shimei by an oath. The LXX. embodies this information as a direct statement in the text of ver. 37, *καὶ ὕρκισεν αὐτὸν ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκεῖνῃ*, but it is obviously a gloss] and protested unto thee, saying, Know for a certain, on the day that 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. [The LXX. (Vat.) omits “And thou saidst,” &c. This last sentence has been punctuated thus: “Good is the word. I have heard.” Probably  $\text{וְנִי}$ , “which,” is to be understood.

Ver. 43.—Why then hast thou not kept the oath of the Lord and the commandment that I have charged [Heb. *commanded*] thee with. [“Shimei ought to have been warned against trifling with Solomon’s forbearance by the punishment already inflicted on Adonijah and Joab.” Wordsworth.]

Ver. 44.—The king said, moreover [Heb. *And the king said*] Thou knowest all the wickedness which thine heart is privy to [Heb. *knoweth*] that thou didst to David my father [Solomon brings a threefold charge against Shimei. He has violated a solemn oath, “by the life of Jehovah,” and so has “profaned the name of his God” (Lev. xix. 12). He has broken his parole and set at naught the king’s commandment. He has defied and blasphemed the Lord’s anointed. He must die] therefore the Lord shall return [“hath returned,” or “returns.” LXX. *ἀνταπέδωκε*, *aor.* The king regards himself as merely the instrument and dispenser of the Divine Justice. According to him, it is God, not spite, demands and has brought about Shimei’s execution] thy wickedness upon thine own head [Every Jew, taught to expect that “every transgression and disobedience” would receive its “just recompense of reward” in this life present would see in Shimei’s almost unaccountable infatuation the finger of God. To them he would seem delivered up to destruction.

Ver. 45.—And king Solomon shall be blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before the Lord for ever. [It is inconceivable that Solomon could have spoken thus if he had been conscious either of sharp practice, or spite, or cruelty. The words are those of one who is sure that he is doing God service.]

Ver. 46.—So the king commanded Benaiah, the son of Jeholada, which went out and fell upon him that he died. [The execution of Shimei has, perhaps, on the

whole given more offence than that of Joab or even Adonijah. He, at any rate, was not "a murderer whom vengeance suffereth not to live," nor had he taken any part in recent conspiracies. On the contrary, he seems to have lived quietly enough under the eye of the king. And it consequently has the appearance of cruelty and malevolence that Solomon should "press the letter of a compact against him," especially when, by returning to Jerusalem, he placed his life at Solomon's mercy. But it is not difficult to offer a complete justification of Solomon's action in this matter. In the first place, it is to be remembered that cruelty had no part in his character. In his long reign of forty years there are absolutely no evidences of a brutal and tyrannical disposition. There is a strong presumption, consequently, that he was not actuated by cruelty on this occasion, a presumption which finds support in the consideration that Solomon was much too sagacious to prejudice himself in popular estimation at the commencement of his reign by proceedings which would have the least suspicion of vindictiveness. And (2) with this probability the facts of the case entirely agree. Shimei's life, as we have seen, was forfeited to Jewish law. As he had so long been spared, however, the king gave him a gracious respite. The conditions imposed were not onerous. Shimei had but to keep his parole and he would live; to break it and he would assuredly die. He *did* break it; not without provocation, it may be, but he broke it, and broke too his solemn oath. It may be said it was hard he should lose his slaves, but better, surely, lose them than his life. Besides, there

were other ways of recovering them; or, if he must pursue them in person, his proper course was evidently to ask the king's permission. That he did not do so is in itself a suspicious circumstance, and Solomon might reasonably think that the flight of the slaves was but a feint, and that Shimei's visit to a foreign court had really a political object. But, be that as it may, the king had protested unto him that if he went any whither, he should most certainly die. When he went, when he despised the royal command and disregarded his sacred oath, how was it possible for Solomon to break his word? To do so would have been inevitably to compromise himself with his subjects, and to forfeit their reverence and trust. Besides, there was a duty he owed to his dead father, and above all, one which he owed to the living God. He had now the opportunity for which his father bade him wait, of putting into force the provisions of the Mosaic law, of requiring the death of the blasphemer, of showing his subjects that the law could not be defied with impunity, that though vengeance was not executed speedily against evil works, still retribution was certain in the long run, and so of teaching them a much needed lesson of obedience and respect of authority. Every consideration, therefore, of justice, morality, filial piety, and religion warranted him in putting Shimei to death. Every imputation of weakness, irresolution, disregard of his plighted word, compromise of his royal dignity, and indifference to religion might justly have been levelled against him, had he interfered between Shimei and the sword of Justice.

### HOMILETICS.

**Vers. 44—46.—The End of the Transgressor.** Such was the end of Shimei—violent, sanguinary, shameful. Old man as he is, he may not die in peace: his hoar hairs must be crimsoned with his blood. What does this teach? what its message to Christian men? It is twofold. It speaks (1) OF THE SIN, (2) OF THE RETRIBUTION.

I. It teaches (1) *The sin of treason.* He had offered insult and defiance to his lawful king. Rebellion against constituted authority can only be justified by intolerable tyranny and outrage. He who

"dares to wield  
The regicidal steel"

must answer to Him by whom kings govern. We are to "honour the king," to "be subject to the higher powers." "They that resist shall receive to themselves damnation," as did this rebel Benjamite. 2. *The sin of blasphemy.* "A grievous curse." Aimed at the king, it reached the King of kings. It was not only destructive of authority; not only an affront offered to the majesty of law; it was an indirect blow at the Majesty of Heaven. Men cannot "speak evil of dignities" without sin. Those who "curse God" will "die" (Job ii. 9). How little do men

make of blasphemy! But Shimei had to pay for it with his life. 3. *The sin of perjury.* It was this in the strict sense of the word. He *broke through* his oath. Though he said, "the Lord liveth," he swore falsely. He thus profaned the awful incommunicable name, and incurred the Divine curse (Zech. v. 4). Perjuries are plentiful in our days, our police courts being witness. (Some kiss the thumb, and not the book.) "The Lord will not hold him guiltless," &c. 4. *The sin of disobedience.* The king had adjured him, had "protested," had said "know for certain," &c.; and even if the Kidron were mentioned arbitrarily, still it served to test his obedience. The prohibition, therefore, could not have been plainer. He disregarded it, and died. "Fool," does any one say? Stay! The great King has said, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." He has solemnly testified what will be the doom of disobedience, and yet how often have we crossed our Kidron—the bound of His law—have gone after our own lusts and pleasures, and it is only because He is God and not man, only because

"the heart of the Eternal  
Is most wonderfully kind,"

that we have not died. 5. *The sin and folly of presumption.* Whatever may have led Shimei to go after his slaves, it was certainly presumption brought him back. He would hardly have returned had he not counted on forgiveness. No doubt he had persuaded himself either that Solomon would never know, or that, if he did, he would be magnanimous. "Allowance will be made for me," he had said; "my return will disarm suspicion and ensure clemency." But the sword of Benaiah soon undeceived him. And such will be the end—death, shame, everlasting contempt—of those who presume on the mercy of God. How many say, "God is so good, He will never be hard upon us," &c. But is God *true*? Can He deny Himself? Even Solomon could not go back from his word; and can the Holy One? Alas, if despair has slain its thousands, presumption has slain its ten thousands. It is a significant fact that since the invention of the safety lamp there have been more accidents in mines than there were before.

II. As to the RETRIBUTION, we are reminded, 1. *That curses commonly come home to roost.* The "grievous curse" of Shimei did not hurt David. But it was his own destruction. The poisoned arrow missed its mark, but it recoiled on the archer. The engineer is hoist by his own petard. A curse rests on those who curse the king (cf. Eccles. x. 20). 2. *That respite does not mean release.* When David "swore" to him, Shimei thought himself safe. Surely the bitterness of death was past. He would die in his nest. We often mistake God's forbearance for forgetfulness. He is long-suffering, and men ask, "Where is the promise of His coming?" Because "He does not settle His accounts once a week" (Goethe) the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. But the day of retribution comes as a thief, as the flood, as the sword, as the snare. 3. *That if we die, it is our own fault.* Shimei had his life in his own hands. It rested with him alone whether he lived or died. He should live, if he would but live at Jerusalem. But he chose death. Men cause their own destruction. God has no pleasure in their death. "Thou hast destroyed thyself." 4. *That warnings are commonly lost on the wicked.* "How could Shimei be so infatuated?" we ask. What, have we not seen his infatuation paralleled? Have we never seen repeated warnings repeatedly neglected? Yes, souls, sins, warnings, results, are the same in all ages. 5. *That when God reckons, He reckons for all.* The sword avenged the sin of eight years before. And in the Great Assize, everything—both cup of cold water and idle word—will receive its just recompense of reward.

#### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 41—46.—*Retributions.* This is one example of the way in which Solomon carried out David's dying command, as given in verses 5—9. Shimei's violation of his promise in reference to not leaving Jerusalem, though the immediate occasion, was thus not the real reason of his punishment. He had been all along a doomed

man. A great deal in David's command in reference to these men that we cannot regard with complacency; so far as there was anything of personal vindictiveness in it, our moral sense condemns it. Would it not have been more magnanimous if with his dying breath he had freely forgiven these old offenders? Solomon's conduct, however, wears a different aspect. A father's word would be to him an imperious authority; to vindicate a father's honour the instinctive impulse of filial affection; to avenge the innocent blood a sacred obligation. Moreover, these men deserved their fate. Joab had been a traitor and murderer; Abiathar had abused the sanctity of his priestly office by helping the cause of the usurper; Shimei had "cursed the Lord's anointed." This incident suggests—

I. THE ETERNAL LAW THAT WRONG-DOING MUST BE FOLLOWED BY ITS DUE RECOMPENSE. Recognise the Divine element in this act of human retribution. There is a Nemesis that tracks the steps of the transgressor, and sooner or later overtakes him; not a natural law merely, but an intelligent Divine will and power. The superstition of the Melitans had a deep and solemn truth in it (Acts xxviii. 4). Striking correspondence often between the sin and the penalty. Men suffer in forms resembling the injury they inflict. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood," &c. "All they that take the sword," &c. The weapon used wrongfully recoils upon the head of him who wielded it. "Curses, like birds, come home to roost." In the teaching of Christ and His apostles, however, the law of retribution appears, not in its old bare, crule form, but in a more vital and spiritual form. New Testament idea—sin bears within itself the germ of its own punishment. The penalty is a development rather than an arbitrary infliction. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Sin may be divinely forgiven, and yet go on to produce in this world all sorts of bitter fruits. "May one be pardoned and retain the offence?" No; but the pardoned man may retain in himself the evil effects of what he has done, and see, with infinite remorse, the evil effects in others. The sin, as a "finished" fact, takes its place in the general procession of cause and effect, independently of God's mercy to the transgressor. On the other hand, the worst retribution is in the moral nature of the sinner himself.

"There is no future pang  
Can deal that justice on the self-condemn'd  
He deals on his own soul." (*Manfred.*)

(E.g., SHAKESPEARE'S *Macbeth*; MILTON'S *Satan*.)

No escape from this retribution but in "the cross." "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son," &c. It will not wipe out *all* the effects of transgression, but it will arrest the eternal penalty, and perfectly cleanse the fountain from which the evil springs.

II. THE NOBLENES OF A TRUTHFUL AND FEARLESS DISCHARGE OF DUTY. Solomon's deed a homage to the sense of duty. Magnanimity blended with severity. He spares Abiathar, but has no mercy on Joab and Shimei. Note the reasons of this distinction. As a "man of peace" he had no love for this retributive work. It might involve him in trouble. But he shrinks not from doing the thing he conceives to be right. Men often constrained by force of circumstances, or persuasion of a Divine voice within them, to do what they have no natural inclination for doing. Essence of all moral nobleness to make duty rather than inclination or policy the law of one's life. In men of highest nature conscience is the ruling power. However it may appear, that Life is the most blessed which is the most perfect homage to the law of right.

III. THE SUPERIORITY OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS ABOVE THE MORAL STANDARD OF OLDEN TIMES. In following the chronicles of these old Hebrew kings we feel that we are moving in a moral region of somewhat dim light and low level. It must needs be so if there is a real law of development in Scripture and the dispensations of God. We may recognise the working of Divine principles of truth and righteousness amid the confusions of the time, and yet feel that we have in the law of Christ a far higher rule of conduct. We admit what is good in David and Solomon, but HE is our model who, on the cross of sacrifice, prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."—W.

## EXPOSITION.

## CHAPTER III. 1—15.

## THE BEGINNING OF SOLOMON'S REIGN.—

In the preceding chapter we have seen the establishment of Solomon's rule (ver. 46) by the removal of internal foes, *i.e.*, of disaffected and rebellious subjects. In this we see him strengthening his position by an external alliance, by a marriage with an Egyptian princess. This event, however, is related here, not because the historian had this connexion of ideas in his mind, but probably because the marriage came next in order of time.

Ver. 1.—And Solomon made affinity [Not "alliance" (as some have supposed) but relationship. Lit., *made himself son-in-law*] with Pharaoh king of Egypt [which of the Pharaohs this was, it is impossible to say with certainty. As, however, Shishak (ch. xi. 40; xiv. 25) is undoubtedly the Sheshonk who succeeded to the throne of Egypt in the 26th year of Solomon (Poole), and who was the first king of the 22nd dynasty of Manetho, we may safely identify this Pharaoh with "a late king of the 21st (or Janite) dynasty." It has been assumed (Bunsen, Ewald, Brugsch, *al.*) that it was Psusennes II., the last king of that house, on the supposition that he reigned 35 years, (as stated by Eusebius), but according to Africanus, his reign was limited to 14 years. It is wiser to say, therefore, with Mr. Poole (Diet. Bib., "Pharaoh") that this Pharaoh "cannot yet be identified on Manetho's list." It is also impossible to decide whether the alliance was first sought by Solomon with a view to win over a powerful and dangerous neighbour (Thenius), to whose inroads his northern border was exposed, and especially to counteract the influence (ch. xi. 21) of Hadad (Plumptre), or whether the marriage was proposed by Pharaoh because the 21st dynasty "had then become very weak" (Rawlinson) and its head desired "friendly relations with the kingdom of Israel, which had grown into a power to be dreaded" (Keil). But we may reasonably suppose that the alliance "must have been to most Israelites a very startling one" (Plumptre.) Egypt (Rahab, Psa. lxxxix. 10; Isa. li. 9) was to every Israelite a name both of triumph and dread. The Pharaohs were their ancestral foes, and took Pharaoh's daughter [A marriage such as this was not without precedent (Gen. xii. 45; Exod. ii. 21; Num. xii. 1; Matt. i. 5;

Ruth iv. 13), nor was it condemned by the Law, which only forbade intermarriage with the nations of Canaan (Exod. xxxiv. 16; Deut. vii. 3), and sanctioned the union of an Israelite with a captive taken in war (Deut. xxi. 13; cf. xx. 14). "At the same time, it was only when the foreign wives renounced idolatry . . . that such marriages were in accordance with the spirit of the law" (Keil). As Solomon at this period of his life faithfully observed the law, as he is never blamed for this marriage, and as there is no trace whatever of the introduction of Egyptian rites into Israel, it is a fair presumption that the Egyptian princess conformed to the religion of her adopted country], and brought her into the city of David [2 Chron. viii. 11 speaks of her dwelling in "the house of David," *i.e.*, it would seem, the palace which David had occupied] until he had made an end [this hardly shows that he had begun to build, as Keil infers. He did not begin building the Temple until the fourth (1 Kings vi. 1), nor his own house until the eleventh year (*ib.* vii. 1) after his accession, and the marriage, though not at the very commencement of his reign, can hardly have been delayed to the eleventh year, and may have taken place before the death of Shimei] of building his own house [cf. ch. vii. 7] and the house of the Lord [cf. ch. vi. ; vii. 51] and the wall of Jerusalem round about. [Probably, he both strengthened and extended the city walls, as Josephus (Ant. viii. 6. 1) affirms. Acc. to the LXX. addition to ch. xii., it was on this task that Jeroboam was employed (ch. xi. 27; cf. ix. 15). David had fortified a part of the city (2 Sam. v. 9).

Ver. 2.—Only [The word perhaps signifies "that there was one exception to the flourishing condition of things which the writer has been describing" (Rawlinson), though the people are nowhere blamed for sacrificing on the high places, and Solomon's sacrifice at "the great high place" was full of blessing. The idea rather is that just as he was obliged to bring his Egyptian wife into the city of David, because his palace was not yet finished, so the people were compelled to sacrifice on the high places, because the temple was not yet built (Keil), and "the place" where God would put His name had only just been chosen (1 Chron. xxii. 1)] the people sacrificed [Heb. *were sacrificing*, *i.e.*, habitually, constantly] in high places [All nations have chosen hill tops for acts of worship, perhaps as being nearer heaven. "Even Abraham built an altar to the Lord on a mountain near Bethel (Gen.

xi. 7, 8; cf. xxii. 2, 9; xxxi. 54.)” And the use of high places for this purpose was not *distinctly* condemned in the Law. It is true the Hebrews were commanded to have but one place of sacrifice (Lev. xvii. 9; Deut. xii. 5, 11, 13, 26, 27; cf. Jos. xxii. 29), and this no doubt was, if not an indirect prohibition, a discouragement of such sanctuaries. It has been held, however, that this command was purely prospective, and it is certainly remarkable that even when the Israelites were settled in the promised land, and the tabernacle was set up (Josh. xviii. 1), altars were constantly built and sacrifices offered on high places, and sometimes, as in the case of Gideon (Judg. vi. 26), and Manoah (*ib.* xiii. 19, 20), by express Divine command. Later on we find Samuel (1 Sam. vii. 9, 10; xi. 15; xvi. 5), Saul (xiii. 9; xiv. 35), David (1 Chron. xxi. 26), Solomon and Elijah (1 Kings xviii. 30), offering sacrifices in various places, which they could not possibly have done had it seemed to them that this was condemned beforehand by the Law. It is highly probable, therefore, that though the contemporaries of Joshua took a different view (as Josh. xxii. 15—31 proves), the men of a later age excused themselves on the ground stated in the text, that “there was no house built unto the name of the Lord.” It has been held by some that “had they not sacrificed and burnt incense on high places, they could not have sacrificed or burnt incense at all” (Bp. Horsley); but this seems to overlook the fact that there was one place provided for sacrifices—the door of the tabernacle—and that for some reason or other they sacrificed elsewhere. And the reason, no doubt, was the one assigned by the historian. It should be added that this term “high place” (בָּמֹת) came to be used of *all* places of worship, not only on heights, but even those in valleys (2 Kings xvii. 9; Jer. vii. 31; xxxii. 35). The Bamah sometimes consisted of an altar only, but as a rule, there was a shrine or sanctuary erected hard by (ch. xiii. 32; 2 Kings xvii. 29; xxiii. 19), the *Beth-Bamah*, for which the word *Bamah* is sometimes loosely employed (ch. xi. 7; xiv. 23; 2 Kings xxi. 3)], because there was no house built unto the name of the Lord until those days.

Ver. 3.—And Solomon loved the Lord [thus keeping the first and great commandment, the “Shema Israel” (Deut. vi. 5; cf. xxx. 16; Matt. xxii. 37; Luke x. 27), walking in the statutes of David his father [*i.e.*, those which David had kept (verses 6, 14) and commanded him to keep (ch. ii. 4)]: only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places. [These words clearly show that the worship of the high places, although condoned, and

indeed accepted, by God (ver. 5) was not strictly lawful and right. It was an ignorance that God winked at. The historian, remembering what the worship of the high places became, notices this as an imperfection of Solomon’s early reign, though he does not say that such worship was sinful.

Ver. 4.—And the king went to Gibeon [Josh. ix. 3; x. 2; xviii. 25; xxi. 17; 2 Sam. xxi. 1. Now known as *El-Jib*, a commanding eminence (as the name implies) some six miles north of Jerusalem. Strictly, it consists of *two* heights, on one of which, it is conjectured, the town stood, while the other was the high place. Solomon was accompanied to Gibeon by “all the congregation,” including the captains, judges, governors, &c. (2 Chron. i. 2, 3] to sacrifice there [This religious service was designed to inaugurate his reign (2 Chron. i. 13), after the precedent of 1 Sam. xi. 15; cf. 2 Sam. vi. 2. His object was also to supplicate the Divine blessing on his undertakings. If his visit served at the same time as a farewell, or “honourable funeral to the tabernacle” (Wordsw.) this was an accident]; for that was the great high place [being the place of the tabernacle and brazen altar. In 1 Sam. xxi. 6 we find the tabernacle at Nob, though without the ark (1 Sam. iv. 2). After the massacre of the priests it lost the ephod (1 Sam. xxii. 20; xxiii. 6). It could hardly remain in a spot stained by so much blood; but how or when it found its way to Gibeon, we do not know. See 1 Chron. xvi. 37, 39; 2 Chron. i. 3—6]: a thousand burnt offerings [such numbers were not infrequent at festivals. See on ch. viii. 62, and cf. 2 Chron. xxix. 33, 34. Rawlinson reminds us that “Xerxes offered 1000 oxen at Troy” (Herod. vii. 43).] did Solomon offer [not, of course, personally, as some (Ewald, *e.g.*) have supposed. He is said to have “offered” them, because he [together with the congregation, perhaps] provided them. The immense number alone shows that he cannot have offered in person. The festival probably lasted for seven or eight days, but even then a thousand victims can hardly have been offered whole (עֹלֹת) unless the altar was greatly enlarged, or additional temporary altars were erected. This latter supposition is not negatived by the next words. See on ch. viii. 63, 64.] upon that altar.

Ver. 5.—In Gibeon the Lord appeared unto Solomon in a dream [cf. Num. xii. 6. A vision is not necessarily implied (as in Gen. xxviii. 12; cf. xv. 12), though he may have seen some angelic form (*angelus in Dei nomine ei apparuit loquens*. Grotius)—of course, only in his dream. Cf. Matt. i. 20; ii. 12. Probably “appeared” is the equivalent of “revealed Himself.” Bähr]

by night; and God said, Ask what I shall give thee [cf. Matt. vii. 7. This was the answer to the sacrifices. The night was probably that which followed the last day on which they were offered (ver. 15).]

Ver. 6.—And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto [Heb. *wrought with*] thy servant David my father great mercy [marg., *favour*] according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee [cf. 2 Kings xx. 3, where Hezekiah uses much the same language of himself. Also ch. xi. 4], and thou hast kept for him this great kindness [Heb. *favour*; same word as above. David himself had regarded this as a singular mercy (ch. i. 48)], that thou hast given him a son to sit [Heb. *sitting*] upon his throne, as it is this day. [Same expression Deut. vi. 24; viii. 18; 1 Sam. xxii. 8; 1 Para ix. 7.]

Ver. 7.—And now, O Lord my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father; and I am but [Heb. *and I . . .*] a little child: [These words are generally understood as indicating Solomon's humility rather than his age. No doubt, there is some exaggeration in the expression, which manifestly is not to be taken *au pied de la lettre*; at the same time it is questionable whether such words would be used of himself by a young man of twenty, which Solomon is commonly supposed to have been. See on ch. ii. 2, and xii. 8.] I know not how to go out or come in. [The same phrase is found in the Pentateuch, Deut. xxviii. 6; xxxi. 2. Also in 1 Sam. xviii. 13; 2 Sam. iii. 25; Ps. cxxi. 8. It is the formula for expressing behaviour, conduct, the outward life of man.]

Ver. 8.—And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen [see Deut. vii. 6], a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. [The promise of Gen. xiii. 16; xv. 5, lived in the thoughts and language of the Jews, and were doubtless the original of this expression. Cf. also Num. xxiii. 10.]

Ver. 9.—Give therefore thy servant an understanding [Heb. *hearing*]. Cf. ver. 11 (Heb. "to hear judgment.") The idea is not docility, as the Vulg. (*cor docile*). but discrimination, penetration. Cf. 2 Sam. xiv. 17 (Heb.); Phil. i. 9, 10 (marg.) heart [i.e., a judicial mind. The "hearing heart" was desired, not that it might "give heed to the law" (Keil), but to qualify him] to judge thy people [The Hebrew king, like most ancient monarchs, was supreme judge as well as governor ("prince and judge," Exod. li. 14; and cf. Exod. xviii. 16). The Jews desired a king that he might judge them (1 Sam. viii. 5). Their rulers so far had

been purely "Judges" (דִּבְרֵי); compare the Carthaginian name, *suffetes*.) When they desired one who should lead their armies, they still put his judicial functions in the first place (*loc. cit.* ver. 20). And what were the duties of a king in this respect, Absalom's words (2 Sam. xv. 4) show. In vers. 16—28 we see Solomon sitting as Chief Justice, that I may discern between good and bad [i.e., right and wrong, true and false; cf. Heb. v. 14]: for who is able to judge this thy so great [Heb. *heavy*, i.e., numerous; compare *graves greges*] a people. [The number of the Israelites at this period is referred to in ch. iv. 20.]

Ver. 10.—And the speech [Heb. *thing*; same word as below] pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this thing. [Though in a dream the judgement and will were not suspended. Our dreams accord with our waking thoughts. This would have been Solomon's choice at any time.]

Ver. 11.—And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life [Heb. *many days*]; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life [i.e., destruction in battle] of thine enemies [not so much personal enemies, like Hadad and Rezon, (Rawlinson) as military foes. The meaning is explained by the corresponding word, "honour" (כְּבוֹד *glory*) in ver. 13]; but hast asked [The word is repeated, according to Hebrew usage, now for the sixth time] for thyself understanding to discern [Heb. *hear*; see on ver. 9] judgment,

Ver. 12.—Behold, I have done according to thy words [i.e., granted thy prayer, as the next words show]: lo [Heb. *behold*] I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart, so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. [Cf. 1 Chron. xxix. 25; 2 Chron. ix. 22. But there is no need to restrict the reference to kings and princes.]

Ver. 13.—And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honour [Heb. *glory*]; so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days.

Ver. 14.—And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk [ver. 6; xv. 4. This is the Divine confirmation of David's words to his son (ch. ii. 3, 4) and of the son's description of his father's piety (ver. 6 *supra*)], then I will lengthen thy days [Solomon's days were not of an unusual length, as he can hardly have been more than sixty (if so much), although called 72] (ch. xi. 4) at the time of his

decease. But he had not fulfilled the condition (ch. xi. 9—12).

Ver. 15.—And Solomon awoke; and, behold, it was a dream [That is to say, this passed while Solomon *slept*; but it was more than a dream. The same words are used of Pharaoh (Gen. xii. 7) when God showed him what He was about to do (vers. 25, 28, cf. ch. xl. 8), and this was such a dream as Pharaoh's and as Joseph's (Matt. i. 20; ii. 19). It was a dream, *i.e.*, in which a Divine revelation was made to him. Wordsw. refers to Solomon's words, "I sleep, but my heart waketh" (Cant. v. 2), and "He giveth to his beloved (Jedidiah) in sleep" (Ps. cxvii. 2)]. And he came to Jerusalem, and stood before

the ark of the covenant [the other sanctuary of that period (2 Sam. vi. 17; 1 Chron. xvi. 37—40)] and offered up burnt offerings [probably in continuation of the sacrifices of Gibeon, ver. 4], and offered peace offerings [in testimony of his thankfulness for the signal favour recently vouchsafed to him] and made a feast [lit., a *drinking*. After the example of David, 1 Chron. xvi. 3. Cf. 1 Kings viii. 65. It was not exclusively a *symposium*. The flesh of the animals offered in sacrifice was eaten by the worshippers and their guests (Lev. vii. 15, 31; 1 Sam. ii. 16; 1 Cor. viii. 13). This was "a sacrificial meal of the דְּבַר־הַשֶּׁמֶן" (Keil). See on ch. viii. 63] to all his servants.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 8.—*The Grace and Place of Love.* "And Solomon loved the Lord, walking in all the statutes of David his father, only . . . he sacrificed," &c.

Of how many men, as well as of the wisest of men, may some such words be used. Of some few it may perhaps be averred that they have loved the Lord "with a perfect heart," of fewer still, if any, that they have loved Him with all the heart, and all the mind, and all the soul, and all the strength. But in the case of most, a qualifying clause must be added, an "*only*." Along with sincere piety, with devout love to Him who first loved us, how often are there found imperfections, infirmities, sins. Sometimes, *e.g.*, the loved is tinged with superstition, as in the case of St. Theresa, Lacordaire, and many Romanists; sometimes, as in the case of Calvin and many Protestants, it is marked by harshness and intolerance; sometimes, as in the case of Schleiermacher and Bunsen, it is infected with rationalism. The love, that is to say, is not without alloy; it is not the pure refined gold. In some of the blessed saints we find narrowness and bigotry, in others fanaticism; in others, again, Pharisaism and presumption. Now all these "love the Lord . . . only . . ." But observe. Solomon was loved of God; blessed, enriched, and prospered of God, despite this "only;" notwithstanding, *i.e.*, that his sacrifice and service were marked by imperfection. Hence learn—

I. THAT GOD LOVES THOSE WHO LOVE HIM, DESPITE THEIR IMPERFECTIONS. Of course God loves men who do *not* love Him. "God commendeth His love towards us in that while we were yet sinners," &c. We often say to children, "God doesn't love you when you are naughty," but this is vicious theology. If this were so, there had been no hope for our world. But He is good to the unthankful and evil. Yes, the love must *begin* with God. "We love Him because He *first* loved us." And the love that bore with our sins, in the days of our impotence, now bears also with our infirmities and ignorances. Neither superstition nor narrowness nor fanaticism "nor any other creature can separate us from the love of God," &c.

II. THAT GOD FORGIVES THOSE WHO LOVE HIM, NOTWITHSTANDING THEIR INFIRMITIES. It is not meant here that our love can make any atonement or reparation for our sins. We know of no merits or mediation but His. "Your sins are forgiven you for *His name's sake*." But where there is love, there is forgiveness (Luke vii. 47). Why, love involves penitence and faith, and ensures obedience. (Observe the next words, "Walking in all the statutes," &c.) Thus, the three conditions of forgiveness are all comprehended in love.

III. THAT GOD WILL RECEIVE THOSE WHO LOVE HIM, DESPITE THEIR IGNORANCES. The gate of heaven is never shut against love, and only love will open it.

"O merchant, at heaven's gate, for heavenly ware  
Love is the only coin that passes there."

It must be so, for "love is heaven, and heaven is love."

**IV. THAT WE OUGHT TO LOVE THOSE WHO LOVE GOD, DESPITE THEIR IGNORANCES, INFIRMITIES, AND IMPERFECTIONS.** If the Eternal Love overlooks our “*only*,” surely we ought to overlook the “*only*” of others. We may regret their views, we may think them unsound in the faith, we may lament their superstition, their lack of “sweetness and light,” their vulgarity, or fanaticism, but if God loves them, and receives them notwithstanding, what right have we to do otherwise? If they love our Lord, then they are entitled to our love. “Grace be unto all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.” We find, consequently, in the religion both of the Old Testament and of the New—

V. **THAT LOVE IS EVERYTHING.** It is 1. *The fulfilling of the law* (Rom. xiii. 8. 10; Matt. xxii. 37—40). We cannot break the law if we love. “*Habe caritatem et fac quicquid vis*,” said St. Augustine. 2. *The stamp and seal royal of the Christian.* “He that loveth, is born of God.” “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love,” &c. It has been said, “*Pectus est quod theologum facit*.” It is equally true that the heart makes the *Christian*. 3. *The glory of the man.* It was the greatest glory of Solomon. The highest praise recorded of him is, not that “he was wiser than all men” (ch. iv. 31), nor yet that he “exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and wisdom” (ch. x. 33), but that he loved the Lord. “The best thing that can be said of a man is that he loves God.” Solomon in all his glory is not greater than the poorest of the saints. 4. *The one thing needful.* The one thing God demands is the *heart*. (Adelaide Procter’s beautiful poem, “*Give me thy heart*,” affords a fine illustration here.) It is the mainspring of the man. The life depends on the heart. In the reign of Queen Elizabeth, when the Roman Catholics were commanded to attend Church under pains and penalties, some of their leaders applied to the Pope for guidance. “Let the Catholics of England,” was the astute reply, “give me their hearts, and the Queen may do what she likes with the rest.”

**Vers. 5—15.—God’s Gifts and Solomon’s Choice.** “And God said, Ask what I shall give thee,” &c. “Happy Solomon!” we exclaim, as we read these words. He had all that *earth* could give already—youth, wealth, prosperity, glory, greatness. He stood already on the topmost pinnacle of human felicity. And now *Heaven* offers him his choice of blessings; now the treasure-house of the infinite God is opened, and he is bidden to take what he will. Behold the favourite of Heaven! It is indeed true “there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee” (ver. 12). But stay! Solomon’s is not an exceptional case. If we have not his temporal advantages, we may share his spiritual blessings. For to us—to all, that is, who, like Solomon, “love the Lord”—does the same voice speak, saying, “Ask what I shall give thee.” Yes; He who spake to this new-crowned king in the night visions hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, saying, “Ask, and it shall be given you.” Let us consider—

I. **LIKE SOLOMON, WE ARE COMMANDED TO ASK.** It is not that we are *permitted* so to do: it is made a positive duty. If we do not ask, we *sin*. “Ask,” “seek,” “knock”—these are the injunctions of our Lord and Master. Asking is an essential part of our religion. “Prayer is the Christian’s vital breath.”

II. **LIKE SOLOMON, WE HAVE BUT TO ASK, AND GOD WILL GIVE.** Solomon was *not* a favourite of Heaven. God has no favourites—that would argue imperfection in the Deity. “*Every one that asketh receiveth*,” &c. “*Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord*,” &c. “If *any of you* lack wisdom, let him ask of God, . . . and it shall be given him.” If we have not wisdom, blessing, pardon, peace, it is all for want of asking. God is “more ready to hear than we to pray.” And observe here: we are commanded to ask, and God is sure to give, because He loves to give; it is His nature and property to give. Not only (as has been beautifully said) is “the greatest Being in the world the greatest giver,” but it is an essential part of His perfections to give. We often say “It is more blessed to give than to receive,” but God *acts* on this principle. It is the nature of man to take. The first lesson the child learns is to grasp. Covetousness, the desire to have, is a part of our being. It is a part of His being to desire to impart. He abhors a vacuum.

III. LIKE AHAZ, MANY SAY, "I WILL NOT ASK." They will not believe in the wonderful charity of God. To some it seems too good to be true. But many have no room for God's gifts. Their heart is full already. "No room for *Him* in the inn."

IV. LIKE SOLOMON, LET US ASK THE BEST GIFTS. That is an instructive fable which tells how Hercules, on attaining manhood, went out into solitude, and sitting down there, deliberated long and anxiously with himself which of the two ways before him it were better to take—the way of pleasure, or the way of virtue. Such a crisis, involving such a choice, happens in every life. Solomon must now make his choice, and it really lies between pleasure and duty, between temporal and eternal blessings. He may choose glory, wealth, renown—in a word, earthly pleasure and prosperity—or he may choose character, wisdom, goodness; in other words, heavenly and abiding treasure. We know which he chose. So each one of us has to choose in turn between the showy and the solid, between the higher and the lower, between God and Mammon.

"Once to every man and nation, comes the moment to decide  
In the strife of Truth with Falsehood, for the good or evil side.

Then it is the brave man chooses, while the coward stands aside,  
Doubting in his abject spirit, till his Lord is crucified."

V. IF, LIKE SOLOMON, WE CHOOSE THE BEST GIFTS, THE OTHER AND INFERIOR BLESSINGS ARE THROWN IN WITH THEM. Consider: God gave Solomon wisdom because he asked for it, and at the same time gave him wealth because he did not ask for it. His choice of the higher showed he was fit to be entrusted with the lower. The gifts men covet most, viz., "riches and honour," are of so little account with God that He adds them as a make-weight. Just as when we buy a jewel the case is thrown in as part of the purchase, so those who choose the better part receive at the same time all that is necessary for them. "Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and *all these things shall be added unto you.*" And here again observe, that not only is it God's nature to give, but to give "exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think." He is "wont to do more than either we desire or deserve." Thus the disciples asked for a form of prayer (Luke xi. 1). Our blessed Lord gave them their desire, and gave at the same time what they never dreamed of asking—some precious directions as to the spirit of prayer, as to perseverance in prayer, &c. (*ib.* vers. 5—13). The same idea is embodied in a stanza of Wordsworth's—

"I knelt before Thy gracious throne,  
And asked for peace with suppliant knee;  
And peace was given; *not peace alone,*  
*But love and joy and ecstasy."*

It was in the night visions that God spoke to Solomon. It is in no dream, no vision, but in His own written word, He says to us, "Ask what I shall give thee." Which shall we imitate, Solomon or Ahaz? Shall we have all or none? But it may be said, Solomon's wisdom did him no great service after all. His prayer did not keep him from falling. But why was this? It was just because he ceased to care for wisdom and piety, and ceased to ask for it. Learn, then, in conclusion—

VI. IF, LIKE SOLOMON, WE CEASE TO COVET THE BEST GIFTS, AND CARE ONLY FOR THE LOWER, WE SHALL CERTAINLY LOSE THE FORMER, AND MAY POSSIBLY LOSE BOTH. So that Solomon's prayer may teach us this last lesson, that "men ought always to pray, and not to faint." Yes, it seems, as we think of the beginning and then of the end of this puissant prince—it seems as if his father's last words must have been prophetic—"If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever" (1 Chron. xxviii. 9); and Solomon's fall solemnly echoes and emphasizes the words which follow—O that he had laid them to heart!—"Take heed now" (ver. 10).

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

**Vers. 8—16; iv. 2—34.—The prayer of Solomon and its fulfilment. "Ask what I shall give thee."**

THE PRAYER OF SOLOMON IS THE TYPE OF TRUE PRAYER. We learn from it (1) The power of prayer; (2) The condition on which it is granted; (3) Its result.

I. THE POWER. "Prayer," said Adolphe Monod, "sets in motion the whole power of God." The words of God to Solomon show us this Almighty power, placing itself, as it were, at the disposition of human weakness. When the Son of God came to earth, taking upon Himself our frail humanity, that He might perfectly sympathize with all its woes, He spoke in the same way to the poor blind Bartimæus: "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" (Mark x. 51). Before going back to heaven He addressed the same language to His disciples: "*Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you*" (John xvi. 23). Let us then ask all that we need with holy boldness, for it is God Himself who bids us do so. Like the father of the prodigal son, He always comes to meet us. Our hopes and desires can never be so large as His promises. We truly honour Him when we make His love the measure of our trust.

II. THE CONDITIONS ON WHICH OUR PRAYERS ARE GRANTED ARE: (a) Full trust in this infinite love, and grateful remembrance of favours received: "Thou hast showed unto David my father great mercy . . . and hast given him a son to sit on his throne" (ver. 6). (b) The consciousness of our own helplessness and weakness: "*I am but as a little child, and know not how to go out or come in*" (ver. 7). (c) The precedence given to spiritual over temporal gifts: "*Give thy servant an understanding heart*" (ver. 9). Prayer is not intended to bring to us at once all material prosperity. Such an answer to prayer might be often injurious, hardening the heart, and depriving us of the salutary discipline of trial. If the thing we sought beyond all else was material prosperity, we should be mere mercenaries. We are always heard, but not always in the way we desire, so far as our earthly life is concerned. But when we ask of God a new and understanding heart, we are asking that which He is pledged to grant, for it is written: "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not."

III. THE RESULT OF THE PRAYER OF SOLOMON was not only the spiritual grace he sought, but also the prosperity and glory of his reign. "I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked" (ver. 13). There is a general application both to individuals and nations of the words of Christ: "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you" (Matt. vi. 33), with the exception of afflictions, which may be necessary as discipline, and on the condition that we walk in the ways of the Lord (ver. 14), for the mercy of God, free as it is, is still bound up with His holiness, and cannot suffer the violation of His laws.—E. DE P.

**Vers. 5—16.—A wise prayer.** Gibeon, the scene of this incident, was one of the "high places" of the land. Worship in high places had been forbidden. Law against it not rigidly enforced until the place was chosen "where the Lord would cause his name to dwell." That Solomon's act in sacrificing at Gibeon was not condemned is proved by his being favoured with this direct Divine communication. Every scene of real worship may become the scene of special Divine manifestation. "The Lord appeared unto Solomon in a dream of the night." Whatever our theory of these dreams of the olden times, it was evidently an articulate and intelligible Divine communication that Solomon had, and his spirit was intensely active. His choice of wisdom rather than riches, &c., was an act of judgment, a decision of the will, and therefore indicative of moral character. The whole spirit of his prayer most honourable to him. The prayer is, in a sense, answered before it is presented. Every holy yearning of the pious soul contains within itself the pledge of its own fulfilment.

I. THE NATURE OF TRUE WISDOM. A power of moral discernment. "An under-

standing heart to judge," &c. This was the virtue of Solomon's prayer—it craved a *moral* rather than mere circumstantial, or even intellectual, endowment. He had the wisdom of the man of science, the "minute philosopher" (see chap. iv. 83). But higher wisdom was wanted for higher work—for guiding and governing the people—and this is what he prayed for. Little trace in Solomon of the pure, fervent spirit of devotion that glowed in his father David. The yearning of David's heart was not so much for wisdom as for holiness. But Solomon has a lofty ideal of kingly rule before him, and this is how he seeks to realize it.

1. Wisdom is a *practical* quality; not merely theoretical; consists less in true ideas than in the ability to embody them in a real and living form; not knowledge or insight, but power to turn what is known and understood to highest account. In common affairs of life—in matters of business, science, art—how many clever theoretical men are there whose cleverness never takes a tangible, practical form! You can point to nothing that they have ever *done* as a worthy expression of their native capacity. Only in a qualified sense are such men "wise." How much more in the higher sphere of moral and religious life. Here also a science and an art, the ideal and the practical. Wisdom is the combination of the two. It is thought and it is life—the science of spiritual truth and reality married to the divine art of living under the influence of what is real and true.

2. *Wisdom deals with those eternal principles that underlie the surface appearances of life.* The judgment of Solomon in the dispute between the two women about the child (verse 16 to end) is suggestive here. Its peculiarity is, that instead of trusting to appearances to decide the doubt, he leaves the decision to the deep instinct of the mother's nature, *i.e.*, his wisdom is seen in calling to its aid a principle profounder and less fallible than itself. Apply this to the higher conduct of life. We want something more reliable than our own observation or reason as a guide. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." **Lay hold on God. Walk by faith. Let there be a divine element in your life:**

"There is more wisdom in a whisper'd prayer  
Than in the ancient lore of all the schools."

How great the wisdom of him whose whole daily life is a heaven-ascending prayer!

II. THE DIVINE ORIGIN OF WISDOM. "Ask what I shall give thee." God is the infinite Fount of Wisdom, and He "gives" from His exhaustless fulness. "The Father of Lights." What a world of wonders is the book of Nature! What creative thought, constructive skill, wise adaptation are here! A world of profounder wonders is the Book of Truth. "O the depth of the riches," &c. But this is *revelation*; we have to think of *impartation*. God will *give* wisdom. "Ask what I shall give thee." "If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God," &c. All true light that guides man in any right path is His gift. Most of all those right thoughts, high aspirations, holy energies, which are the very life of men. Man can only *disclose* his mental riches. The philosopher cannot "give" the rustic wisdom, nor the father or teacher the child. God sheds the light of His Spirit into the soul. "If ye being evil," &c.

III. THE ABUNDANT REWARD OF WISDOM. "And I have also given thee," &c. (ver. 13). God's beneficence exceeds the expectations of His children. "Able to do exceeding abundantly," &c. (Eph. iii. 20). "Seek ye first the kingdom of God," &c. (Matt. vi. 33). —W.

Ver. 5.—SERMON FOR CHILDREN. *Waiting for God's voice.* Little children are sometimes intended to do great things. God has a special place for everyone to fill. Sometimes the child who is least thought of in the home or in the class is to have the noblest destiny. Two brothers once lived in the same tent. One was brave and manly, a great hunter, and a popular, generous man, but his younger and feebler brother, Jacob, became greater than he. In Jesse's family at Bethlehem there were young men, tall, comely, and heroic, yet their shepherd brother, whom they despised, was chosen to be their king. Now in David's own family God made His choice; and overlooking the beautiful Absalom, and the ambitious Adonijah,

he selected Solomon, their youngest and gentlest brother, to be king over one of the richest kingdoms in the world, and to rule His own people in the time of their greatest prosperity. It may be that some lads here, who are little thought of, may become the leaders of a nation to a nobler life, the teachers of their age, to whom the world will gladly listen. But whatever sphere you have to fill, you will only be ready to fill it well when you begin, as Solomon began his reign, by listening to the voice of God. This was the most interesting part of Solomon's life. He was now at his best. Ascending his father's throne, he was conscious of his responsibility, and asked God to give him wisdom (James i. 5, 6). In youth our future is generally decided. If we go wrong then, it is not easy to be set right. An injury done to a living thing during its growing time is irreparable. The man who was crippled when he was a child, the tree blasted when it was a sapling, cannot by any subsequent care be made straight and whole. Solomon, however, started well—going up to the ancient tabernacle in Gibeon, to offer sacrifice to the Lord.

Let us see *what preparation Solomon had for the dream spoken of here.* Many a child says, "I wish God would come to me, and tell me I might ask for whatever I liked. I often say my prayers, but God does not seem real to me. I never see Him or hear Him." You will not see Him as did Solomon, nor hear Him as did Samuel. But you may feel Him in your thoughts—in the prompting to do right, or to speak the truth when doing this may get you into trouble; and in the relief and rest you know after telling God about the sorrow you have. [Quote part of Faber's hymn: "Dear Jesus, ever at my side." Tell some story of a child who has found help, relief, and rest in prayer. This will bring the old story of Solomon near to the experience of children.]

Three things prepared Solomon for listening to God.

**I. SOLOMON HAD COME FROM WORSHIP.** Describe the old tabernacle, now pitched on the top of the hill at Gibeon; the coming of the procession of nobles, soldiers, priests, &c., to the sacred festival; the offering of the thousand victims; the song of praise, the united prayers, &c. This worship prepared the young king for his dream. Children go to Sunday schools who are seldom found in God's house. Trace the lads and girls leaving the senior classes to spend their Sundays in pleasure and sin—their forced merriment, their aching hearts. Trying to forget God, they are not prepared to see Him as Solomon did. Contrast with this the day spent in *worship*. The children whose hearts are uplifted by songs of praise, who have been hearing of the love of God in Christ, who have been reminded of those who knew the Lord, are prepared to say, as Samuel said, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth!"

**II. SOLOMON WAS ALONE WITH GOD.** The crowd had dispersed. The shouts, and songs, and music were silent. The stars shone down on the camp, and in his own royal tent the young king had retired to rest. As he slept he dreamed, and a happy night followed a holy day. Dreams were often used by God in olden days. Give examples. These were overruled, but they were natural. A dream is the product of familiar thoughts. Boys don't dream of protoplasm, of which they know nothing, but of cricket, lessons, companions, &c. The elements of a dream are in the mind before sleep; e.g., the Midianitish soldier dreamt of a barley cake, which was his ordinary food; the Egyptian butler, of Pharaoh's cup; the baker, of his white baskets of bakemeats, &c. So Solomon had been thinking about his kingdom—the greatness of his father, the overruling providence of God; he had been filled with a desire to rule wisely, had been fired with devotion during the day, and all these things re-appeared in his dream. If you have never had such dream, you have had quiet times when you were ill, or before going to rest, when God seemed real to you. Recall the first time when the old form of prayer had a new meaning, when God seemed close, and loving, and gracious. An example from child life may be readily found.

**III. SOLOMON WAS LISTENING TO GOD,** who said, "Ask what I shall give thee." Sometimes children wish that the fairies, of whom they read, actually existed; that one, with her fair form and beautiful wand, would come and say, "Ask what I shall give thee." Many, like Cinderella, would exchange drudgery for glitter.

God does not do this. If He did, many of us would ignorantly ask for foolish things. We do not know what we shall be doing or wanting even to-morrow. If you were going abroad and did not know for what country you were destined, nor even whether it was hot or cold, civilized or uncivilized, it would not be wise to provide things on the chance they might be useful. You might get weapons of defence for a country where they would not be wanted, and have to wear in the tropics clothing only suited to the polar seas. It would not be really kind for your father to say, "Now go into that shop, and get whatever you like." You would say, "No, thank you; as you know where I am going, and I don't, I would rather trust you; though if *you* think it would be good, I should like this, or that." So we are taught to pray to our Heavenly Father. Give examples. Sometimes God does give us what we foolishly choose, as the father did to the prodigal, and then sorrow teaches us the folly of our self-will. The freedom to ask anything can only be given safely to those who are like Solomon. He had just given himself up to God as a living sacrifice, and had asked God to accept him and use him for His service; for it was this which he expressed by his offering of a thousand burnt sacrifices. (Romans xii. 1.) If you can say in your heart, "Lord, I want to become like Jesus Christ, and always to be obedient to Thy will; I long to be earnest and humble, and pure, and loving, and to live altogether for Thee;" then He says, of all that will keep you toward that, "Ask and ye shall receive, and your joy shall be full."

*Show the necessity of prayer to children; point out their special temptations to neglect it; and close by the story of Esther going into the king's presence with trembling, only to see the golden sceptre extended, and to hear the gracious encouragement, "What is thy petition, and what is thy request? and it shall be done unto thee!" "When thou saidst, 'Seek ye my face,' my heart said unto Thee, 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek.'"*—A. R.

**Vers. 6, 7.**—*The reverent prayer of a royal petitioner.* Solomon had a more peaceful reign and greater outward glory than David. Yet much is said in Scripture about the father, and little about the son. This revelation of God's truth about men and things is less concerned with splendid surroundings than with secret struggles. Few, if any, are made great by splendour. Hence a few verses suffice to tell of Solomon's ships and palaces, and gold and ivory; but many chapters are devoted to accounts of David's temptations, deliverances, and prayers. We have God's estimate of Solomon's magnificence in the memorable words of Christ, "Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these." From these words we infer that human greatness does not claim God's regard, but that He cares for lilies as well as for kings; so that from none of us, however lowly our lot, is the privilege of prayer, granted to Solomon, withheld.

*The prayer before us was characterized by the following excellences:—*

**I. GRATITUDE.** (Ver. 6.) Solomon thanked God for what his father had been. David was far from being a sinless man, but his son loyally veiled his faults, and praised God for what he had been to himself and others. What reasons for gratitude many have in this respect. Loving care during the feebleness of infancy; provision for education, &c., often the result of habitual self-denial; protection of the home not only from physical, but from moral evils, in the shape of bad literature, companions, &c. These are the ordinary blessings from parenthood, but often there are more than these, *e.g.*, the moral heritage of wholesome tendencies; the good name, to be chosen rather than great riches; the repression of evil, and encouragement of good habits of thought and action; the counsels and warnings to the inexperienced; the Christian truth revealed in the holy life, proclaimed by the loving lips. Few blessings are greater than these; but few are less thankfully recognized. Gratitude should reveal itself in tender consideration, in graceful courtesies, in prompt obedience, &c., in the home, and should express itself in praise to the Giver of all good gifts. [This is but an example of subjects for gratitude: others may be suggested.]

II. SOLEMNITY. The young king seemed overwhelmed with a sense of responsibility. He was about to succeed a father renowned as a warrior, as a statesman, as a poet, as a ruler of men. He was about to rule a numerous and prosperous people, who had been specially declared to be the Lord's, so that he would be henceforth the representative of Jehovah. He foresaw that there would be snares not easy to avoid, difficulties hard to surmount; and therefore he dared not go forward without the prayer, "O God of my father, stand by me." Contrast this with the light spirit in which life-work is often undertaken. Describe a father about to vacate his plan in business, or in the Church, whose honour has been unstained, who has been a king amongst men, and urge on any who are about to succeed to such an inheritance the responsibility incurred, that they may feel "who is sufficient for these things?" To go on to unknown temptations, to unattempted duties, in a flippant, godless spirit, is to show the foolhardiness of the captain who, in strange waters, wrecks his vessel on the hidden shoal, because he scorns to employ a pilot.

III. HOPEFULNESS. In ver. 4 he tacitly refers to what God had done for his father, as an example and pledge of what God could do for him. He implies that the promise, like the throne, came by inheritance. This was the teaching of the patriarchal dispensation. It was not withdrawn by Christ, who came "not to destroy, but to fulfil." Hence, in the first sermon preached after the baptism of the Church by the Holy Spirit, Peter refers to, and endorses for this dispensation, the declaration of Joel, "The promise is unto you, and to your children." Show how the privileges of Christian parentage keep pace with its responsibilities. What God had been to David was a sign to Solomon, his son, of what God would do for him; and therefore he prayed with eager hope.

IV. HUMILITY. "I am but a little child." Solomon had enough to make him proud. He was immensely rich, was flattered by courtiers, was obeyed by a disciplined army, was strikingly handsome (Psalm xlv.), and was at an age (twenty years old) when no one thinks least of himself. But he recognized that God made him what he was ("Thou hast made Thy servant king"), and that, so far as wisdom and ability were concerned, he was "but a little child." Such has been the spirit of all truly great men, e.g., Moses, when called in Midian (Exod. iii. 11); Isaiah, when he saw the Lord in the temple (Isa. vi.); Jeremiah, when invested with prophetic office (Jer. i.) This humility should characterize all who approach God. Refer to the Pharisee and publican (Luke xviii. 10—14); also to declaration that except we become as little children we cannot enter the kingdom. Contrast Solomon with his brothers, Absalom and Adonijah. He was content to wait God's time, and so was prepared for the place prepared for him. The chrysalis waits—is kept back—in its inactive stage, till both the wings are ready for the sunshine, and the sunshine ready for the wings. Humbly let us wait for the higher spheres of earth and the highest spheres of heaven.—A. R.

Vers. 9—13. *The wisdom of Solomon's choice.* Solomon was never more kingly than when he made this choice. Subsequently he became enervated by prosperity, corrupted by heathen associations, &c., but now he ruled as a king over himself. The bright promise of life is often gradually overcast, till it ends in the gloom of a hopeless night. Examples from Scripture, e.g., Saul the King, Esau. It is well to know the kind of choice that "pleased the Lord." In Solomon's there was *true wisdom*, for it had these elements—

I. THE CHOICE WAS FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS RATHER THAN FOR THE ADVANTAGE OF HIMSELF. It was not like asking for knowledge and wisdom that he might himself be admired as a sage. This followed, but this he did not seek. He wished to rule God's people well for *their* good, and asked that he might do what was just in judgment, what was equitable in law. Such equity establishes any rule on a sure foundation. Our hold on India is chiefly due to the righteousness of our magistrates, and the trustworthiness of men like the Lawrences, Lord Mayo, &c. Natives would not hesitate to bring an action in one of our English law courts against an Englishman, so certain are they of even-handed justice. This Solomon

sought, and the peace and prosperity of his kingdom (ch. iv. 25) arose from the fact that God gave it him. To ask God to make us wise and capable for the sake of others, is a prayer consonant with His will. Unselfishness is commended and exalted under the new dispensation as it never was under the old. Christ Himself came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life "a ransom for many." The prayer of selfishness, greed, avarice, can never be put up in Christ's name.

II. THE CHOICE WAS MADE OF INWARD WORTH AND NOT OF OUTWARD SHOW. He did not ask for himself riches and honour. What will make us noble is always more readily given by God than what will make us wealthy. A wise father would rather that his son should be truthful than that he should win popularity among his schoolfellows by anything surreptitious and deceitful. So our heavenly Father cares little that we should make money, or win applause; but He cares much that we should be wise, and true, and loving; and these graces He will in no wise withhold from those who seek. Sometimes He answers our prayers for these inward blessings in modes we resent. The illness that throws us back upon Him, the failure that proves a man's life does not consist in the abundance of things that he possesseth, &c., may work in us the peaceable fruits of righteousness. The Lord Jesus, who was at once the King of Glory and the village carpenter, showed us this; and in the inward gladness His disciples experienced amid their outward woes, we have confirmation of it. Show how, in New Testament history, and in the lives of the saints, the words which begin the Sermon on the Mount have been fulfilled. Blessedness of the highest kind comes to the poor in spirit, to them that mourn, to the meek, to them which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, to the merciful, to the pure in heart, to the peacemakers, and even to those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake.

III. THE CHOICE MADE OF THE HIGHER BROUGHT WITH IT THE LOWER BLESSINGS. (Vers. 11—13.) Because Solomon asked wisdom God gave him that, but added to it wealth and honour. If we ask grace to fulfil our mission, and rightly do our life-work, our heavenly Father will see that we do not want for life's necessities. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." The teaching of Christ (Matt. vi. 24—34) goes to show that a man who is chiefly concerned to please God need have no anxiety or care about lower things. If God feeds the birds. He will feed you; if He clothes the lilies, He will clothe you; if He gives the life, He will give the "meat" that is less than life. Ask God for the higher blessings: pardon, righteousness, reverence, wisdom, &c., and He will give you not only these, but all things necessary for us, and all the riches and honours that are good for us.

Solomon's wisdom was great, but there has come into the world one greater than Solomon, more worthy far of our adoration and love. As the child in Nazareth, Jesus grew in wisdom, and in stature, and in favour with God and man. His wisdom was purer, deeper, truer than Solomon's, because it was united with purity of life, with victory over sin, and with sacrifice of self. He is the true Shelômôh, "the Prince of Peace;" the true Jedidiah, "the well beloved of the Father;" and to Him now let us humbly bow the knee, as to One worthy to be exalted both as Prince and Saviour.—A. R.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER III. 16—28.

IN this section we see how remarkably the gracious promise of Gibeon (ver. 12) was fulfilled. The "understanding to discern judgment" has been richly bestowed. And this, no doubt, is the reason why the story is related here. Ἐπιτείναι τὴν τοῦ βασιλεως ἐβουλήθη σοφίαν (Theodoret). It

is just possible, as Thenius maintains, that the narrative was handed down to a succeeding age by tradition, and was not incorporated into any of the documents from which our historian compiled his narrative; but this argues nothing against its authenticity or its inspiration. It is, as Bähr observes, a thoroughly Oriental story.

Ver. 16.—Then came there two women that were harlots [The Jewish writers here, as in the case of Rahab (Josh. ii. 1), would understand “hostess,” “inn-keeper” (סוּדָרָה, not סוּדָרָה, as Bähr, which = *παδοκείον*, “inn”). In support of which it is alleged that prostitutes never have children, or if they have are not solicitous about them. The meaning “hostess,” however (as if from סוּד, to feed), is not to be entertained for a moment, but we may readily admit that these children, though born out of wedlock, were not necessarily the offspring of professed harlots, though the fact that their mothers dwelt together and alone (ver. 17) is certainly suspicious; and see Gesen. s. v. סוּדָרָה]. Grotius, from Deut. xxiii. 17, concludes that they must have been foreigners. But it is equally probable that the law was constantly violated] unto the king [as supreme judge] and stood before him.

Ver. 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.

Ver. 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. [Emphasis is laid on this fact, as showing the possibility of the fraud and the impossibility of producing proof. Hebrew women have always required but little assistance in child-bearing. That which is written in Exodus i. 19 is true to this day.]

Ver. 19.—And this woman's child died in the night; because she overlaid it.

Ver. 20.—And she arose at midnight [rather, in the middle, *i.e.*, dead of the night. The sleeper could not know it was 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.

Ver. 21.—And when I rose in the morning [while it was still dusk] to give my child suck, behold it was dead; but when I had considered it in the morning [*i.e.*, in broad daylight; Vulg. *clara luce*] behold [this second “behold” marks a second discovery] it was not my son which I did bear.

Ver. 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. [It is somewhat difficult to account for the pertinacious claim to the child, preferred even before the king by the pretended mother. The most probable explanation is, that having taken the child in the first

instance on the spur of the moment, in order to avoid the reproach of having killed her offspring by her clumsiness and neglect, she found it difficult to draw back from her false position—which indeed she could not do without owning herself both child-stealer and liar—and so she put on a bold face and maintained the imposture even before the monarch himself. That she did not really care for the child is evident from ver. 26.] Thus they spake [Heb. “*And they spake*,” *i.e.*, affirmed and contradicted] before the king.

Ver. 23.—Then [promptly, without hesitation] said the king, The one saith [Heb. “*this is saying*,” *i.e.*, keeps saying] This 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.

Ver. 24.—And the king said, Bring me a sword. And they brought a [Heb. *the*; the sword, *i.e.*, of the executioner, or the sword for which he asked] sword before the king.

Ver. 25.—And the king said, Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one and half to the other [Heb. *one*].

Ver. 26.—Then spake the woman whose the living child was unto the king, for her bowels [thought by most of the ancients to be the seat of the affections, probably because of the sensations which strong emotions excite there. Cf. *τὰ σπλάγχνα* in the New Testament (2 Cor. vi. 12; Phil. ii. 1; Philem. 7, 20, &c.) yearned [Heb. *glowed*. We speak of “glowing with pity,” &c.] upon her son, and she said, O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it. But the other [Heb. *this*] said [Heb. *saying*] Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it. [The Hebrew is strikingly concise, “*divide*.” We have here by far the greatest difficulty in the story. When the pretender, who has clamoured for the child, is at last offered it by its mother, she refuses the gift and heartlessly urges that it shall be cut in two. We can only account for her strange conduct on the supposition that she caught eagerly at any way of escape from the dilemma in which she had placed herself, and thought, no doubt, that to accept his decision would be to flatter and please the king. (See Homiletics.)

Ver. 27.—Then the king answered and said [He simply echoes the exact words of the mother. This is clear from the fact that the word לְיָדָא = *natus*, “the one born,” here and in ver. 26 rendered “*child*,” is a very unusual one]. Give her the living child, and in no wise slay it [The LXX which reads “Give the child to her who said, Give

it to her," &c., obscures the evidently designed repetition] she is the mother thereof [Heb. *she, his mother*].

Ver. 28.—And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged, and they feared the king [*i.e.*, were impressed and awed by his almost supernatural penetration. Bähr refers to Luke iv. 36; viii. 25], for they saw that the wisdom of God [for which he asked (ver. 9) and which God

gave (ver. 12) was in him [Heb. *within him*] to do judgment. [Most of the commentators cite from Grotius, the familiar story found in Diodorus Siculus, of Ariopharnes, king of Thrace. Three youths claimed before this king each to be the son, and therefore successor, of a deceased king of the Cimmerians. He decided that that one was the real son who refused to cast a javelin at his father's corpse.]

### HOMILETICS.

Ver. 28. — *Solomon's Judgment a Foreshadowing of the Judgment to come.* Again we see in Solomon a type of the true "Son of David." The arraignment of the two harlots is an adumbration of the "great assize." This striking scene—the young king sitting on his throne, probably in a void place at the gate of the city, in the bright clear Eastern morning; around him his guards, counsellors, and ministers of state (ch. xii. 6); before him the two harlots and the helpless child—carries our thoughts to a day of storm and cloud, a day of darkness and dread, when the "Son of Man shall sit upon the throne of His glory," with "the holy angels" around Him and "all nations" before Him (St. Matt. xxv. 31). Let us see in this first judgment, then, an outline of the last. Observe:

I. THE JUDGE. It is (1) *the Son of David*. We do not read of David's judgments. This a duty which he was apparently remiss in discharging (2 Sam. xv.) He devolved the duty of judging and punishing upon his son (1 Kings ii. 1—10). Even so, the "Eternal Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son." Because He is the Son of David, *i.e.*, the Son of Man, our Lord will judge the sons of men. The Judge is, therefore, one who knows us, one who feels for us. It is (2) *the wisest of men*. "He was wiser than all men" (ch. iv. 31). The wisdom of God was in him to do judgment (ch. iii. 28). But the Judge of men and angels not only *has*, but *is* the Wisdom of God (Prov. ix. ; 1 Cor. i. 24). The Supreme, the Essential Wisdom will sit upon the great white throne. His judgments, therefore, must be "just and true." Now consider

II. THE JUDGED. They were (1) *of two classes*. There was the innocent babe and the impure women. And of the latter one was true, the other false; one right, the other wrong. There will be two classes, and only two, in the judgment to come: sheep and goats, wheat and tares, good fish and bad, the righteous and the sinner. (2) *Both were harlots*. "Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." Men cannot, or do not. Our pleasant vices are often undetected; or, if known, are not reprobated. But see 1 Cor. v. 11; vi. 9—19; Gal. v. 19—21.

III. THE JUDGMENT. Thereby (1) *a sin was brought to light*. No eye saw that midnight theft. They two were alone. But the deed is now dragged to the light of day. And the Lord "will bring to light the hidden things of darkness." What was "whispered in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops." (2) *A wrong was redressed*. The pretended mother probably held the child when they came before the king. The true mother carried it in her arms when they left the judgment-seat. Restitution, *i.e.*, was enforced. And the judgment-seat of Christ shall accomplish the restitution of all things. There every wrong shall have its remedy. Now the "foundations of the earth are out of course." Might stands for right. Possession is nine points of the law. But in that day "*suum cuique*." It is related of one of the Wesleys that on paying an account which was a gross imposition, he wrote upon the bill, "To be re-adjusted in that day." (3) *Character was revealed*. The true mother and the pretended alike proclaim themselves. A word from each decides the question, and reveals their inmost thoughts. So shall it be at the end of the world. "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee." "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt

be condemned." The Son of Man shall "make manifest the counsels of the heart."

IV. THE REWARD AND PUNISHMENT. To the one the tribunal brought justification, joy, peace. To the other, condemnation, shame, contempt. But notice especially (1) *the difference it made in their emotions* and (2) *the difference in their reputations*. (1) The joy of the mother who had received her child again may be better imagined than described. The same may be said of the vexation, confusion, remorse, of the pretender when her villainy was made manifest. And in these emotions we may see a faint image of the unspeakable joy of the saved: of the weeping and gnashing of teeth of the lost. (2) The true mother would have the sympathy of bystanders, the congratulations of her friends, &c.; the other would be pointed at with scorn and reproach. Here, too, we have a picture, albeit an imperfect one, of the issues of the day of judgment. To the saint, the "Come ye blessed" of the Judge will lead to "pleasures for evermore;" to the sinner, "Depart ye cursed" will be the beginning of "shame and everlasting contempt."

Ver. 26.—"Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it." "The Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword . . . and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The judgment of Solomon is a striking commentary on this passage; indeed, it is possible that the writer had this incident in his mind when he penned these words. For assuredly the word of Solomon, "Divide," &c., was sharper than the sword they had just brought him \* in wounding the mother's heart (Cf. Luke ii. 35); while not more surely would the king's sword, had it not been stayed, have pierced to the "*dividing asunder of the joints and marrow*" of the child, than did the king's word distinguish between the true and the false, revealing both the tenderness and yearning love of the real mother, and also the thoughts and intents and workings of heart of the pretender. It is probably, in part at least, because of their *revelation of character* that they are recorded here. Let us now, therefore, consider the character and motives of the pseudo-mother, as disclosed to us in her words and conduct.

And first, let us ask, what can have led to this cruel and unnatural speech? Here is a woman who has recently become a mother, and who claims to be the mother of the child, having no pity on a helpless babe. At one moment, she strenuously contends before the king for its possession, and at the next she conspires at, and indeed clamours for, its murder. She has surreptitiously taken it from one who would have guarded and cherished it; she loudly protests that it is hers; she is so anxious to have it that she will plead for it before the royal tribunal, and yet, when it is gravely proposed to cut the hapless child in two, she is loud in her approval of the plan. How can we account for such strange inconsistency?

The usual explanation is that she was impelled to do and say what she did by spite, by jealousy. And, without doubt, there *was* an element of spite in her conduct. If *she* was to be denied the child, she was resolved that none else should have it. She would never submit to the humiliation of leaving the judgment-seat with the character of an impostor, while that other one carried off the babe in her arms in triumph. But while the feeling of "dog in the manger" explains much, it does not explain all. It does not account, for example, for her having cumbered herself with the care of the child in the first instance; and it hardly explains her proceeding to the extremity of judicial murder.

Nor even if we combine with spite the desire to flatter the youthful king, do we find a sufficient explanation of her inconsistency. No doubt she thought it would be a compliment to her prince readily to acquiesce in his proposal. It is not the first time or the last that men have readily assented to wrong-doing because a crowned head suggested it. We see in her cry, "Divide it," a cringing, fawning desire to ingratiate herself into Solomon's favour, or if not that, at least to play the courtier; but we do not see in this desire alone a sufficient explanation of this

\* "A blow with a word strikes deeper than a blow with a sword."—WHITCHOTA.

clamour for the life of a puling and innocent babe. No, if we are to get at the very root of her strange and shameful conduct, we must first ask another question, viz., What led her to *steal* this child from its mother's arms and to claim it for her own? What induced her when she woke in the night and found her own child dead, to creep in the darkness to her companion's couch and take a changeling for her son. For this was surely a strange thing to do. We could more readily understand her rejoicing in the death of her own child of shame than this eager desire to burden herself with a bastard that she had not borne.

Now, it is quite possible that there were special circumstances connected with this case, which, if we knew them, would offer a complete and certain explanation of her conduct. For example, to pass by other possibilities, hers may have been such a case as Tamar's (Gen. xxxviii.) But as we do not and cannot know what these peculiar circumstances were, if there were any, we can only collect her motives, as best we may, from the record of facts which we possess.

It is clear, then, that she was *not* actuated by love for the child. It is unlikely that a woman such as she was could have love for a child such as this was; while it is inconceivable that if she really loved it, she would have consented to and counselled its death. Nor can it have been the pride and joy of having a man-child to call her son (1 John xvi. 21). For the child was not hers, and no one knew this better than herself. No doubt the Jewish mother had special reasons for desiring offspring and for cherishing her children, but this was the child of a stranger.

What then *were* her motives? Were they not these? First, the fear of reproach, and secondly, jealousy of her more fortunate companion. Fear of reproach; for no woman, in any age of the world, or under any circumstances, can fail to be mortified and humbled and ashamed at having occasioned, by her maladroitness, the death of her child. She knew what the tongues of the neighbours would say: she could see them, perhaps, even mocking her as a murderess. For they could not know that the death was accidental and some of them, she feared, might *think*, if they did not *say*, that there had been foul play on her part. These thoughts, as they rushed through her mind in the black and dark night, would be accentuated and made well-nigh intolerable by the thought that her companion had been more careful or more fortunate. What may have passed between these two women we cannot say. For aught we know, each may have boasted of her child, or the one may have disparaged the child of the other. There must almost have been something of the kind—and it may have been something extremely simple—to account for this act of child-stealing.

It is quite possible, of course, that this woman, had she been interrogated after the fraud was detected, would have found it difficult to say what led her to play this false part. For we may rest assured she did not argue about it, did not stop to parley with herself or to weigh the consequences. She acted on a blind, hasty, unreasoning impulse. But all the same it is not difficult for us to see that these must have been among the springs of her conduct. And when the fatal move was once made, the rest of her sin is easily explained. There was then nothing for her to do but to brazen it out. It was impossible for her to stop, without proclaiming herself both liar and thief. As she had lied to her companion, so she must lie to the neighbours, and as she had lied to the neighbours, so she must lie even before the king. There was no help for it. *Vestigia nulla retrorsum!* She must go on to the bitter end.

But it is easy to see how terribly trying and painful her position would at last become. The constant fear of detection, or the fear lest she should betray herself, must have made it almost insupportable. Any moment something might ooze out which would reveal the deceit and cover her with infamy. Bitterly must she have regretted that she had ever embarked on this course of fraud; eagerly must she have cast about for any chance of escape.

And so when the king proposed to cut the Gordian knot; when he proposed, that is, to extricate her from the toils which she had woven round herself, is there any wonder that she caught eagerly at the first chance that offered, and that without

a moment's reflection as to the morality of the remedy, and without the least perception of the snare that was spread for her. All she thought was that it promised an honourable retreat from ground which was every moment becoming more insecure; that it opened to her, in her despair and dread of detection, a door of escape. It is this accounts for the cry, "Divide it." The murder would cover her multitude of lies, the blood of the innocent would efface the traces of her guilt.

The lessons taught by this history must be very briefly indicated. Among them are these:

1. *Impurity almost inevitably leads to deceit.* The root of all the mischief here was the unchastity. The sin against the body makes other sins comparatively easy. "It is only the first step that costs." And what a step is that!

2. *Moral cowardice may lead to murder.* The fear which prompted the hasty resolve to possess herself of the living child, led this miserable woman to stealing, lying, persistent falseness, and to murder, in thought and will. *Facilis descensus Averni*, &c.

3. *Falsehood leads to falsehood.* The proverb says, "If we tell one lie we must tell twenty more to bury it." "One lie must be thatched with another or it will soon rain through."

"O what a tangled web we weave  
When once we venture to deceive."

4. *Jealousy dries up the milk of human kindness.* It is "cruel as the grave."

"Fiercer than famine, war, or spotted pestilence;  
Baneful as death, and horrible as hell."

It led this woman to act like a fiend; to desire the butchery of an innocent babe.

5. *Sin overreaches itself.* The pretender was caught in her own toils. She had no sooner said, "Divide it," than she saw she was undone. She had proclaimed her own falseness. "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee."

6. *When the sinner is most secure, then sudden destruction comes upon him.* This woman had never breathed freely till Solomon said, "Divide it." That seemed such a certain deliverance that she echoed the cry. Now she began to feel safe. The next moment she was disgraced, condemned, ruined. Cf. Matt. xxiv. 50; xxv. 44; 1 Thess. v. 8, &c.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER IV. 1—19.

#### SOLOMON'S STATE AND COURT OFFICIALS.—

The account of Solomon's marriage and entry upon his religious and judicious functions is appropriately followed by a description of his court, of the great functionaries of the realm, of his royal state and magnificence, and, lastly, of his varied and unprecedented wisdom. It must not be supposed, however, from the occurrence of the lists in this particular place, that they necessarily represent the appointments of the early part of Solomon's reign. The mention of two of the married daughters of the king (vers. 11, 15) has been generally thought to prove that the record belongs to a much later period, and it certainly affords a powerful presumption in favour of a later date. Too

much stress, however, must not be laid on this consideration, as the girls of the East marry early, and these may well have been given to officers much their seniors, who had long been in office, and who had merited this distinction (cf. Josh. xv. 16; 1 Sam. xvii. 25; xviii. 17) by the important services they had rendered to the State. Ewald sees in these lists unmistakeable evidence of compilation from the public archives. But see Introduction, sect. vi. If the historians of Israel were the prophets, nothing is more natural than that they should record such details of the Augustan age of their race.

Ver. 1.—So King Solomon was king over all Israel. [All later kings ruled but a part of the land of Israel, as also did David at first.]

Ver. 2.—And these were the princes [*i.e.*,

ministers, officers. Cf. 2 Sam. viii. 15-18, and xx. 23-26] which he had, Azariah the son [i.e., descendant, probably grandson. See on 1 Chron. vi. 10] of Zadok the priest. [We are here confronted by two questions of considerable difficulty. First, to whom does the title "priest" here belong, to Azariah or to Zadok? Second, what are we to understand by the term, a spiritual, or a more or less secular person—*ιερευς* or *βουλευτής*? As to 1, the Vulgate (*sacerdotis*) and apparently the Authorized Version, with the Rabbins, Luther, and many later exponents, connect the title with Zadok (who is mentioned as priest in ver. 4), and understand that Azariah, the son of the high priest Zadok, was, together with the sons of Shisha, one of the scribes (ver. 3). It is true that this view obviates some difficulties, but against it are these considerations. (1) The accents. (2) The Chaldee and LXX. (*ἱερευς* Cod. Alex.; Cod. Vat. omits the word) Versions. (3) Hebrew usage, according to which the patronymic is regarded as almost parenthetical. (4) The fact that in every other case in this list the title is predicate nominative (vers. 3-6). (5) The position of Azariah's name, first in the list—a position which would hardly be assigned to a scribe. (6) The absence of any copula (*ו*), which, it is submitted, would be required if Azariah and the sons of Shisha alike were scribes. The question is one of some nicety, but the balance of evidence is distinctly in favour of connecting the title with Azariah, i.e., "Azariah son of Zadok was the priest." This brings us to 2. What are we to understand by "the priest"—*הַכֹּהֵן*? It is urged by Keil, Bähr, *al.* that this cannot mean "priest" in the ordinary sense of the word, still less "high priest," for the following reasons: (1) Because the high priests of Solomon are mentioned presently, viz., Abiathar and Zadok, and the Jews never had three high priests. (2) Because the Azariah who was high priest under Solomon—for the words of 1 Chron. vi. 10, "He it is that executed the priest's office," &c., must belong to the Azariah of ver. 9, and have got accidentally misplaced—was the son of Ahimaaz, not of Zadok. (3) Because no grandson of Zadok could then be old enough to sustain the office of high priest. (4) Because in one passage (2 Sam. viii. 18, compared with 1 Chron. xviii. 17) *הַכֹּהֵן* is used of privy councillors and of the sons of David, who cannot have been sacrificing priests. Keil consequently would understand that Azariah was "administrator of the kingdom, or prime minister." Similarly Bähr. But in favour of the ordinary meaning of the word are these powerful

considerations: (1) All the versions translate the word by "priest," i.e., they understand by the term a spiritual person. (2) Whatever may be the case with *הַכֹּהֵן*, *הַכֹּהֵן*, "the priest" (*par excellence*) can only be understood of the high priest (ch. i. 8, 38; Exod. xxix. 30; Lev. xxi. 21; 2 Kings xi. 9, 15; xxii. 4, 8, 10, 12, 14. Comp. 2 Chron. xxvi. 17). (3) It is extremely doubtful whether *הַכֹּהֵן* is ever used except in the sense of *ιερευς*. Rawlinson, who says it sometimes indicates "a civil officer, with perhaps a semi-priestly character," refers to Gesenius *sub hac voce*, who, however, distinctly affirms that the word only means priest, and accounts for the application of the term to the sons of David (2 Sam. viii. 18) on the supposition that the Jews had priests who were not of the tribe of Levi. The question is discussed with great learning by Professor Plumptre (Dict. Bib., art. "Priest"), who suggests that "David and his sons may have been admitted, not to distinctively priestly functions, such as burning incense (Numb. xvi. 40; 2 Chron. xxvi. 18), but to an honorary, titular priesthood. To wear the ephod in processions (2 Sam. vi. 14) at the time when this was the special badge of the order (1 Sam. xxii. 18), to join the priests and Levites in their songs and dances, might have been conceded, with no deviation from the Law, to the members of the royal house." There is one difficulty however in the way of accepting this ingenious and otherwise sufficient explanation, namely, that it seems hardly likely that the title of priest would be freely accorded by Hebrew writers to men who were expressly excluded from all "distinctively priestly functions," especially after the use of the same word in the preceding verse (17) to designate the high priest. And I venture to suggest that the discharge by David's sons of the semi-priestly functions just referred to occasioned so much remark as to lead to the application of the term "priest" to them in a special conventional sense; in fact, that it became a sort of *soubriquet*, which rather implied that they were not priests than that they were. (Notice the order of 2 Sam. viii. 18, Heb.) And observe (4), if we are to understand by "the priest" in ver. 2, "prime minister;" by "priests" in ver. 4, "high priests," and by "priest" in ver. 5, "principal officer," language has no certain meaning. (5) The mention of Azariah as "the priest" in the same list with Zadok and Abiathar is easily accounted for. We know that Abiathar was deposed at the beginning of Solomon's reign (ch. ii. 27), and Zadok must then have been an old man. Their names consequently are

recorded (ver. 4) because they were high priests for a brief period of the reign, but Azariah is mentioned first as "the priest" because he was high priest during most of the time. (6) "Azariah the son of Zadok" is quite compatible with the fact that Azariah was really the son of Ahimaaz. אֲזַרְיָהוּ is constantly used in the sense of "descendant," and especially "grandson." (Gen. xxix. 5: xxxi. 28, 55: and see on ch. ii. 8, "the son of Gera.") Zadok is no doubt mentioned as better known than Ahimaaz, and probably because Azariah succeeded him directly in the office. (7) The age of Azariah must be uncertain, and Solomon's reign was a long one. (8) The position of his name—first—accords well with the idea that he was high priest, which I conclude that he was. It is worthy of remark that in the lists of David the military officers of the kingdom occupy the first place; in those of Solomon, the civil and religious dignitaries. "The princes of Solomon are, with one exception (ver. 4) ministers of peace."—Wordsworth.

Ver. 3.—Elihoresh and Ahiah, the sons of Shisha [probably the same person who is mentioned in 2 Sam. xx. 25 as *Sheva*; in 2 Sam. viii. 17, as *Seraiah*; and in 1 Chron. xviii. 16, as *Shavsha*, David's scribe. The office thus descended from father to sons. The variations in this name are instructive. Compare Kishi and Kushaiah, Abijah and Abijam, Michaiah and Maachah, Absalom and Abishalom, &c. Names written *ex ore dictantis* are sure to differ. See below on ver. 12], scribes [the scribes, סֹפְרֵי, were Secretaries of State: they wrote letters and proclamations, drew predictions, and apparently kept the accounts (2 Kings xii. 10). Their position in the list indicates their importance]; Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud, the recorder. [He held the same office under David, and is mentioned in all three lists (2 Sam. viii. 17; xx. 25; 1 Chron. xviii. 15). The recorder or "remembrancer" (margin) was, perhaps, "chancellor" (Keil), or keeper of the king's conscience, rather than, as is generally supposed, chronicler of public events, and keeper of the archives. See Introduction, sect. vi.]

Ver. 4.—And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada [see on ch. i. 32] was [the A. V. supplies *was* and *were* quite needlessly in this and succeeding verses. This is simply a list of Solomon's princes and of the offices they discharged] over the host [cf. ii. 35]: and Zadok and Abiathar were the priests [the mention of Abiathar's name after his deposition (ch. ii. 27, 35) has occasioned much remark, and has even led to the belief that he was subsequently pardoned and restored

to office (Clericus). Theodoret remarks quite truly, *τὴν ἀρχὴν ἀφείλατο, οὐ τῆς ἱερωσύνης ἐγίνωσκον*, and similarly Grotius. But a simpler explanation is that his name is put down here because he had been high priest, though for a brief period only, under Solomon. See above on ver. 2.]

Ver. 5.—And Azariah the son of Nathan [Azariah was clearly not an uncommon name (ver. 2, and cf. 1 Chron. ii. 39; v. 36—40 Heb.; A. V. vi. 9—14), especially in the high priest's family. Keil and Bähr pronounce somewhat positively that this Nathan is not the prophet of that name, but Nathan the son of David (2 Sam. v. 14; Luke iii. 31). It is quite impossible to decide with certainty which is meant, if either, though Zech. xii. 12 undoubtedly favours the supposition that the latter is here intended] was over the officers [the twelve prefects mentioned in vers. 7 sqq.]: and Zabud the son of Nathan was principal officer [Heb. *priest*, Vulg. *sacerdos*. Singularly, as before, the LXX. (Vat.) omits the word. The expression can hardly mean "the son of Nathan the priest," but it may either signify that "Zabud ben Nathan, a priest, was king's friend," or that (as in the A. V.) he was a priest and king's friend. But the former is every way preferable. I find it easier to believe that the true import of 2 Sam. viii. 18—the passage which is cited (sometimes along with *ib.* xx. 26. where the LXX., however, has *ἱερεῖς*): to prove that there were secular "priests"—is not yet understood, than to hold (with Gesenius, Ewald, &c.), that there were sacrificing priests who were not of the sons of Aaron (cf. 2 Chron. xxvi. 18), or that the word אֲזַרְיָהוּ, the meaning of which was thoroughly fixed and understood, can have been familiarly applied, except in the strictly conventional way already indicated, to lay persons], and [omit] the king's friend. ["This appears to have been now a recognized office (2 Sam. xv. 37; xvi. 16; 1 Chron. xxvii. 33)," Rawlinson.]

Ver. 6.—And Ahishar was over the household [steward and manager of the palace. We meet this office here for the first time, an evidence of the growing size and magnificence of the court (cf. 1 Kings xviii. 3; 2 Kings xviii. 18; Isa. xxii. 15). That such an officer was needed, the fact mentioned below (on ver. 23) as to the enormous size of the royal household will prove]: and Adoniram [see on ch. xii. 18] the son of Abda was over the tribute. [Marg. "levy," i. e., the forced labour (ch. v. 13, 14). See on ch. xii. 3.]

Ver. 7.—And Solomon had twelve officers [lit., persons "placed" or "set over"

others, *i.e.*, superintendents. The term is used of Doeg (1 Sam. xxii. 9). They were twelve, not because of the twelve tribes, but the twelve months] over all Israel, which provided victuals for [Heb. *nourished*] the king and his household: each man his month in a year made provision [lit., *a month in the year it was (i.e., devolved) upon each to nourish*. It has been thought by some that these superintendents were also governors of provinces (*ἡγεμόνες καὶ στρατηγοί*, Jos. Ant. viii. 2, 3), as well as purveyors. But of this nothing is said in the text. Their principal function was to collect the royal dues or taxes which were evidently paid, as they still are in the East, in kind].

Ver. 8.—And these are their names [the order is not geographical, nor do the districts correspond, except roughly, with the territories of the tribes. The order is probably that of the months for which they were severally responsible, and the districts were marked out according to the capabilities of the country]: The son of Hur [Heb. as marg., *Ben Hur*. Of the twelve prefects, five are only known by their patronymics, for it is hardly likely that these are proper names, like Ben-hanan and Benzoleth (1 Chron. iv. 20). No satisfactory explanation of this curious circumstance has hitherto been given. The most probable is that in the document from which this list was compiled, the part of the page containing the missing names had been accidentally destroyed], in mount Ephraim. [See on ch. xii. 25. This district, which practically coincided with the territory of Ephraim, was one of the most fertile in Palestine. Hence, possibly, it stands first.]

Ver. 9.—The son of Dekar [*Ben-Dekar*], in Makaz [unknown otherwise], and in Shaalbim [Josh. xix. 42; Judg. i. 35] and Beth-shemesh [called Irshemesh, Josh. xix. 41. Now *Ain Shemes*], and Elon-beth-hanan. [Elon, Josh. xix. 43. Probably Beth-hanan is a different place, the “and” (1) having accidentally dropped out of the text. The LXX. (*ὄρος Βηθανάν*) favours this view. It has been identified by Robinson with Beit-Hunân. This second district embraces Dan.]

Ver. 10.—The son of Hesel [*Ben-Hesel*], in Aruboth (Heb. Arubboth, unknown); to him pertained Sochoh [there were two cities of this name, one in the mountain (Josh. xv. 48), and one in the “valley” (the *Shefelah*, Josh. xv. 33, 35), and both in the tribe of Judah, from which, therefore, this third district was taken], and all the land of Hopher. [Josh. xii. 17. Ewald holds that this place was in Manasseh, and that “it is impossible in the twelve districts to find any portion of . . . Judah.” But see above.]

Ver. 11.—The son of Abinadab [*Ben Abinadab*. Possibly the Abinadab of 1 Sam. xvi. 8; xvii. 13. If so, this officer, who married Solomon's daughter, was also his cousin], in [Heb. omits] all the region [הַרְצָרָה], height; the term is only used in connection with Dor] of Dor [Josh. xi. 2; xii. 23; xvii. 11. Dor, now represented by the miserable village of Tantura, lies on the strand of the Mediterranean, north of Casarea. A “spur of Mouñ Carmel, steep and partially wooded, runs parallel to the coast-line, at the distance of about a mile and a half” (Porter). This is the “height of Dor.” Thenius supposes this fourth district embraced the plain of Sharon. Josephus (viii. 2. 3.) limits this prefecture to the sea coast, which may well include Sharon. Indeed, without it, this district would have been destitute of cornlands] which had Taphath, the daughter of Solomon, to wife. [“It has always been a practice amongst Oriental potentates to attach to themselves the more important of their officers by giving them for wives princesses of the royal house. . . . The practice of polygamy has generally enabled them to carry out this system to a very wide extent” (Rawlinson).]

Ver. 12.—Baana, the son of Ahilud [cf. ver. 3. Probably the recorder's brother], to him pertained [the original, true to its character as a list, omits these words, simply giving the name of the officer and then the towns of his district or province] Taanach and Megiddo [similarly associated, Josh. xii. 21; Judg. v. 19; i. 27. These towns, which became famous in later Jewish history (2 Kings xxiii. 29; 2 Chron. xxxv. 22), lay at the foot of the E. spurs of Carmel, on the margin of the plain of Esdraelon. See Conder's “Tent Work in Palestine,” p. 67] and all Bethshean [Josh. xvii. 11, 16; Judg. i. 27. Otherwise Bethshan (1 Sam. xxxi. 10, 12; 2 Sam. xxi. 12), now *Beisan*. The LXX. here translate the word ὁ οἶκος Σάν; elsewhere they write *βαθαάν* or *βαθαάν*, and in Judges i. 27 explain ἡ ἰσθμὸς Σκιθῶν πόλις, hence its later name Scythopolis. Rawlinson, by an oversight, interprets the name to mean “house of the sun,” which is the translation of Bethshemesh. Bethshan prob. means “house of rest.” “The site of the town is on the brow of the descent by which the great plain of Esdraelon drops down to the level of the Ghor.” The present writer was much struck (in 1861) by its situation. See Conder, pp. 233, 234. The text shows that it gave its name to the adjoining district, which is by Zartanah [probably the Zaretan of Josh. iii. 16 and the Zarthan (same word in the Heb.) of 1 Kings vii. 46, which place is called Zerelathab in 2 Chron. iv. 17, and is probably the Zererath of Judg. vii. 22. (The

variations in spelling are again to be noticed). Here Solomon east the Temple vessels. By some it is identified with Kurn Sartabeh (but see Quart. Stat. of Pal. Explor. Fund, July, 1874, and Conder, pp. 233, 234), a few miles below Bethshan. It is noticeable (in connexion with Josh. iii.16) that at this point the Jordan valley narrows (Keil). It occupies high ground and commands an extensive view (Robinson) beneath [or below] Jezreel [Wordsworth remarks that "Jezreel, now Zerin, is a lofty site." But the idea of "beneath" is not that of depression, but of geographical position—the district south-east of Jezreel] from [LXX. and from] Bethshean to Abelmeholah [lit. meadow of the dance. It lay ten miles south of Bethshean. It is mentioned in connexion with Zererath (Zaretan) in Judg. vii. 22, but is best known as the home of Elisha (1 Kings xix. 16)] even unto the place that is beyond [Heb. *unto the other side of*] Jokneam. [Properly, *Jokneam*. Identified by the Survey (Conder, p. 68) with *Tell Keimim*. A Levitical town (1 Chron. vi. 68) probably the same as Kibzaim (cf. Josh. xxi. 22). This district coincided practically with the tribe of Manasseh. It embraced a part (see ver. 17) of the fertile plain of Esdraelon and of the Jordan valley.]

Ver. 13.—The son of Geber [possibly son of the Geber mentioned in ver. 19] in Ramoth-gilead [two districts east of the Jordan are now enumerated. And first, the territory of Gad. Ramoth-gilead was a Levitical city (Deut. iv. 43; Josh. xxi. 38). Its selection as a city of refuge (Josh. xx. 8), and as the seat of Bengeber's prefecture, together with the constant wars waged for its possession (1 Kings xxii. 3; 2 Kings viii. 28; ix. 14) show that it was a position of great strength and importance]; to him pertained the towns of Jair [the *Havoth Jair* are strictly the *lives* (i.e., villages, because men live there) of *Jair*. So Gesenius, who cites *Eisleben* and similar names] the son Manasseh [it is doubtful whether the judge of that name (Judg. x. 3) or *Jair*, the son of Segub (called a "son of Manasseh" in Numb. xxxii. 41, because his grandmother was a daughter of the great Machir, though his father belonged to Judah, 1 Chron. ii. 21), is intended. Probably it is the latter. (They can hardly be one and the same person, though they are often identified, as, e.g., in the Speaker's Comm. on Judg. x. 3. But they belong to different periods.) Curiously enough, the *Havoth Jair* are mentioned in connexion with each (see Numb. xxxii. 41; Deut. iii. 4, 5, 14; Josh. xiii. 30; 1 Chron. ii. 22; Jndg. x. 4), but in every case except the last the reference is to the son of Segub. As the judge was probably one of his de-

scendants, it is not surprising that the judge's sons should possess some of the villages of *Jair*, which are in Gilead; to him also pertained the region [מִדְּבָרַיִם, lit., *measuring cord*, came to signify the region measured] of Argob [elsewhere "the Argob," i.e., the stony. This is the region subsequently known as Trachonitis, now called the Lejah. It is distinguished here and in Josh. xiii. 30, and 1 Chron. ii. 22 from the Gileadite district just mentioned, with which it is sometimes confounded. Both seem to have been conquered by *Jair*, but the towns of the former bore the name of *Havoth Jair* and these of *Bashan Havoth Jair*. Cf. Deut. iii. 4, 5, 14 with Numb. xxxii. 41. The latter consisted of threescore cities, with walls, gates, and bars. This remarkable district, twenty-two miles in length by fourteen in breadth, is "wholly composed of black basalt, which appears to have issued from innumerable pores in the earth in a liquid state. . . . Before cooling, its surface was violently agitated, and it was afterwards shattered and rent by convulsions. . . . Strange as it may seem, this ungainly and forbidding region is thickly studded with deserted cities and villages" (Porter, "Giant Cities of Bashan," also in Kitto's Cycl. iii. p. 1032; Dict. Bib. i. 104)] which is in Bashan, threescore great cities with walls and brazen bars. [These words are a reminiscence of Deut. iii. 4, 5.]

Ver. 14.—Ahinadab the son of Mdo [probably the seer of that name, 2 Chron. ix. 29] had Mahanaim [Heb. *to Mahanaim*, as marg. That is, went, or was appointed, to Mahanaim. Rawlinson understands that his district was "from the places last mentioned to Mahanaim," but for this the *usque loquendi* of the writer would lead us to expect מִי. For Mahanaim, see Gen. xxxii. 2; Joshua xiii. 26].

Ver. 15.—Ahimaaz [probably the son of Zadok, 2 Sam. xv. 27; xvii. 17] was in Faphtali; he also [like Ben-Abinadab, ver. 11] took Basmath the daughter of Solomon to wife.

Ver. 16.—Banaah [or Baana, the second prefect of that name (ver. 12). The names are identical in the Hebrew. In 2 Sam. iv. 2 the name is Baanah] the son of Hushai [the Archite, David's friend. Cf. 2 Sam. xv. 32] was in Asher and Aloth. [No town or district of this name is known. Probably the word should be Bealoth, as in the LXX., Syr., and Vulg. Our translators have taken the initial ב for a prefix, but it is almost certainly part of the name. There was a Baaloth in Judah (Josh. xv. 24) and a Baaloth in Dan (ibid. xix. 44), but neither of these can be meant here.]

Ver. 17.—Jehoshaphat the son of Paruah,

in Issachar. [He had consequently the plain of Esdraelon, with the exception mentioned above, ver. 12.]

Ver. 18.—Shimei the son of Elah [by some identified with the Shimei of chapter i. 8. But see note there], in Benjamin. [It is noteworthy that Shimei was a Benjamite name, 2 Sam. xvi. 5, 11.]

Ver. 19.—Gēber the son of Uri was in the country of Gilead [*i.e.*, he presided over the parts not already assigned to Bengeber (perhaps his son) and Ahinadab. Gilead is often used (see Deut. xxxiv. 1; Judg. xx. 1) to designate *all* the country east of the Jordan. And so apparently here, for] the country of Sihon king of the Amorites, and of Og king of Bashan] embraced the whole trans-Jordanic region, Deut. iii. 8; Num. xxi. 24—35: cf. Psa. cxxxv. 11; cxxxvi. 19, 20]; and he was the only officer which was in the land. [This cannot mean “the only officer in Gilead,” notwithstanding the great extent of territory—the usual interpretation—for that would contradict vers. 13, 14. Nor can it mean the only officer in his *district*, or *portion*, of Gilead, for that is self-evident, and the remark would apply equally to all the other prefects. And we are hardly

justified in translating  $\text{נָיִב} \text{אֲחֵרֵי}$  “he was the first (*i.e.*, superior), officer” (set over those mentioned above, vers. 13, 14), as Schulze.  $\text{אֲחֵרֵי}$  is used as an ordinal number, but it is only in connexion with days and years (Ges. s. v.) Some, following the LXX. ( $\epsilon\iota\varsigma \epsilon\nu \gamma\eta$  ‘Iov̄ca) would detach Judah from ver. 20, where it must be allowed it occurs with a suspicious abruptness, and where the absence of the copula, so usual in the Hebrew, suggests a corruption of the text, and would connect it with this verse, which would then yield the sense, “and he was,” (or “there was”) “one officer which purveyed in the land of Judah.” It is to be observed, however, that though no mention has as yet been made of Judah in any of the districts, yet the prefecture of Ben Hesed (ver. 10) appears to have extended over this tribe, and the remark consequently seems superfluous. (Can it be the object of the writer to show that the royal tribe was not favoured or exempted from contributing its share?) On the whole, the difficulty would seem still to await a solution. We can hardly, in the teeth of ver. 7, suppose with Ewald, *al.* that a *thirteenth* officer is here intended.

### HOMILETICS.

Vers. 2 sqq.—*The Servants of Solomon.* “These were the princes which he had.” “All Scripture is . . . profitable for instruction,” &c. A bare list of names may teach some lessons. We shall find in this list, first, some proofs of Solomon’s wisdom, and secondly, some principles to guide our own conduct. First, however, let us remember that to select faithful and efficient servants is one of the most difficult tasks of rulers. The welfare of the whole State depends very largely on the choice. (Of Ps. ci. 5—7.) Now observe that here—

I. THE FIRST PLACE IS FILLED BY GOD’S PRIEST (ver. 2). The minister of religion takes precedence of the ministers of state. The universal tendency is to put man first and God second. Solomon—if this list preserves the order of his arrangements—put God first, in the person of His high priest. Under the theocracy the king was a sort of *summus episcopus*. It was meet that next to the anointed Prince should stand the anointed Pontiff.

II. PRIORITY IS GIVEN TO THE OFFICERS OF PEACE (vers. 3, 4). Scribes come before warriors. In David’s day it was otherwise. But there has been an advance, and here is the proof of it. War is essentially barbarous. Among savage tribes warfare is chronic. As men become wiser and more civilized, the appeal to brute force is less frequent. Wiser, for war means unwisdom somewhere. More civilized, for the history of civilization tells how the wager of battle, which is now confined to nations, was once employed by tribes, provinces, and private persons. So that, in this particular, the wise son was greater than the pious father. For this reason Solomon may build the temple which his father’s blood-red hand may not touch. For this reason the son, not the father, is the favourite type of the Prince of Peace. One of the world’s greatest generals (Napoleon) said there were but two great powers, the sword and the pen, and that, in the long run, the former was sure to be overcome by the latter. Solomon would seem to have been of the same opinion. The “scribes” and the “recorder” precede the “captain of the host.”

III. MANY PLACES ARE FILLED BY THE FUNCTIONARIES OF HIS FATHER (vers. 3, 4, 6, and cf. ver. 16). An Eastern autocrat generally appoints his associates of the harem (ch. xii. 10), his personal favourites, to positions of trust. Solomon showed his wisdom in retaining the faithful servants of his predecessor (compare the folly of Rehoboam, ch. xii. 8), and his example thus confirms his precept (Prov. xxvii. 10), "Thine own friend and *thy father's friend* forsake not."

IV. SOME PLACES ARE FILLED BY HIS OWN SONS-IN-LAW (vers. 11, 15). This does not argue nepotism, or favouritism as the hand of the king's daughter was often bestowed as the reward of distinguished services (1 Sam. xvii. 25; xviii. 17, 27). It may have been the due recognition of fidelity and ability. In any case the alliances would strengthen Solomon's throne.

"The friends thou hast, and their adoption, tried,  
Grapple them to thy heart with hooks of steel."

Alien princes would, no doubt, have been proud to espouse Solomon's daughters, but he preferred to marry them to faithful subjects. Blood is thicker than water.

V. ALL PLACES OF TRUST WERE FILLED BY PERSONS OF PIETY. The number of priests' or prophets' sons employed by Solomon is very remarkable (vers. 4, 5, 14, and possibly 15). He knew that those who were taught in the law of the Lord would best keep and best enforce the law of the realm. Those who "fear God" are those who "honour the king" (1 Peter ii. 17). Witness Joseph, Obadiah, Daniel, and the three Hebrew children. Even irreligious masters know the value of God-fearing servants. God blesses the house of Potiphar for the sake of its pious steward. Piety involves probity and excludes speculation and malfeasance.

VI. EVERY OFFICER HAD HIS PLACE AND KEPT IT. There were definite duties, definite districts. The prefectures were so many parishes. Each was responsible for his own and for that only. Order is Heaven's first law. The prosperity of Solomon's reign may have been largely due to his system and method. There is a hierarchy and a due order in heaven. The angels would almost seem to have their districts (Dent. xxxii. 8, LXX.) The great King gives "to every man according to his work" (Mark xiii. 34).

Vers. 7—19.—*The Twelve Prefects and the Twelve Apostles.* "And Solomon had twelve officers over all Israel." Considering how closely he foreshadows our blessed Lord, the twelve officers of Solomon can hardly fail to remind us of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb. It may be instructive to compare their dignities, functions, &c. Observe—

I. THEIR RESPECTIVE POSITIONS. *The officers of Solomon were princes* (ver. 2); *the officers of Jesus were peasants and fishermen.* Ability, energy, &c., dictated Solomon's choice; humility, dependence, weakness, our Blessed Lord's (Matt. xviii. 3, 4; xxiii. 11; and cf. xi. 11). "Not many mighty, not many noble are called," &c. (1 Cor. i. 26). "Unlearned and ignorant men" (Acts iv. 13).

II. THEIR RESPECTIVE REPUTATIONS. *The officers of Solomon were revered and feared; the apostles of our Lord were despised and defamed.* Each of the twelve prefects was, no doubt, a little potentate. The court of Abinadab in Mahanaim, or Shimei in Benjamin, would be a copy in miniature of that of the king in Jerusalem. And we know what the Eastern tax-gatherer is like, what despotic powers he wields, &c. Witness the Pashas and Valis of Turkey. How different were the twelve apostles. The contrast could not well be greater. "Hated of all men," esteemed "the filth and offscouring of all things;" "a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men" (1 Cor. iv. 9—13). What the life of an apostle was like we may learn from 2 Cor. xi. 24—29. "Behold, they which are gorgeously apparelled and live delicately are in king's courts" (1 Luke vii. 25). "Behold, we have forsaken all and followed thee" (Matt. xix. 27).

III. THEIR RESPECTIVE JURISDICTIONS. *The twelve officers presided over tribes; the twelve apostles ministered to continents.* The whole of Palestine is about the size of Wales, and this strip of territory was divided into twelve parts. Compare with this the apostolic commission, "Go ye into all the world," &c. "Ye shall be

witnesses unto me . . . unto the uttermost part of the earth" Judaism was a tribal religion; the faith of Christ is for humanity.

IV. THEIR RESPECTIVE FUNCTIONS. 1. *The twelve officers were receivers-general; the twelve apostles were general givers.* The first took from the people to give to the king; the latter received from their King to bestow on the people. To the former, the subjects of Solomon brought taxes or tribute; the latter have obtained blessings and gifts from their Lord for men. (Cf. Acts i. 8; ii. 18; viii. 18; 1 Tim. iv. 14; 2 Tim. i. 6, &c.) "It is more blessed to give," &c. 2. *The officers nourished the king (ver. 27, Heb.) and his armies: the apostles fed the Church.* (Cf. Acts xx. 28.) The 14,000 dependants of the court, the 4000 charioteers, the 12,000 horsemen, all were maintained by the twelve purveyors. Through the apostles, the Lord fed, now 4000, now 7000, and through them, their doctrine and their successors, He still feeds, with word and sacrament, the millions of the Church.

So far the comparison is largely in favour of the prefects. As regards this world's gifts and dignities, they bear away the palm. In their lifetime they received their good things and the apostles evil things. But an old authority—it is the *dictum* of Solon to Cræsus (Herod. i. 30—33)—warns us to pronounce on no man's fortune or happiness until we have seen the end. And the real end is not in this world. Let us therefore consider (1) *What is the verdict of posterity?* and (2) *What will be the issue of futurity as to these two classes?* Here we observe—

I. THE NAMES OF SOME OF THE PREFECTS ARE FORGOTTEN; THE NAMES OF THE APOSTLES ARE IN EVERLASTING REMEMBRANCE. The fame of Solomon's twelve was shortlived. Several of them are now known to us only by their patronymics. Those much dreaded satraps, before whom subjects trembled, their very names are in some cases lost in oblivion. But the apostolic college, every member is still famed, revered, loved throughout the whole round world. Their names are heard, Sunday by Sunday, in the Holy Gospel (cf. Matt. xxvi. 13). Better still, their "names are written in heaven" (Luke x. 20; cf. Phil. iv. 3). As to

II. THE TWELVE APOSTLES WILL JUDGE THE TWELVE PREFECTS. In their time, the latter sate on twelve thrones, each in his capital city, ruling the twelve tribes of Israel. But their glory, like that of the Roman general's pageant, "*lacked continuance.*" In the midst of their brief authority

"Comes the blind Fury with the abhorréd shears  
And slits the thin-spun life."

The dominion of the apostles is in the future. It belongs to the "regeneration." "When the Son of Man"—the true Son of David—"shall sit on the throne of his glory," then shall they "sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes," &c. (Matt. xix. 28). The despised fishermen shall judge the high and mighty officers—yes, and magnificent Solomon himself. Even now, it may be, their glory is in part begun.

"Lo, the twelve, majestic princes  
In the court of Jesus sit,  
Calmly watching all the conflict  
Raging still beneath their feet."

Shall we follow the officers of Solomon, or the twelve apostles of the Lamb? Shall we, that is, desire earthly advancement, high position, contemporary fame, or shall we count all as dross that we may "win Christ and be found in Him" (Phil. iii. 8—11). "What shall it profit a man, if he gain," &c. We cannot all be *ἡγεμόνες καὶ στρατηγοί*, still less can we all wed kings' daughters. But we may all sit with Christ upon His throne (Rev. iii. 21); may all receive the crown of life (Rev. ii. 10); may all be "called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev. xix. 7—9).

## EXPOSITION.

## CHAPTER IV. 20—34.

**SOLOMON'S RULE, STATE, AND WISDOM.**—The remainder of this chapter, which describes to us the extent and character of Solomon's sway (vv. 20, 21, 24, 25), the pomp and provision of his household (vv. 22, 23, 26—28), and his profound and varied wisdom (vv. 29—34), has every appearance of a compilation from different sources. It scarcely has the order and coherence which we should find in the narrative of a single writer.

Ver. 20.—Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude [a reminiscence of Gen. xiii. 16; xxii. 17; xxxii. 12 (cf. ch. iii. 8)]. In the reign of Solomon these promises had their fulfilment, eating and drinking, and making merry. [Cf. 1 Sam. xxx. 16. The Hebrew here begins a new chapter. The LXX. omits vers. 20, 21, 25, 26, and places vers. 27, 28, "and those officers," &c., after the list of prefects, ver. 19.]

Ver. 21.—And Solomon reigned [Heb. *was reigning*] over all kingdoms [Heb. *the kingdoms*]. That is, as suzerain, as is explained presently. So that Psa. lxxii. 10, 11 had its fulfilment] from the river [*i.e.*, the Euphrates, *the river* of that region: so called Gen. xxxi. 21; Exod. xxiii. 31; 2 Sam. x. 16. In Gen. xv. 18 it is called "the great river, the river Euphrates." Similarly Josh. i. 4] unto [not in the Hebrew. It is found in the parallel passage, 2 Chron. ix. 26, and perhaps we may safely supply it here. Its omission may have been occasioned by the recurrence of the same word (עַר) presently. Some would render, "reigned . . . over the land," &c., supplying עַר in thought from above. But "unto" seems to be required after "from." Cf. ver. 24] the land of the Philistines [this, *i.e.*, the Mediterranean shore, was the western border of his realm], and unto the border of Egypt [this was his southern boundary. We have here a reference to Gen. xv. 18, the promise which now first received its fulfilment]: they brought presents [*i.e.*, tribute. Similar expressions, 2 Sam. viii. 2; 2 Kings xvii. 3, 4, and especially Psa. lxxii. 10. What the presents were we are told ch. x. 25, where, however, see note], and served Solomon all the days of his life.

The daily consumption of the royal household is now related to show the grandeur and luxury of the court. And it agreed well

with the greatness of the kingdom. The lavish provision of Oriental palaces was evidently a subject of wonder and of boasting to the ancients, as the inscriptions and monuments show.

Ver. 22.—And Solomon's provision [marg. *bread*, but עֵלֶּיךָ, strictly signifies any kind of food] for one day was thirty measures [Heb. *cors*. The עֵלֶּיךָ was both a liquid and a dry measure (ch. v. 11) and was the equivalent to the homer (Ezek. xlv. 14), but its precise capacity is doubtful. According to Josephus, it contained eighty-six gallons; according to the Rabbins, forty-four] of fine flour and threescore measures of meal. [Thenius calculates that this amount of flour would yield 28,000 lbs. of bread, which (allowing 2 lbs. to each person) would give 14,000 as the number of Solomon's retainers. This computation, however, could have but little value did not his calculations, based on the consumption of flesh, mentioned presently (allowing 1½ lbs. per head), lead to the same result.]

Ver. 23.—Ten fat [Heb. *fatted, i.e.*, for table] oxen, and twenty fat oxen out of the pastures, and an hundred sheep, beside harts and roebucks [or gazelles] and fallowdeer [Roebucks. The name *Yahmûr* is still current in Palestine in this sense (Conder, p. 91)], and fatted fowl. [This word (עֵלֶּיךָ) occurs nowhere else. The meaning most in favour is *geese*.]

Ver. 24.—For [the connexion seems to be: Solomon could well support such lavish expenditure, because] he had dominion over all the region on this side [עַרְבֵי] strictly means, *on the other side, beyond* (עַרְבֵי, *transit*). But here it must obviously mean on the west side, for Solomon's rule did not extend east of the Euphrates. The use of this word in this sense (Josh. v. 1; ix. 1; xii. 7; 1 Chron. xxvi. 30; Ezra viii. 36; Neh. ii. 7) is generally accounted for on the supposition that the writers were living in Babylon in the time of the captivity; but this appears to be by no means certain. (See, *e.g.*, Ezra iv. 10, 11.) The truth seems to be, not that "the expression belonged to the time of the captivity, but was retained after the return and without regard to its geographical signification, just, for instance, like the expression, *Gallia Transalpina*" (Bähr), but that from the first it was employed, now of one side, now of the other, of the Jordan; of the west in Gen.

l. 10, 11; Josh. ix. 1, &c.; of the east in Num. xxii. 1; xxxii. 32; "and even in the same chapter is used first of one and then of the other Deut. iii. 8, 20, 25" (Spk. Comm. on Deut. i. 1), and that it was subsequently applied, with similar variations of meaning, to the Euphrates. See Introduction, sect. v.] from Tiphshah [cf. 2 Kings xv. 16, apparently the town on the west bank of the Euphrates, known to the Greeks as Thapsacus. It derived its name from the fact that the river at that point was fordable פָּרָץ = pass over; חָצַץ = crossing. A bridge of boats was maintained here by the Persians. It was here that the river was forded by Cyrus and the Ten Thousand, and was crossed by the armies of Darius Codomannus and Alexander] to Azzah [i.e., Gaza, now called *Guzzeh*, the southernmost city of Philistia, ten miles from the Mediterranean, and the last town in Palestine on the Egyptian frontier. Cf. ver. 21], over all the kings on this side the river ["Petty kings were numerous at this time in all the countries dependent upon Judæa" (Rawlinson). Cf. 1 Sam. vi. 16; 2 Sam. viii. 3-10; 1 Kings xx. 1. The "kings on this side the river" were those of Syria (2 Sam. viii. 6. Cf. x. 19) conquered by David, and of Philistia, 2 Sam. viii. 1]; and he had peace on all sides [Heb. *from all his servants*] round about him [in fulfilment of 1 Chron. xxii. 9. The objection of Thenius that this statement contradicts that of ch. xi. 23, sqq., is hardly deserving of serious notice. The reign of Solomon, on the whole, was undoubtedly a peaceful one.

Ver. 25.—And Judah and Israel [here we have the copula, the absence of which in ver. 20 suggests a corruption or confusion of the text] dwelt safely [Heb. *confidently*. Cf. Judges viii. 11; 1 Sam. xii. 11], every man under his vine and under his fig tree. [A proverbial expression (see 2 Kings xviii. 31, where it is used by Rabshakeh; Micah iv. 4; Zech. iii. 10) to denote rest and the undisturbed enjoyment of the fruits of the earth, not necessarily, as Keil, "the most costly products of the land." In invasions, raids, &c., it is still the custom of the East to cut and carry off all the crops, and fruits. Wordsworth notices that the vine often "clustered on the walls of houses (Psa. cxxviii. 3), or around and over the court-yards"], from Dan even to Beersheba [i.e., from the extreme northern to the extreme southern (not eastern, as the American translator of Bähr) boundary, Judg. xx. 1; 1 Sam. iii. 20; 2 Sam. iii. 10].

Ver. 26.—And Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses [40,000 is certainly a clerical error, probably for 4000 (i.e.,

מֵרֶבֶתִּים for מֵרֶבֶתִּים)]. For (1) in the parallel passage in Chronicles the number is stated as 4000. (2) 4000 agrees, and 40,000 does not, with the other numbers here given. The chariots, e.g., numbered 1400; the horsemen 12,000. Now for 1400 chariots the proper allowance of horses would be about 4000. We see from the monuments that it was customary to yoke two horses (seldom three) to a chariot; but a third or supernumerary horse was provided to meet emergencies or accidents. 4000 horses would hence be a liberal provision for Solomon's chariots, and it would also agree well with the number of his cavalry. 12,000 cavalry and 40,000 chariot horses are out of all proportion. As to stalls, it seems clear that in ancient, as in modern times, each horse had a separate crib (Vegetius in Bochart, quoted by Keil). Gesenius, however, understands by מֵרֶבֶתִּים, not stalls, but teams, or pairs] for his chariots [or chariotry: the word is singular and collective] and twelve hundred horsemen [rather, horses, i.e., riding or cavalry, as distinguished from chariot-horses above. See note on ch. i. 5. It has been supposed that this warlike provision is mentioned to account for the peace ("si vis pacem, para bellum") of Solomon's reign, and was designed to overawe the tributary kings. But it is more probable that the idea of the historian was, partly to exhibit the pomp and circumstance of Israel's greatest king, and partly to record a contravention of the law (Deut. xvii. 16), which was one of the precurors of his fall].

Ver. 27.—And those [rather, these, i.e., the officers mentioned vv. 7-19] officers provided victual for [Heb. *nourished*] king Solomon and for all that came unto king Solomon's table [we can hardly see here (with Keil) "a further proof of the blessings of peace." The words were probably suggested by the mental wonder how the cavalry, &c., could be maintained, and so the author states that this great number of horses and horsemen depended on the twelve purveyors for their food] every man in his mouth; they lacked nothing [rather, *suffered nothing to be lacking*]. So Gesen.; and the context seems to require it].

Ver. 28.—Barley also [the food of horses at the present day in the East, where oats are not grown. (Cf. Hom. Il. v. 196)] and straw for the horses and dromedaries [marg. *mules or swift beasts*. Coursers, or fleet horses of superior breed are intended. מֵרֶבֶתִּים = Germ. *Renner*. These coursers were for the use of the king's messengers or posts. See Esther viii. 10, 14] brought they unto the place where the officers were ["officers"]

is not in the Hebrew. The LXX. and Vulg. supply 'king' (the verb is singular, "was"). But the true meaning is to be gathered from chap. x. 26. There we learn that the horses were distributed in different towns throughout the land. To these different depôts, therefore, the purveyors must forward the provender. "unto the place where it should be" (וְהַיְיָ), not, as Rawlinson, "where the horses were." every man according to his charge.

Ver. 29.—And God gave Solomon [in fulfilment of the promise of chap. iii. 12] wisdom and understanding (חָכְמָה וְיָדְעָה, *wisdom, knowledge*; בְּרִיבְרִיבָה, *discernment, penetration*). The historian, after describing the prosperity of the realm, proceeds to speak of the personal endowments of its head] and largeness of heart exceeding much [the Easterns speak of the heart where we should talk of head or intellect (chap. iii. 9, 12; x. 24. Cf. Matt. xv. 19; Ephes. i. 18 (Greek); Heb. iv. 12). The "large heart" is the *ingenium copiosum*, as Thenius. These different words indicate the variety and scope of his talents, in agreement with ver. 33] as the sand that is on the sea shore. [Same expression in Gen. xxii. 17; xxxii. 12; xli. 49; Josh. xi. 4; Judg. vii. 12, &c.]

Ver. 30.—And Solomon's wisdom excelled [or exceeded; same word as in ver. 29] the wisdom of all the children of the east country [By the *Beni-Kedem* we are hardly to understand (with Rawlinson) a distinct tribe on the banks of the Euphrates. It is true that the land of the Beni-Kedem is identified with Haran or Mesopotamia (Gen. xxix. 1), and the mountains of Kedem (Num. xxiii. 7) are evidently those of Aram. It is also true that "the children of the East" are apparently distinguished from the Amalekites and Midianites (Judg. vi. 3, 33; vii. 12; viii. 10). It is probable, nevertheless, that the name is here employed to designate all the Arabian tribes east and south-east of Palestine—Sabæans, Idumeans, Temanites, Chaldeans. What their wisdom was like, we may see in the Book of Job. Cf. Jer. xlix. 7; Obad. 8] and all the wisdom of Egypt. [The learning of Egypt was of great repute in the Old World. It differed very considerably from the wisdom of Kedem, being scientific rather than gnomic (Isa. xix. 11, 12; xxxi. 2, 3; Acts vii. 22) and including geometry, astronomy, magic, and medicine. See Jos., Ant. viii. 2. 5; Herod. ii. 109. 160. Wilkinson, "Ancient Egyptians" vol. ii. pp. 316—465.]

Ver. 31.—For (Heb. *and*) he was wiser than all men [Keil adds "of his time," but we have no right to restrict the words to his contemporaries (see note on chap. iii. 12).—

It is very doubtful whether the names mentioned presently are those of contemporaries] than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda [It is impossible to say whether these are the same persons as the Ethan and Heman and Chalcol and Dara of 1 Chron. ii. 6, or the Ethan and Heman who were David's singers. The resemblance is certainly remarkable. Not only are the names practically the same (*Dara* may well be a clerical error: many MSS., together with the Syr. and Arab., read *Darda*), but they occur in the same order. Our first impression, consequently, is that the two lists represent the same persons, and if so, these four sages were the "sons" of Zerah, the son of Judah (Gen. xxxviii. 30). But against this it is urged that Ethan is here called the Ezrahite, as are both Ethan and Heman in the titles of Psalms lxxxix. and lxxxviii. respectively. The resemblance, however, of Ezrahite (עֲזָרָהִי) to Zerahite (זֵרָהִי) is so close as to suggest identity rather than difference. There is, perhaps, more weight in the objection that Chalcol and Darda are here distinctly said to be "the sons of Mahol," though here again it has been observed that Mahol (מַחֹל) means *pipe or dance*, and the "sons of Mahol," consequently, may merely be a synonym, agreeably to Eastern idiom (Eccles. xii. 4, with which cf. 2 Sam. xix. 35), for "musicians." We may therefore allow that the four names may be those of sons (*i.e.*, descendants) of Zerah. But the question now presents itself: Are Ethan and Heman to be identified with the well-known preceptors of David? Against their identity are these facts: 1. That Ethan the singer (1 Chron. vi. 31) is described as the son of Kishi (1 Chron. vi. 44), elsewhere called Kushaiah (*ib.* xv. 17), and of the family of Merari; as a Levite that is, instead of a descendant of Judah, and that Heman, who is called the singer, or musician (*ib.* vi. 33), and the "king's seer" (*ib.* xxv. 5) is said to be a son of Joel, a grandson of the prophet Samuel, and one of the Kohathite Levites (*ib.* xv. 17). The first impression in this case, therefore, is that they *must* be distinct. But it should be remembered (1) that the sons—in the strict sense—of Zerah are nowhere else named for their wisdom, whereas the royal singer and seer probably owed their appointments to their genius, and (2) that though Levites, they may have been incorporated (possibly like Jair, through marriage—see note on ver. 13 above, and cf. Ezra ii. 61) into the tribe of Judah. "The Levite in Judg. xvii. 7 is spoken of as belonging to the family of Judah, because he dwelt in Bethlehem of Judah, and Elkanah the Levite is called an

Ephraimite in 1 Sam. i. 1, because in his civil capacity he was incorporated into the tribe of Ephraim" (Keil). It must be admitted, however, that the *natural* interpretation of 1 Chron. ii. 6 is that the "sons" of Zerah there mentioned were his immediate and actual descendants, and not Levites who long centuries afterwards were somehow incorporated into his family. But the question is one of so much nicety that it is hardly possible to come to a positive conclusion] and his fame [Heb. name] was in all [Heb. all the] nations round about. [Cf. x. 24, &c.]

Ver. 32.—And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five. [Of the former, less than one-third are preserved in the Book of Proverbs (see i. 1; xxv. 1); the rest are lost to us. The Book of Ecclesiastes, even if the composition of Solomon, can hardly be described as proverbs. Of his songs all have perished, except the Canticles, and possibly Psalms lxxii., cxvii. (see the titles), and, according to some, cxviii.]

Ver. 33.—And he spake of [*i. e.*, discoursed, treated, not necessarily wrote] trees [In his proverbs and songs he exceeded the children of the East. But his knowledge was not only speculative, but scientific. In his acquaintance with natural history he outshone

the Egyptians, ver. 20], from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon [A favourite illustration. The Jews had a profound admiration for all trees, and of these they justly regarded the cedar as king. Cf. Judg. ix. 15; Ps. lxxx. 10; civ. 16; Cant. v. 15; Ezek. xxxi. 3] unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall [His knowledge, *i. e.*, embraced the least productions of nature as well as the greatest. The common hyssop (Exod. xii. 22; Lev. xiv. 4) can hardly be intended here, as that often attains a considerable height (two feet), but a miniature variety or moss-like hyssop in appearance, probably *Orthotrichum saxatile*; he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes. ["The usual Biblical division of the animal kingdom" (Rawlinson). The arrangement is hardly according to manner of motion (Bähr). If anything, it is according to elements—earth, sky, sea. Both Jewish and Mohammedan writers abound in exaggerated or purely fabulous accounts of Solomon's attainments and gifts. We may see the beginning of these in Jos., Ant. viii. 2. 5.]

Ver. 34.—And there came of all people [Heb. the peoples, nations] to hear the wisdom of Solomon [ch. x. 1], from all the kings of the earth [*i. e.*, messengers, ambassadors, as in the next chapter], which had heard of his wisdom.

## HOMILETICS.

Vers. 20—25.—*The Golden Age.* It has been cynically said that men always place the golden age in the past or in the future. Possibly they are not so far wrong after all. For, if our historian is true, there *has* been such a period in the history of the world. And if the Holy Gospel is true, there *will* be such a period hereafter. The reign of Solomon was the Augustan, the golden age, of Israel. The reign of Jesus, of which Solomon's empire was a foreshadowing, will be the golden age of the world. Let us then consider what light the first period—the past—throws upon the future; in what respects, that is to say, the sway of Solomon is a type and prefiguration of the holy and beneficent rule of our Redeemer. Observe—

I. THE MONARCH. 1. *He was the wisest of men.* This was the root of the universal prosperity. He was *capax imperii*; he had the understanding to judge that great people (ch. iii. 9). From a throne established in equity and intelligence (Psa. lxxii. 2) flowed a tide of blessing through the land. But "Messiah the Prince" is the Incarnation of Wisdom. He is "made unto us wisdom" (1 Cor. i. 30). In Him "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. ii. 3). He is "the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. i. 24). 2. *He ruled in the fear of the Lord.* The precept of his father (2 Sam. xxiii. 3) was not forgotten (ch. iii. 6—9). Compare the account of Messiah's reign—the reign of the Branch of the root of *Jesse*—in Isaiah ii. 2—5. This "King shall reign in righteousness" (Isa. xxxii. 1).

II. THE EMPIRE. 1. *Its extent.* He had dominion from "the river to the border of Egypt," "from Tiphshah even to Azzah." The petty kings brought presents and did fealty. Now observe how Psalm lxxii., descriptive or prophetic of the reign of Solomon, is also prophetic of the reign of our blessed Lord. Of Him alone is it strictly true that "He shall have dominion from sea to sea," &c. (ver. 8), that "all kings shall fall down before Him," &c. True, His enemies do not yet "lick

the dust" (ver. 9), for "we see not yet all things put under Him," but we know that all power is given to Him in heaven and in earth (Matt. xxviii. 18), and that "the kingdoms of this world" shall "become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ" (Rev. xi. 15). 2. *Its duration.* Solomon's was a long reign, and would have been much longer (ch. iii. 14) had he been faithful. But He who shall possess "the throne of his father David" "shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke i. 32, 33; cf. Dan. ii. 44; vii. 14, 27; Psa. cxlv. 13; Micah iv. 7).

III. THE SUBJECTS. 1. *Their number.* They were "many," "as the sand which is by the sea in multitude." Compare Dan. vii. 10, "ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him," and Rev. v. 11; vii. 9, "a great multitude which no man could number." 2. *Their character.* Solomon's sway extended over Gentiles as well as Jews (vers. 21, 24). A foreshadowing of the inclusion of Gentiles in the kingdom of Christ. In the one fold, two flocks (John x. 16). Compare Acts xxvi. 23; xxviii. 28; Rom. xi. 15; Ephes. iii. 6; ii. 14, &c. There are three particulars, however, in which the subjects of our Lord will differ from those of Solomon. (1) There will be no bondage, no forced labour, none to bear burdens. (2) The free labour of love will require no rest (ch. v. 14). The servants who serve Him "rest not day and night" (Rev. iv. 8), yet keep perpetual sabbath (Heb. iv. 9.) (3) All shall be holy. No Jeroboam shall "lift up his hand" against the Lord. He shall be all and in all.

IV. THE REIGN. 1. *It was peaceful* (ver. 24; cf. ch. v. 4 and 1 Chron. xxii. 9). In Messiah's reign they shall "beat their swords into ploughshares," &c. (Isa. ii. 4). Into His court "neither foe entereth nor friend departeth." He is the King and Prince of Peace (Heb. vii. 2). 2. *It was joyous and prosperous.* "Eating and drinking and making merry." "*Ibi festivitas sine fine*" (Augustine). And Athanasius speaks τῶν ἁγίων καὶ τῶν ἀγγέλων αἰεὶ ἰορᾶζοντων. The vine and the fig-tree may remind us of the tree of life with its twelve manner of fruits; the security (ver. 25) of the pillars in the temple of God (Rev. iii. 12). "In his days Israel shall dwell safely" (Jer. xxiii. 6; cf. Isa. xi. 6—9). That golden age lasted "all the days of Solomon" (ver. 23). That which is to come shall be coeternal with the endless life of the Son of God (Heb. vii. 16; John xiv. 19; Psa. xvi. 11).

Ver. 31.—"*The greatest, wisest, meanest of mankind.*" It is a spirited and glowing description which the historian here gives of Solomon's wisdom. We may believe that it was not without a pardonable pride that he recounted the rich endowments and the widespread fame of Israel's greatest monarch. But it is really one of the saddest chapters in the whole of Scripture—and one of the most instructive. Manifold as were his gifts, marvellous as was his wisdom, they did not preserve him from falling. It is a strange, shuddering contrast, the record of his singular powers and faculties (ch. iv. 29—34), and the story of his shameful end (ch. xi. 1—14). How came it to pass that a man so highly gifted and blessed of God made such complete shipwreck of faith and good conscience; that over the grave of the very greatest and wisest of men must be written, "Fallen, fallen, fallen, fallen from his high estate"? Let us consider (1) *The character of his wisdom*; and (2) *The causes of his fall.* As to (1), observe—

I. IT WAS UNPRECEDENTED AND HAS SINCE BEEN UNEQUALLED. The sages of Hebrew antiquity, the shrewd Arabians, the sagacious Egyptians, he has eclipsed them all. "Wiser than all men," such was the judgment of his contemporaries. And such is also the verdict of posterity. At the present day, among Jews, Christians, and Mohammedans, no fame equals his. Among the wise men of the world Solomon stands *facile princeps*.

II. IT WAS PRODIGIOUS. To the writer it seemed inexhaustible, illimitable. He can only compare it to "the sand that is on the sea shore;" and he could hardly use a more forcible illustration of its boundless and infinite extent.

III. IT WAS VARIED AND COMPREHENSIVE. It was both scientific and sententious. He was at once philosopher and poet. Nothing was too great and nothing too small for him. It is seldom that a man excels in more than one or two branches of

knowledge, but Solomon was distinguished in all. He could discourse with equal profundity of the cedar and the hyssop, of beast and bird. It was lofty, it was wide, it was deep.

IV. IT WAS TRUE WISDOM. Not superficial, and not mere book learning. Book-worms are often mere pedants. Students often know little of the world and know less of themselves. But Solomon knew man ("The proper study of mankind is man") knew himself. He needed not the charge, *γνώθι σεαυτὸν*. He was not one of the *μετρωροσοφιστῆαι* whom the Attic poet justly ridicules (Aristoph. Nub. 360). His writings proved that he had studied the world, and was familiar with the heart.

V. IT WAS GOD-GIVEN WISDOM (ver. 29; cf. 3, 12, 28; Dan. ii. 21). Not "the wisdom of this world which is foolishness with God" (1 Cor. iii. 8), and which "descendeth not from above" (James iii. 15), but that which the Supreme wisdom teacheth. (Cf. Prov. ii. 6.) Solomon was truly *θεοδιδάκτος*.

VI. IT WAS GOD-FEARING WISDOM. "The fear of the Lord," he says, "is the beginning of wisdom" (Cf. Prov. i. 7; ix. 10.) There is a wisdom (falsely so called) which dishonours and despises God. This did not Solomon's. The Proverbs point men to the Lord.

VII. HIS WISDOM STILL WARNS AND TEACHES THE WORLD. Some of the thousand and five songs (Pss. lxxii., cxxvi.) are still chanted by the Catholic Church. (It is significant, though, how few of this vast number remain to us. David was not as wise as Solomon, nor so prolific a writer, but *his* songs have survived in considerable numbers. They are among the greatest treasures of Christendom. Piety is before wisdom. "Knowledge shall vanish away," but "charity never faileth.") Some of his Proverbs are still read to the congregation. He still warns the young and the sensual (chs. ii.—vii.) He is fallen, but his words stand. Now turn we to

(2) *The causes of his fall.* How came this wisest of men, without fellow before or since, whose wisdom was so profound, so real, so boundless, whose wisdom came from God and led to God, and who though dead yet speaketh, how came *he* of all men to go astray? Was it not—

I. BECAUSE THE HEART WAS NOT KEPT. The intellect, *i.e.*, was developed and cultivated at the expense or to the neglect of the spiritual life. "His wives turned away his heart." But how came one of so much wisdom to let his wives turn it away? Because the wisdom had dwarfed and overshadowed the soul; because the moral did not keep pace with the intellectual growth, and it became flaccid and yielding. It is dangerous for wisdom to increase unless piety increases with it. The higher the tower, the broader should be its foundations. If all the weight and width is at the top, it will come to the ground with a crash. Even so, if wisdom is not to destroy its possessor, the basis of love and piety must be broadened. "Knowledge bloweth up, but charity buildeth up." The head of a colossus needs the trunk of a colossus to sustain it.

II. BECAUSE HIS OWN PRECEPTS WERE NOT KEPT. It was because he leaned to his own understanding that this giant form fell prostrate. It was because he forgot his warnings against the strange woman that he fell a prey to strange women. The keeper of the vineyards did not keep his own (Cant. i. 6). He was not true to himself, and he soon proved false to his God. After preaching to others, he himself became a castaway. A solemn warning this to every preacher and teacher that he should not do

"As some ungracious pastors do,  
Show men the steep and thorny road to heaven,  
While, like a puffed and reckless libertine,  
Himself the primrose path of dalliance tread  
And recks not his own rede."

III. BECAUSE PRIDE POISONED HIS WISDOM AND PERVERTED HIS GIFTS. There was no decay of mental power; the force was unabated, but it was misdirected. Pride took her place at the helm. It is pride, not sensuality, accounts for his army of wives and concubines. But if pride brought them, pleasure kept them. And

when he put his heart into their keeping, they turned him about at their will (cf. James iii. 8, 4). The heart carries the intellect along with it. (Here again compare his own words, Prov. xvi. 18, and iv. 23; cf. Dan. v. 20.) Magnificent Solomon, unequalled in wisdom, how art thou fallen from heaven! Aye, and if we could but draw aside the veil; if we could but visit the spirits in prison (1 Pet. iii. 19), we might perchance find among them one clothed of yore "in purple and fine linen" (Luke xvi. 19; cf. xii. 27), and who "fared sumptuously every day," and looking into the anguished face might find it was none other than the brilliant and illustrious son of David, the chosen type of the Messiah, the very wisest and greatest of mankind. "The wisest, greatest, *meanest* of mankind." We know of whom these words were spoken. But their true application is not to England's greatest chancellor, but to Israel's greatest king.

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 20—25.—*A Prosperous Reign.* This chapter presents a general view of the prosperity of Solomon's reign, much of which was owing to the extraordinary glory of the reign of David. Such a rule as David's sowed seeds of blessing in the land which it was Solomon's privilege to reap. David united the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, and Solomon came into quiet possession of the completed commonwealth. David laid the foundation, Solomon developed the fabric and adorned it. Each succeeding generation inherits the good stored up for it by those that went before. Happy they who are the descendants of a noble ancestry. If it is true that "the sins of the fathers are visited on the children," &c., equally true is it that "the good men do lives after them." We all reap the fruits of the care and toil and suffering of our fathers. "Other men labour and we enter into their labours." The text suggests—

I. THE GRANDEUR OF A MULTITUDINOUS PEOPLE. "Judah and Israel were many, &c. What is the secret of the feeling of solemnity akin to awe with which we gaze upon a vast concourse of human beings? It is the fulness of life—not mere physical force, but thinking, emotional life, with all its latent capacities that impresses us. But think of a *great nation*—what a world of busy, many-sided life is here! What complex relations; what slumbering energies; what rich resources; what mines of undeveloped thought; what tides of feeling; what boundless possibilities of good or evil, of glory or of shame! Consider the mutual action and reaction of the individual and corporate life in such a nation; the conditions of its well-being; the tremendous responsibility of those who are set to guide its forces, to guard its interests, to control its destinies. We can understand the trembling of spirit Moses felt when he looked on the thronging host of Israel in the wilderness. "Wherefore layest thou the burden of all this people upon me?" &c. (Numbers xi. 11). So with Solomon—"Who is able to judge this thy so great a people?" (ch. iii. 9). Rulers who show that they are alive to the dread significance of their position claim our deepest sympathy. Well may we pray for them (1 Tim. ii. 2) that they may be inspired by the right spirit, prompted by purest motives, never allowed to fall into the sin

"Of making their high place the lawless perch  
Of winged ambitions."

II. THE FAR-REACHING INFLUENCE OF A WISE AND RIGHTEOUS RULE. "And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms," &c. (ver. 21). These were tributary kingdoms. It was not the division of one great empire into many provinces, but the recognition by outlying principalities of the superior sovereignty of the Hebrew monarch. What was the cause of this wide-spread influence? Won by force of arms in David's reign, it was retained, probably, by force of good government and beneficent policy. Israel presented an example of a well-ordered state—entered, under Solomon, on a remarkable career as a commercial people—Solomon himself a royal merchant. Note his sagacity in "making affinity" with the king of Egypt (ch. iii.

1), and in his treaty with Hiram, king of Tyre (ch. v.) This was the secret of Solomon's influence. As far as we can judge, it was not so much the result of overmastering force, but of a policy by which the bonds of mutual confidence and helpfulness were strengthened. We are reminded that this is the real stability of any nation—the spirit of justice, integrity, beneficence that inspires it, coupled with the disposition to form friendly and helpful relations. The influence that arises from the display of military strength not worthy to be compared with this. "Righteousness exalteth a nation" (Prov. xiv. 34). "The throne is established by righteousness" (Prov. xvi. 12). Every nation is strong and influential just in proportion as its internal order and external relations are conformed to the law of righteousness.

III. THE PEACE THAT IS THE RESULT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. "He had peace on all sides round about him" (ver. 24). This was the fulfilment of a prophecy that attended his very birth. David, the "man of war," yearned for a time of peace, and the yearning expressed itself in the names he gave his sons—Absalom, "the father of peace;" Shelomoh, Solomon, "the peaceful one." The peacefulness of Solomon's reign was the natural outcome of his own personal characteristics, and of the policy he adopted. "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Prov. xvi. 7). False maxim of international life, "If you want peace prepare for war"—multiply the means and provocations of strife! Maintain an attitude of distrust, defiance, menace! Men have strange confidence in the pacifying effect of desolating force. They "make a solitude and call it peace," forgetting that tranquillity thus gained does but cover with a deceptive veil the latent seeds of hostility and revenge. How much better the Scripture idea, "The work of righteousness shall be peace," &c. (Isa. xxxii. 17); "The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (James iii. 18).

IV. THE SECURITY THAT SPRINGS FROM PEACE (ver. 25). "And Judah and Israel dwelt safely," &c.—this became almost a proverbial expression (2 Kings xviii. 31; Micah iv. 4; Zechariah iii. 10). Suggests the quiet enjoyment of the good of life, the fruit of honest labour, under the protection of impartial law. This is the result of peace. Often urged that war is an education in some of the nobler elements of national character; safeguard against luxury and indolent self-indulgence, &c. But may not these good results be bought at too terrible a price? Are there no other fields for the healthy development of a nation's energies?—no foes of ignorance, and vice, and social wrong, to say nothing of forms of beneficent world-wide enterprise, that call them forth in manly exercise? It is the reign of peace that fosters the industries that enrich the life of a people, and the beneficent activities that beautify it. 'Tis this that "makes the country flourish and the city smile." The happy condition of things here described is said to have lasted through "all the days of Solomon;" chiefly true of the earlier part of his reign. Sins and disasters involved the latter part in gloom. So far, however, we have in it a prophecy of the reign of David's "greater Son." Psa. lxxii. has its partial fulfilment in the days of Solomon; but the grandeur of its prophetic meaning is realized only in the surpassing glory of His kingdom who is the true "Prince of righteousness and peace."—W.

Ver. 33.—*The voice of Nature speaking for God.* This is given as an example of the wisdom for which Solomon was justly famed. His information was at once accurate and far reaching. Nothing escaped the notice of his observant eye, nothing was too insignificant to deserve his attention. The "hyssop" which was remarkable neither for size nor beauty, neither for fragrance nor utility, as well as the noble "cedar," was the subject of his research and discourse.

I. THE GERM OF HIS KNOWLEDGE WAS FROM GOD. He was enriched with natural capacities above the average, as the preceding chapter shows. Men do differ widely in keenness of perception, in retentiveness of memory, in power of imagination, in love or dislike for the studies of natural science. A remembrance of this is of peculiar value to us in the training of children. The dullard in mathematics may prove the scholar in classics, &c. The wisdom of the Divine arrangement which

makes differences between us in our natural tastes and capacities is seen in this, that it is on the one hand a *blessing to society*, enabling all spheres of life to be filled, and on the other a *means of culture* to character, by calling forth our sympathy, our forbearance, and our generosity in rejoicing over the triumphs of others.

II. THE GROWTH OF HIS KNOWLEDGE WAS FROM STUDY. Solomon did not have all the mysteries of nature unveiled to him by revelation. No "royal road to learning" existed then, or ever. His studiousness as a youth may be fairly inferred from his strenuous exhortations to diligence and his frequent rebukes of sloth. Out of the depths of personal experience he declared that the "hand of the diligent maketh rich"—in thought, as well as in purse. See also Proverbs x. 5; xix. 24; xxvi. 13, &c. Press home on the young the value of habits of diligence. Illustrate by examples from biography. It would be interesting to know with certainty the substance of Solomon's discourses. Probably he knew more than any other of his own day of horticulture, physiology, and kindred topics. But the reference is not so much to scientific treatises and orderly classifications as to the ethical use he made of the phenomena of nature. This may be inferred, partly from the fact that in those days, and in Eastern lands, this rather than that would be accounted "wisdom;" and partly from such writings of his as are still extant—certain of the Psalms, the Canticles, and the Proverbs. Study the text in the light thrown by these books, and it will be seen that through Solomon's wisdom the voice of Nature spoke to his people for God, in the same fashion as in far nobler tones it spoke afterwards through Him who made the lilies whisper of God's care, and the fallow fields speak of Christian duty. Inanimate things and dumb creatures spoke to Solomon's people through him, and should speak to us.

I. THE CREATURES OF GOD SPEAK TO US OF DIVINE CARE. Solomon, like his father, could say, "The heavens declare the glory of *God*;" or like One greater than himself, "Consider the lilies of the field," &c. See how he speaks (Prov. xvi. 15) of the cloud of the latter rain that filled out the ears of corn; of the dew upon the grass (Prov. xix. 12); of the gladness of nature, when the winter is past and the rain is over and gone (Cant. ii. 11—13). To see God's hand in all this is true wisdom. The phenomena are visible to pure intellect, but He who is behind them can only be "spiritually discerned." Many now are losing sight of God because the mental perception only is employed, and believed to be necessary. Once the world appeared to men as the expression of God's thought, the outcome of His will. Now some look on it as you may look on a friend who is not dead so far as natural life is concerned, but is worse than dead, because intelligence and will are gone, and he is an idiot! May we be aroused by the Divine Spirit to yearn for the lost Father, for the vanished heaven.

II. THE CREATURES OF GOD SPEAK TO US OF HUMAN DEPENDENCE. Neither "hyssop" nor "cedar" can grow without Heaven's benediction, and of every "beast," and "fowl," and "creeping thing," and "fish," it may be said, "these all wait upon Thee." Man, with all his attainments and powers, cannot create a single element required by his life. He can use God's gifts, but they are God's gifts still; and because He is good, our Lord bids us learn the lessons of content and trust (Matt. vi. 25—34). We depend on these creatures in the natural world for food, clothing, shelter, &c., and they only live because God cares for them.

III. THE CREATURES OF GOD SPEAK TO US OF DAILY DUTIES. How often in Proverbs we are reminded of that. Agur, who had wisdom similar to that of Solomon, speaks of the diligence of the ant, of the perseverance of the spider, of the strength in union of the locusts, of the conscious weakness and provided shelter of the conies. Solomon speaks of the blessing that came to the keeper of the fig tree (Prov. xxvii. 18) as an encouragement to servants to be faithful and diligent. Adduce similar examples.

IV. THE CREATURES OF GOD SPEAK TO US OF MORAL DANGERS. Take three examples of this. 1. In Canticles ii. 15 Solomon alludes to "the little foxes who so stealthily approach and spoil the vines and their tender grapes" as illustrations of the small evils which desolate men's hearts and homes. Apply this. 2. Then in Proverbs xxiv. 30—34 he draws a picture of a neglected garden, grown over with

thorns and nettles, and shows how looking on it he "received instruction," and warning against sloth. 3. Again turn to Proverbs xxiii. 32, where, speaking of intoxicating drink, he says, "at last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder." It was in this way he referred to the animals and plants around him.

V. THE CREATURES OF GOD SPEAK TO US OF SOCIAL EVILS. In those days, as in other days, foolish favourites, and unworthy men, were exalted to places of trust and honour. Seeing it Solomon draws again on his observance of nature; and having noted the disorder and injury caused by untimely storms, says, "As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest, so honour is not seemly in a fool" (Prov. xxvi. 1). Another example of this teaching occurs in Proverbs xxviii. 3. A heavy rain after long drought, raising the streamlets to floods, would sweep away the mud-built dwellings of the poor and the harvest already reaped; and to those who had seen that the wise king said, "A poor man that oppresseth the poor is like a sweeping rain which leaveth no food."

VI. THE CREATURES OF GOD SPEAK TO US OF NOBLE POSSIBILITIES. Solomon saw growth around him on every side. The seed dropped in the crevice of a wall was not forgotten, but appeared in the "hyssop;" and the sapling, which a child could break, at last became the great "cedar of Lebanon." God's benediction and man's toil developed life; and the feeblest was not forgotten, the smallest not despised. We can imagine how from such facts Solomon would draw lessons of trust and hope.

IN CONCLUSION let us learn from the subject the following lessons—1. *Never be afraid of the teachings of natural science.* Show how geology, botany, astronomy, &c., are regarded by some Christians with terror, as if their influence would affect the spiritual truths revealed of God. Demonstrate the folly of this. Let theology recognize the sisterhood of science. 2. *Never become absorbed in pursuits which are merely intellectual.* The soul of man needs more than his intellect can win. The "hunger and thirst after righteousness" only a living God can satisfy. Use the suggestions of nature as the witnesses of God. 3. *Never neglect the wonderful works of God.* Many a frivolous life would be redeemed from vacuity and ennui if young people were trained to observe and take interest in the habits of animal life and the marvels of inanimate existence. Show the wholesomeness of such studies, as those of Charles Kingsley and others. But let us walk through this fair world as those who follow Christ, and then from the fragrant lilies and golden harvest fields He will speak to us of our Father in heaven.—A. B.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER V. 1—18.

**SOLOMON AND HIRAM.**—The somewhat detailed description which we have had in chapter iv. of Solomon's pomp and power and wisdom, is followed in chapters v. sqq. by an account of what, in Jewish eyes, was the great undertaking of his reign, and, indeed, the great glory of Hebrew history—the erection and adornment of the Temple. And as this was largely due to the assistance he received—both in the shape of materials and labourers—from the Tyrian king, we have in the first place an account of his alliance with Hiram.

Ver. 1.—And Hiram [In vers. 10, 18, the name is spelled *Hiram* (חִירָם)], whilst in Chronicles, with one exception (1 Chron.

xiv. 1, where the *Keri*, however, follows the prevailing usage), the name appears as *Hiram* (חִירָם). In Josephus it is *Ἡρώμος*. This prince and his friendly relations with the Jews are referred to by the Tyrian historians, of whose materials the Greek writers Dios and Menander of Ephesus (*temp.* Alexander the Great) availed themselves. According to Dios (quoted by Josephus *contr.* Apion, i. 17) Hiram was the son of Abibaal. Menander states that the building of the temple was commenced in the twelfth year of Hiram's reign, which lasted 34 years (*Jos. Ant.* viii. 3. 1; *Contr.* Ap. i. 18). Hiram is further said to have married his daughter to Solomon and to have engaged with him in an intellectual encounter which took the shape of riddles] king of Tyre [Heb. חִירָם, *rock*, so called because of the rocky island on which old Tyre was built, sometimes called

צָרְתָר, the fortress of, or fortified Tyre (Josh. xix. 29; 2 Sam. xxiv. 7, &c.) The capital of Phœnicia. In earlier times, Sidon would seem to have been the more important town; hence the Canaanites who inhabited this region were generally called Zidonians, as in ver. 6] sent his servants [*legatos*, *Vatablus*] unto Solomon (The Vat. LXX. has here a strange reading, "To anoint Solomon," &c. The object of this embassy was evidently to recognize and congratulate the youthful king (the Syriac has a gloss, "and he blessed him," which well represents one object of the embassy) and at the same time to make overtures of friendship. An alliance, or good understanding, with Israel was then, as at a later period (Acts xii. 20) of great importance to them of Tyre and Sidon. Their narrow strip of seaboard furnished no corn lands, so that their country depended upon Israel for its nourishment]; for he had heard that they had anointed him king in the room of David his father [*i.e.*, he had heard of the death of David and the accession of Solomon; possibly of the events narrated in chap. i.]: for Hiram was ever [Heb. *all the days*: *i.e.*, of their reigns; so long as they were contemporary sovereigns] a lover of David.

Ver. 2.—And Solomon sent to Hiram. [According to Josephus (Ant. viii. 2. 6), he wrote a letter, which together with Hiram's reply (ver. 8) was preserved among the public archives of Tyre. The account of 2 Chronicles ii., which as a rule is more detailed than that of the Kings, begins here. It does not notice, that is to say, the prior embassy of the Phœnician king, as the object of the chronicler is merely to narrate the measures taken for the erection of the temple], saying [The return embassy gave Solomon the opportunity to ask for the timber, &c., that he desired.]

Ver. 3.—Thou knowest how that David my father could not build an house [Hiram could not fail to know this, as his relations with David had been close and intimate. Not only had he "sent cedar trees and carpenters and masons" to build David's house (2 Sam. v. 11), but "they of Tyre brought much cedar wood to David" (1 Chron. xxii. 4) for the house of the Lord] unto the name of the Lord [*i.e.*, to be dedicated to the Lord as His shrine and habitation (cf. Dent. xii. 5, 11; and ch. viii. 18, 19, 20, &c.)] for the wars [Heb., *war*. As we have singular noun and plural verb, Ewald, Rawlinson, *al.* assume that *war* stands for *adversaries*, as the next clause seems to imply. Bähr and Keil, however, with greater reason, interpret, "for the war with which they surrounded him;" a construction (בַּמִּלְחָמָה with

double accusative) which is justified by Psa. cix. 3] until the Lord put them under the soles of his feet [until, *i.e.*, He trampled them down. The same image is found in some of David's psalms, *e.g.*, vii. 5; lx. 12; cf. Psa. viii. 6; xci. 13; Isa. lxiii. 3; Rom. xvi. 20; Eph. i. 22; Heb. ii. 8.]

Ver. 4.—But now the Lord my God hath given me rest [In fulfilment of the promise of 1 Chron. xxii. 9. David had had a brief rest (2 Sam. vii. 1), Solomon's was permanent. He was "a man of rest"] on every side [Heb. *round about*, same word as in ver. 3, and in 1 Chron. xxii. 9], so that there is neither adversary [Hadad and Rezon, of whom this word is used (1 Kings xi. 14, 23), apparently belonged to a somewhat later period of his reign] nor evil occurrence [Rather, "occurrence," or "plague" (עֲוֹנָה), *i.e.*, "rebellion, famine, pestilence, or other suffering" (Bähr). David had had many such "occurrences" (2 Sam. xv. 14; xx. 1; xxi. 1; xxiv. 15).]

Ver. 5.—And, behold, I purpose [Heb. *behold me saying* (וַיִּבְרַח, with infin. expresses purpose. Cf. Exod. ii. 14; 2 Sam. xxi. 16)] to build an house unto the name of the Lord my God, as the Lord spake unto David my father, saying [2 Sam. vii. 12, 13. He thus gives Hiram to understand that he is carrying out his father's plans, and plans which had the Divine sanction, and that this is no fanciful project of a young prince], Thy son whom I will set upon thy throne in thy room, he shall build an [Heb. *the*] house unto my name.

Ver. 6.—Now therefore command thou that they hew me cedar trees out of Lebanon [Heb. *the Lebanon*, *i.e.*, the White (*sc.* mountain). "It is the *Mont Blanc* of Palestine" (Porter); but whether it is so called because of its summits of snow or because of the colour of its limestone is uncertain. Practically, the cedars are now found in one place only, though Ehrenberg is said to have found them in considerable numbers to the north of the road between Baalbek and Tripoli. "At the head of Wady Kadisha there is a vast recess in the central ridge of Lebanon, some eight miles in diameter. Above it rise the loftiest summits in Syria, streaked with perpetual snow. . . . In the very centre of this recess, on a little irregular knoll, stands the clump of cedars" (*Ibid.*, Handbook, ii. p. 534), over 6,000 feet above the level of the sea. It would seem as if that part of Lebanon where the cedars grew belonged to Hiram's dominion. "The northern frontier of Canaan did not reach as far as Bjerreh" (Keil), where the cedar grove is now. The idea of some older writers that the cedars belonged to Solomon, and

that he only asked Hiram for artificers ("that they *hew* me cedar trees," &c.) is negated by ver. 10. It is true that "all Lebanon" was given to Israel (Josh. xiii. 5), but they did not take it. They did not drive out the Zidonians (ver. 6; Judg. i. 31) or possess "the land of the Gibletes" (ver. 6; Judg. iii. 3). It should be stated here, however, that the cedar of Scripture probably included other varieties than that which now alone bears the name (see on ver. 8)], and my servants shall be with thy servants [i.e., sharing and lightening the work]: and unto thee will I give hire for thy servants [Solomon engaged to pay and did pay both Hiram and his subjects for the services of the latter, and he paid both in kind. See below, on ver. 11] according to all that thou shalt appoint [This would seem to have been 20,000 measures of wheat and 20 measures of pure oil annually, ver. 11]: for thou knowest that there is not among us any that can skill [Heb. *knoweth*, same word as before] to hew timber like unto the Zidonians [Propter vicina nemora.

Grotius, *Sidon* (Heb. שִׁדְוֹן), means "fishing." See note on ver. 18. By profane, as well as sacred writers, the Phœnicians are often described by the name Zidonians, no doubt for the reason mentioned in the note on ver. 1. See Homer, *Iliad* vi. 290; xxiii. 743; *Odyss.* iv. 84, 618; xvii. 424. Cf. Virg. *Æn.* i. 677, 678; iv. 545, &c. Gen. x. 15; Judg. i. 31; iii. 3; 1 Kings xi. 1, 33, &c. "The mechanical skill of the Phœnicians generally, and of the Zidonians in particular, is noticed by many ancient writers," Rawlinson, who cites instances in his note. But what deserves especial notice here is the fact that the Zidonians constructed their houses of *wood*, and were celebrated from the earliest times as skillful builders. The fleets which the Phœnicians constructed for purposes of commerce would ensure them a supply of clever workmen. Wordsworth aptly remarks on the part the heathen thus took in rearing a temple for the God of Jacob. Cf. *Isa.* lx. 10, 13.]

Ver. 7.—And it came to pass, when Hiram heard the words of Solomon [reported by his ambassadors], that he rejoiced greatly [see note on ver. 1. The continuance of the *entente cordiale* was ensured], and said, Blessed be the Lord [In 2 Chron. ii. 12, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel that made heaven and earth." We are not warranted by the expression of the text in concluding that Hiram believed in the exclusive divinity of the God of Israel, or "identified Jehovah with Melkarth his god" (Rawlinson), much less that he was a proselyte to the faith of David and Solomon.

All that is certain is that he believed the Lord, as did most ancient nations ("Der Polytheismus ist nicht ausschliesslich. Bähr), to be one of the gods many. A belief in Jehovah as God was quite compatible with the retention of a firm faith in Baal and Astarte. It is also possible that he here adopts a language which he knew would be acceptable to Solomon, or the historian may have given us his thoughts in a Hebrew dress. It is noticeable that the LXX. has simply εὐλογητός ὁ θεός] which hath given unto David a wise son [Compare 1 Kings i. 48; ii. 9. The proof of wisdom lay in Solomon's fulfilling his wise father's purposes, and in his care for the worship of God. "Wise," however, is not used here in the sense of "pious," as Bähr affirms. In Hiram's lips the word meant discreet, sagacious. He would hardly recognize the fear of the Lord as the beginning of wisdom] over this great people.

Ver. 8.—And Hiram sent to Solomon [in writing, 2 Chron. ii. 11. It is instructive to remember in connexion with this fact that, according to the universal belief of antiquity, the use of letters, i.e., the art of writing, was communicated to the Greeks by the Phœnicians. Gesenius, indeed, holds that the invention of letters is also due to them. See the interesting remarks of Mr. Twisleton, *Dict. Bib.* ii. pp. 866—868], saying, I have considered the things which thou sentest unto me for [Heb. *heard the things* (i.e., message) which thou sentest unto me]: and I will do all thy desire concerning [Heb. *in*, i.e., as to] timber [or trees] of cedar [Heb. *cedars*] and timber of fir [Heb. *trees of cypresses*. This is, perhaps, the proper place to inquire what trees are intended by the words עֵץ אֲרֵז, and עֵץ חָוֵל, here respectively translated "cedar" and "fir." As to the first, it is impossible to restrict the word to the one species (*Pinus cedrus* or *Cedrus Libani*) which is now known as the cedar of Lebanon, or, indeed, to any single plant. That the *Cedrus Libani*, one of the most magnificent of trees, is meant in such passages as Ezekiel xxxi., Psa. xcii. 12, &c., admits of no manner of doubt. It is equally clear, however, that in other passages the term "cedar" must refer to some other tree. In Num. xix. 6, and Lev. xiv. 6, e.g., the juniper would seem to be meant. "The cedar could not have been procured in the desert without great difficulty, but the juniper (*Juniperus oxycedrus*) is most plentiful there." (The "cedar" of our pencils, it may be remarked, is a kind of juniper—*Juniperus Bermudiana*.) In Ezekiel xxvii. 5, "they have taken cedars of Lebanon to make masts for thee," it is probable that the *Pinus*

*Halepensis*, not, as was formerly thought, the Scotch fir (*Pinus sylvestris*), is intended. The *Cedrus Libani* appears to be indifferently adapted to any such purpose, for which, however, the *Pinus Halepensis* is eminently fitted. But in the text, as throughout ch. v.—viii., the reference, it can hardly be doubted, is to the *Cedrus Libani*. It is true the wood of this species is neither beautiful nor remarkably durable. Dr. Lindley calls it the “worthless, though magnificent cedar,” but the former adjective, however true it may be of English-grown cedar, cannot justly be applied to the tree of the Lebanon mountain. The writer has some wood in his possession, brought by him from the Lebanon, and though it has neither fragrance nor veining, it is unmistakably a hard and resinous wood. And it should be remembered that it was only employed by Solomon in the interior of the temple, and was there, for the most part, overlaid with gold, and that the climate of Palestine is much less destructive than our own. There seems to be no sufficient reason, therefore, for rejecting the traditional and till recently universal belief that the *Cedrus Libani* was the timber chosen for the temple use. Mr. Houghton, in Smith’s Dict. Bib., vol. iii. App. A. p. xl., who speaks of it “as being *κατ’ ἐξοχήν*, the firmest and grandest of the conifers,” says at the same time that “it has no particular quality to recommend it for building purposes; it was probably therefore not very extensively used in the construction of the temple.” But no other tree can be suggested which better suits the conditions of the sacred narrative. The *deodara*, which has found favour with some writers, it is now positively stated, does not grow near the Lebanon. It may be added that, under the name of *Eres*, the yew was probably included. The timber used in the palaces of Nineveh, which was long believed to be cedar, is now proved to be yew (Dict. Bib., art. “Cedar”). However, it is certain that *רָז* is a *nomen generale* which includes, at any rate, the pine, the cedar, and the juniper, in confirmation of which it may be mentioned that at the present day, “the name *arz* is applied by the Arabs to all three” (Royle, in Kitto’s Cyclop., art. “Eres”).

The Grove of Cedars now numbers about 450 trees, great and small. Of these about a dozen are of prodigious size and considerable antiquity, possibly carrying us back (as the natives think) to the time of Solomon. Their precise age, however, can only be a matter of conjecture.

The identification of the “fir” is even more precarious than that of the cedar. Celsius would see in this the true cedar of

Lebanon. Others identify it with the juniper (*Juniperus excelsa*) or with the *Pinus Halepensis*, but most writers (among whom are Keil and Bähr) believe the evergreen cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens*) to be intended. Very probably the name *Berosh* comprehended two or three different species, as the cypress, the juniper, and the savine. The first-named grows even near the summits of the mountain. Bähr says it is inferior to cedar (but see above). According to Winer, it is well fitted for building purposes, as “it is not eaten by worms, and is almost imperishable and very light.” It is certainly of a harder and closer grain, and more durable than the *Cedrus Libani*.

It shows the brevity of our account that Solomon has not mentioned his desire for “fir” as well as “cedar.” This is disclosed in Hiram’s reply, and in the parallel passage of the chronicler. It is also to be noticed that in the text the request for materials is more prominently brought to view, while in Chronicles the petition is for workmen.

Ver. 9.—My servants shall bring them [No word in the Hebrew; “Timber of Cedar,” &c., must be supplied or understood from the preceding verse] down [It is generally a steep descent from the cedar grove, and indeed all the Lebanon district, to the coast] from Lebanon unto the sea [This must have been a great undertaking. The cedars are ten hours distant from Tripoli, and the road must always have been a bad one. (“What a road it is for mortals. In some spots it seems to have been intended for mountain goats only . . . . It winds up sublime glens, and zigzags up rocky acclivities, and passes over stone-strewn terraces,” &c. (Porter, Handbook, p. 583.) To the writer it appeared to be the most rugged and dangerous road in Palestine. It is possible that the timber was collected and floated at Gebal (Biblus. See note on ver. 18). Beyrout, the present port of the Lebanon, is 27 hours distant *viâ* Tripoli. But cedars would then, no doubt, be found nearer the sea. And the ancients (as the stones of Baalbek, &c., prove) were not altogether deficient in mechanical appliances. The transport of cedars to the Mediterranean would be an easy undertaking compared with the carriage of them to Nineveh, and we know from the inscriptions that they were imported by the Assyrian kings] and I will convey them by sea in floats [Heb. “I will make (or put) them rafts in the sea.” This was the primitive, as it was the obvious, way, of conveying timber, among Greeks and Romans, as well as among Eastern races. The reader will probably have seen such rafts on the Rhine or other river] unto the place which

thou shalt appoint [Heb. *send*] me [In 2 Chron. ii. 16, Hiram assumes that this place will be Joppa, now Yafo, the port of Jerusalem, and 40 miles distant from the Holy City. The transport over these 40 miles, also of most rugged and trying road, must have involved, if possible, a still greater toil than that from Lebanon to the sea] and will cause them to be discharged there, and thou shalt receive them: and thou shalt accomplish [Heb. *do*, same word as in ver. 8, and probably used designedly = "I will perform thy desire . . . and thou shalt perform my desire."] There shall be a strict *quid pro quo* my desire, in giving food for my household [Hiram states in his reply in what shape he would prefer the hire promised by Solomon (ver. 6). The food for the royal household must be carefully distinguished from the food given to the workmen (2 Chron. ii. 10). The fact that 20,000 cors of wheat formed a part of each has led to their being confounded (e.g. in the marginal references). It is noticeable that when the second temple was built, cedar wood was again brought to Jerusalem, *viâ* Joppa, in return for "meat and drink and oil unto them of Zidon" (Ezra iii. 7). The selection of food as the hire of his servants by Hiram almost amounts to an undesigned coincidence. Their narrow strip of cormland, between the roots of Lebanon and the coast—Phœnicia proper ("the great plain of the city of Sidon," Josephus, Ant. v. 3, 1) is only 28 miles long, with an average breadth of one mile—compelled the importation of corn and oil. Ezekiel (xxvii. 17) mentions wheat, honey, oil, and balm as exported from Palestine to the markets of Tyre. It has been justly remarked that the fact that Phœnicia was thus dependent upon Palestine for its breadstuffs explains the unbroken peace that prevailed between the two countries (Heeren. See Dict. Bib. ii. p. 865).

Ver. 10.—So Hiram gave [Heb. *kept giving, supplied*] Solomon cedar trees and fir [or cypress] trees, according to all his desire.

Ver. 11.—And Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand measures [Heb. *cors*. See ch. iv. 22] of wheat for food [מַכְלֵת for מַאֲכָל] to his household [Rawlinson remarks that this was much less than Solomon's own consumption (ch. iv. 22). But he did not undertake to feed Hiram's entire court, but merely to make an adequate return for the timber and labour he received. And the consumption of *fine flour* in Solomon's household was only about 11,000 cors *per annum* and twenty measures of pure oil [lit., *beaten oil*, *i.e.*, such as was

obtained by pounding the olives, when not quite ripe, in a mortar. This was both of whiter colour and purer flavour, and also gave a clearer light, than that furnished by the ripe olives in the press. See the authorities quoted in Bähr's Symbolik, i. p. 419]: thus gave Solomon to Hiram year by year [probably so long as the building lasted or timber was furnished. But the agreement *may* have been for a still longer period.]

Ver. 12.—And the Lord gave [Can there be any reference to the repeated "gave" of the two preceding verses?] to Solomon wisdom, as he promised him (ch. iii. 12) and there was peace [one fruit of the gift. Cf. James iii. 17] between Hiram and Solomon, and they two made a league together [Heb. "*cut a covenant*." Cf. ὄρκια τέμνειν. Covenants were ratified by the slaughter of victims, between the parts of which the contracting parties passed (Gen. xv. 18; Jer. xxxiv. 8, 18, 19). Similarly σπονδή, "libation," in the plural, means "league, truce," and σπονδᾶς τέμνειν is found in classic Greek.]

Ver. 13.—And King Solomon raised a levy [Marg. *tribute of men, i.e.*, conscription] out of all Israel [*i.e.*, the people, not the land—Ewald] and the levy was thirty thousand men. [That is, if we may trust the figures of the census given in 2 Sam. xxiv. 9 (which do not agree, however, with those of 1 Chron. xxi. 5), the conscription only affected one in *forty* of the male population. But even the lower estimate of Samuel is regarded with some suspicion. Such a levy was predicted (1 Sam. viii. 16).

Ver. 14.—And he sent them to Lebanon, ten thousand a month, by courses [Heb. *changes*]: a month they were in Lebanon, and two months at home [they had to serve, that is to say, four months out of the twelve—no very great hardship], and Adoniram [see on ch. iv. 6; xii. 18] was over the levy.

Ver. 15.—And Solomon had threescore and ten thousand that bare burdens, and fourscore thousand hewers in the mountains. [These 150,000, destined for the more laborious and menial works, were not Israelites, but Canaanites. We learn from 2 Chron. ii. 17, 18 that "all the strangers that were in the land of Israel" were subjected to forced labour by Solomon—there were, that is to say, but 150,000 of them remaining. They occupied a very different position from that of the 30,000 Hebrews. None of the latter were reduced to bondage (ch. ix. 22), while the former had long been employed in servile work. The Gibeonites were reduced to serfdom by Joshua (Josh. ix. 27), and the rest of the Canaanites as they were conquered (Josh. xvi.

10; xvii. 13; Judg. i. 29, 30). In 1 Chron. xxii. 2, we find some of them employed on public works by David. By the "hewers" many commentators have supposed that stone-cutters alone are intended (so Jos., Ant., viii. 2. 9) partly because stone is mentioned presently, and partly because חֲצִוִּי is mostly used of the quarrying or cutting of stone, as in Deut. vi. 11; viii. 9; 2 Kings xii. 12, &c. Gesenius understands the word both of stone and wood cutters. But is it not probable that the latter alone are indicated? That the word is sometimes used of wood-cutting Isa. x. 15 shows. And the words, "in the mountain" (הַר) almost compel us so to understand it here. "The mountain" must be Lebanon. But surely the stone was not transported, to any great extent, like the wood, so great a distance over land and sea, especially when it abounded on the spot. (The tradition that the stone was quarried at Baalbek is quite unworthy of credence. It has no doubt sprung from the huge stones found there. "The temple was built of the beautiful white stone of the country, the hard *missal*" (Warren, p. 60) It is true the number of wood-cutters would thus appear to be very great, but it is to be remembered how few comparatively were the appliances or machines of those days: almost everything must be done by manual labour. And Pliny tells us that no less than 360,000 men were employed for twenty years on one of the pyramids. It is possible, however, that the huge foundations mentioned below (ver. 17) were brought from Lebanon.]

Ver. 16.—Bestle [without counting] the chief of Solomon's officers [Heb. *the princes of the overseers, i.e., the princes who acted as overseers, principes qui præfecti erant* (Vatabl.)] which were over the work three thousand and three hundred [This large number proves that the "chiefs of the overseers" cannot be meant. Were all the 3,300 superior officers, there must have been quite an army of subalterns. But we read of none. In ch. ix. 23, an additional number of 550 "princes of the overseers" (same expression) is mentioned, making a total of 3,850 superintendents, which agrees with the total stated in the Book of Chronicles. It is noteworthy, however, that the details differ from those of the Kings. In 2 Chron. ii. 17 we read of a body of 3,600 "overseers to set the people a work," whilst in ch. viii. 10 mention is made of 250 "princes of the overseers." These differences result, no doubt, from difference of classification and arrangement (J. H. Michaelis). In Chron. the arrangement is one of *race, i.e., 3,600 aliens* אֲרָמִי; cf. 2 Chron. ii. 18) and 250

Israelites, whilst in Kings it is one of *status, i.e., 3,300 inferior and 550 superior officers*. It follows consequently that all the inferior and 300 of the superior overseers were Canaanites] which ruled over the people that wrought in the work.

Ver. 17.—And the king commanded and they brought [or cut out, quarried (Gesens.), as in Eccles. x. 9; see also ch. vi. 7 (Heb.)] great stones, costly [precious, not heavy, as Thenius. Cf. Psa. xxxvi. 8; xlv. 9; Esth. i. 4 in the Heb.], stones and [omit and. The hewed stones were the great and costly stones] hewed stones [or squared (Isa. ix. 10; cf. ch. vi. 36; vii. 9; xi. 12). We learn from ch. vii. 10 that the stones of the foundation of the palace were squared to 8 cubits and 10 cubits] to lay the foundation of the house. [Some of these great squared stones, we can hardly doubt, are found *in situ* at the present day. The stones at the south-east angle of the walls of the Haram (Mosque of Omar) are "unquestionably of Jewish masonry" (Porter, Handbook, p. 115). "One is 23 ft. 9 in. long; whilst others vary from 17 to 20 feet in length. Five courses of them are nearly entire" (*ib.*) As Herod. in rebuilding the edifice, would seem to have had nothing to do with the foundations, we may safely connect these huge blocks with the time of Solomon. It is also probable that some at least of the square pillars, ranged in fifteen rows, and measuring five feet each side, which form the foundations of the Mosque *El Aksa*, and the supports of the area of the Haram, are of the same date and origin (cf. Ewald, Hist. Israel, iii. 233). Porter holds that they are "coeval with the oldest part of the external walls." Many of them, the writer observed, were monoliths. The extensive vaults which they enclose are unquestionably "the subterranean vaults of the temple area" mentioned by Josephus (B. J. v. 3. 1), and the "*cavati sub terra montes*" of Tacitus. It may be added here that the recent explorations in Jerusalem have brought to light many evidences of Phœnician handiwork.]

Ver. 18.—And Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders did hew them, and the stone-squarers: [the marg. *Giblites, i.e., people of Gebal, is to be preferred. For Gebal (=mountain) see Josh. xiii. 5 ("the land of the Giblites and Lebanon"); Psa. lxxxiii. 7 ("Gebal and they of Tyre"); and Ezek. xxvii. 9, where the LXX. translate the word *Biblus*, which was the Greek name of the city and district north of the famous river *Adonis*, on the extreme border of Phœnicia. It is now known as *Jebel*. It has been already remarked that Tyre and Sidon, as well as Gebal, have Hebrew meanings. These are among the proofs of the practical*

identity of the Hebrew and Phœnician tongues. The Aramæan immigrants (Deut. xxvi. 5; Gen. xii. 5) no doubt adopted the language of Canaan (Dict. Bib., art. "Phœnicians"). Keil renders, "*even the Giblites.*" He would understand, *i. e.*, that the Zidonian workmen were Giblites; but this is doubtful. The Giblites are selected, no doubt, for special mention because of the prominent part they took in the work. Gebal, as its ancient and extensive ruins prove, was a place of much importance, and lying as it did on the coast, and near the cedar forests, would naturally have an important share in the cutting and shipping of the timber. Indeed, it is not improbable that it was at this

port that the land transport ended, and the rafts were made. A road ran anciently from Gebal to Baalbak, so that the transport was not impracticable. But as the forests were probably of great extent, there may have been two or three depôts at which the timber was floated] so they prepared timber [Heb. *the timber*] and stones [Heb. *the stones*] to build the house. [The LXX. (Vat. and Alex. alike) add here, "*three years.*" It is barely possible that these words may have dropped out of the text, but they look more like a gloss, the inference from the chronological statement of ch. vi. 1.]

### HOMILETICS.

Vers. 7—12 compared with ch. xvi. 31 and ch. xviii. 4. *Tyre and Israel—a lesson on personal influence.* Twice in the history of Israel were its relations with the neighbouring kingdom of Tyre close and intimate. Twice did the Phœnician race exercise an important influence on the Hebrew people. In the days of Solomon the subjects of Hiram furnished men and materials to build a house to the name of the Lord. The Phœnicians were not only idolaters, but they belonged to the accursed races of Canaan, yet we see them here assisting the holy people, and furthering the interests of the true religion. But in the days of Ahab these relations were reversed. Then the kingdom of Ethbaal furnished Israel with a princess who destroyed the prophets of the Lord and sought to exterminate the religion of which the temple was the shrine and centre. In the first case, that is to say, we see Israel influencing Tyre for good; we hear from the lips of the Tyrian king an acknowledgment of the goodness of the Hebrew God; we see the two races combining to bring glory to God and to diffuse the blessings of peace and civilization amongst men. In the second case, we see Tyre influencing Israel for evil. No longer do the skilled artificers of Zidon prepare timber and stones for the Lord's house, but the prophets and votaries of Phœnician deities would fain break down the carved work thereof with axes and hammers. So far from rearing a sanctuary to Jehovah, they would root up His worship and enthrone a foul idol in the place of the Divine Presence. Such have been at different times the relations of Tyre and Sidon to the chosen race and the true religion.

Now why was this fatal difference? Why was the influence in one age so wholesome, in another so baleful? It may be instructive to mark the causes of this change. But observe, first—

I. IT WAS NOT THAT THE PHœNICIAN CREED WAS CHANGED. In its essential features that was the same B.C. 1000 (*temp.* Solomon) and B.C. 900 (*temp.* Ahab). It was always idolatrous, always immoral, always an infamous cultus of the reproductive powers. The gods of Hiram were the gods of Ethbaal, and the rites of the latter age were also the rites of the former.

II. IT WAS NOT THAT THE LAW OF THE LORD WAS CHANGED. The idolatry which it forbade at the first period, it forbade at the second. It never tolerated a rival religion; it always condemned the Phœnician superstition. *That is, semper eadem.*

III. IT WAS NOT THAT HIRAM WAS A PROSELYTE. This was the belief of the divines of a past age, but there is no evidence in its favour.

We see then that it was no change in either of the religious *systems*. No; it was a change of *persons* made this difference. It was brought about by the personal influence of three or four kings—of Solomon, Jeroboam, Omri, Ahab. But before we trace the influence they respectively exercised, observe—

I. THE WHOLESOME RELATIONS BETWEEN HIRAM AND SOLOMON, BETWEEN TYRE AND

ISRAEL, *i.e.*, WERE DUE TO THE PIETY OF DAVID. "Hiram was ever a lover of David." The timber he supplied for the temple was not the first he had sent (2 Sam. v. 11). The league between the two kings (1 Kings v. 12), and their joint undertakings (ch. v. 18; ix. 27), were the fruits of David's righteous dealings.

II. THE RELATIONS CONTINUED WHOLESOME AND BENEFICIAL SO LONG AS THE LAW OF THE LORD WAS KEPT. During David's reign, and the earlier part of Solomon's, the commerce of the two nations was to their mutual advantage. Then the Jew came into contact with idolatry unhurt. The soil was not ready for the baleful seed. At a later period (see Homily on ch. x. 22) it was otherwise.

III. THE LAW WAS NO SOONER VIOLATED THAN THE INFLUENCE OF TYRE BECAME HURTFUL. The Zidonian women in Solomon's harem were a distinct violation of the law (ch. xi. 1), and that trespass bore its bitter fruit forthwith (ch. xi. 7, 8).

The principal factors, consequently, in the change were these—

I. THE INFLUENCE OF SOLOMON. If he built altars for his Tyrian consorts, what wonder if the people learnt first to tolerate, then to admire, and at last to practise idolatry. Who can tell how much the frightful abominations of Ahab's days are due to the example of wise Solomon, to the influence of the builder of the temple?

II. THE INFLUENCE OF JEROBOAM. The cultus of the calves, though it was not idolatry, paved the way for it. That violation of the law opened the door for departures greater still. It was no great step from the calves to the groves, from schism to utter apostasy.

III. THE INFLUENCE OF OMRI. Nations, like individuals, do not become infamous all at once (*Nemo repente turpissimus fuit*). They have their periods and processes of depravation. Omri carried Jeroboam's evil work a step further; possibly he organized and formulated his system (Micah vi. 16). He exceeded all his predecessors in wickedness, and so prepared the way for his son's consummation of impiety.

IV. THE INFLUENCE OF AHAH. A second violation of the Jewish marriage law opened wide the gates to the pestilent flood of idolatries. The son of Omri weds the daughter of a priest of Astarte; and Phœnicia, once the handmaid of Israel, becomes its snare. Now the ancestral religion is proscribed, and the elect people lends itself to unspeakable abominations (1 Kings xvi. 32; cf. 2 Kings x. 26, 27; Rev. ii. 20). It may be said, however, that all this was the work of Jezebel, and due to her influence alone (1 Kings xxi. 25; cf. xviii. 13; xix. 2. &c.) That may be so, but it was only the example of Solomon, the schism of Jeroboam, and the apostasy of Omri made this marriage possible, or enabled Jezebel, when queen, to do these things with impunity. Hence learn—

I. THE POWER AND RESPONSIBILITY OF PERSONAL INFLUENCE. An idle word may destroy a kingdom. The Crimean war sprung out of the squabbles of a few monks over a cupboard and a bunch of keys. "There is not a child . . . whose existence does not stir a ripple gyrating onward and on, until it shall have moved across and spanned the whole ocean of God's eternity, stirring even the river of life and the fountains at which His angels drink." And our responsibility is increased by the fact that—

II. THE EVIL THAT MEN DO LIVES AFTER THEM. They go on sinning in their graves. Though dead, their example speaks. Witness Solomon and Jeroboam.

III. THE EVIL THAT KINGS DO AFFECTS WHOLE COUNTRIES. Their own kingdoms, of course, and neighbouring kingdoms too. It has been said that "the influence of one good man extends over an area of sixteen square miles." But who shall assign any limits to the influence of a wicked prince? It may plunge a continent into wars, and wars that shall last for generations, or it may steep it for ages in sensuality and superstition. Its issues, too, are in eternity. It is because of the influence of kings that we are so plainly commanded to pray for them (1 Tim. ii. 2; cf. Ezra vi. 10; Jer. xxix. 7).

IV. IN KEEPING OF GOD'S COMMANDMENTS IS GREAT REWARD. The perfect piety of David procured the friendship and help of Tyre. The disobedience of Solomon, Jeroboam, and Ahab led to the decay and dispersion of the nation and the destruction of their families.

V. TEMPTATION DISCIPLINES THE FAITHFUL SOUL, BUT DESTROYS THE SINNER. David took no harm from his commerce with Hiram, nor did Solomon in the days of his piety. A good man will choose the good and refuse the evil in a corrupt system. But the wicked will choose the evil and refuse the good. Ahab's relations with Tyre were altogether to his hurt. In David's loyal heart the evil seed found no lodgment; in Ahab's it found a congenial soil, and took root downwards and bare fruit upwards.

Ver. 17.—*Sure Foundations.* No city in the world has experienced so many vicissitudes as “the city of the Great King.” The place of the “vision of peace” (or, “*foundation of peace*”) has known no peace. It has been sixteen times taken by siege since our blessed Lord's day, and conqueror after conqueror has cried, “Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof” (Psa. cxxxvii. 7). It has been the carcase round which the Roman “eagles” have repeatedly gathered; it has been the battle-field of Saracen and Crusader; now the Christian has wrested it from the Moslem, and now the Moslem has torn it back from the Christian. The consequence is that it is a mound of ruins, a heap of *débris*. When the Anglican church was built, it was necessary to dig down some forty feet, through the accumulated rubbish of ages, to get a foundation. The Jerusalem of the past can only be reached by deep shafts. It is literally true that not one stone of the ancient city is “left upon another” (Matt. xxiv. 2). With one exception. Amid the wreck and havoc of war, amid the changes and chances of the world, the colossal foundations of Solomon remain undisturbed. His “great stones” are to be seen at the present day at the south-east angle and underneath the temple area (see on ver. 17). Everything built upon them has perished. Not a trace of tower or temple remains; nay, their very sites are doubtful. But “through all these great and various demolitions and restorations on the surface, its foundations, with their gigantic walls, have been indestructibly preserved” (Ewald). After the lapse of nearly three thousand years, “The foundation standeth sure.”

Let us learn a lesson hence as to—I. *Christ.* II. *The Church of Christ.* III. *The doctrine of Christ and His Church.* We may see, then, in the Solomonian foundations of the Temple—

I. A PICTURE OF CHRIST. He compared Himself to the Temple (John ii. 19), and to the foundations of the Temple (Matt. xxi. 42). Yes, to these very *corner stones* which are still visible. It is remarkable that Psalm cxviii. 22—“The stone which the builders refused is become the head of the corner”—is cited by our Lord of Himself (Matt. xxi. 42), and is applied to Him by St. Peter (Acts iv. 11), while Isa. xxviii. 16, “Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone,” &c.—words which were no doubt suggested by the great and precious stones of Solomon's building—are interpreted of Him both by St. Peter (1 Pet. ii. 6) and St. Paul (Rom. ix. 33). We have consequently “most certain warrants of Holy Scripture” for seeing in these venerable relics an image of the Eternal Son. He is the one foundation (1 Cor. iii. 11); the chief corner stone (*ἀκρογωνιαίος*, Eph. ii. 20); He “abideth ever;” “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever” (Heb. xiii. 8, Gr.) That “sure foundation” can never fail. How many systems of philosophy, how many “oppositions of science” have “had their day and ceased to be”? How many proud empires have tottered to their fall; how many dynasties are extinct and forgotten? But the carpenter's Son still rules in the hearts of men, and the cross of Christ “towers above the wreck of time.”

II. A PICTURE OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST. As surely as the great corner stone images our Lord, so surely do the huge and strong foundations portray the Church of which He is the Founder. It is to the Church (*ἐκκλησία ὑπο θεοῦ θεμελιωμένη*) those words refer, “The firm foundation of God standeth” (2 Tim. ii. 19, Gk.) The Church is “the pillar and ground of the truth;” it is “built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets” (Eph. ii. 20; cf. Rev. xxi. 14). And, like the foundations of the Temple, its base shall be stable and permanent. “The gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. xvi. 18). It is founded on a rock (*ibid.*)

“Crowns and thrones may perish,  
Kingdoms rise and wane,  
But the Church of Jesus  
Constant will remain.”

It was the boast of Voltaire that what it took twelve men to build one man should suffice to break down. But the Church is stronger in the hearts of men now than it was in the eighteenth century. And Voltaire's cry of impotent rage, *Ecrasez l'infime*, seems farther than ever from its realization. Its enemies assert that Christianity has “destroyed two civilizations”—a striking admission of its strength and vitality. True, the Church has a legion of foes. But let us take courage. There is at Jerusalem a pledge and picture of her stability. Her fashions, her excrescences, her sects and schisms, like the buildings of the Holy City, shall pass away. But her foundation is sure.

III. A PICTURE OF THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST AND THE CHURCH. As there are twelve foundations of the Church, so are there six foundation-truths, six “principles of the doctrine of Christ” (Heb. vi. 2). And of these it may justly be said, “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid.” Some of these doctrines may have been, or may hereafter be, more or less obscured—the “doctrines of baptism and of the laying on of hands” are often ignored or repudiated even now—but for long centuries the foundations of the Temple area have been hidden. Obscured or not, they shall never be shaken or removed. This “firm foundation standeth.” The monoliths beneath the Mosque *El Aksa*, standing where Solomon and Hiram's builders placed them, are silent but eloquent pictures of the eternal and unchangeable truth of God. And if men build on the foundations of Christian doctrine, or on the one foundation of “the personal historical Christ” (Alford on 1 Cor. iii. 11), “wood, hay, stubble,” *i.e.*, systems, more or less worthless, of their own, like the Temple of Jerusalem, these shall be destroyed by fire in the “day of visitation;” but the foundation shall remain unscathed, strong and sure and eternal as the God who laid it.

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

**Vers. 2—6.—The Temple.** Read also 2 Chron. ii. 1—10, where additional light is thrown on this transaction. It marks a period of extreme interest and importance in Hebrew history. It introduces us by anticipation, to that which was the crowning glory of the reign of Solomon, for his name must ever stand connected with the magnificence of the first Temple, though it be but as a gorgeous dream of the far-distant past, which imagination strives in vain to reproduce with distinctness and certainty. Whether the Hiram who entered into this treaty with Solomon is the same as the Hiram who was the friend of David is a matter of doubt. Menander of Ephesus (quoted by Josephus) describes him as a man of great enterprize, a lover of architecture, noted for his skill in building and adorning the temples of the gods. And in this we have a valuable indirect confirmation of the Biblical history. Look at this purpose of Solomon to build a splendid temple to the Lord in two or three different lights.

I. IT EXPRESSES HIS DESIRE TO CARRY OUT THE GOOD DESIGNS OF HIS FATHER DAVID. Filial feeling prompted it. It drew the inspiration of its enthusiasm from the warmth of a filial heart. “Thou knowest how that David my father could not,” &c. We are told why he “could not” (1 Chron. xxii. 7, 8; xxviii. 5). He had been “a man of war,” and had “shed much blood.” Noble purposes may be conceived in a time of discord and confusion; they can be actualized only in a time of rest. The hands must be free from the blood of men that would build a worthy dwelling-place for a righteous God. Nothing was more natural than that Solomon, under happier auspices, should resolve to do what his father had the “heart to do,” but “could not.” To how large an extent is human life a record of thwarted purposes! A tale cut short before it is half told; a laying of plans that are never worked out; a reaching forth towards fair ideals that men have not the

power or the time to turn into realities. What can the high mission of each succeeding generation be but just to take up the good purposes that a previous generation failed to accomplish and develop them to their ripe issues? This is the real law of human progress. All honour to the son who, knowing what was truest and deepest in his father's heart, endeavours worthily to fulfil it.

II. IT IS THE SPONTANEOUS OUTCOME OF HIS OWN DEVOUT FEELING. Solomon never had the pure and lofty spirit of devotion that inspired the soul of David; but as yet, at least, his religious sentiment is deep and true. A "house great and wonderful," dedicated to the Lord, in the royal city, will give it fitting public expression. All religious feeling instinctively seeks to body itself forth in appropriate forms. Forbidden as the Jews were to "make any likeness or image" of the great Object of worship (Exod. xx. 4), it was quite in harmony with the Divine dispensation of the time that the spirit of worship should robe itself in a grand symbolic garb. Solomon only sought to develop the service of the tabernacle into a system more imposing and enduring (2 Chron. ii. 4, 5). In every age symbolism has its place as the spontaneous and natural expression of religious thought and feeling. Let it be relied on as the means of *awakening* such thought and feeling, as the prescribed form in which it shall move—an artificial substitute for it—and it becomes a mockery and a snare. The magnificence of Solomon's design for the Temple indicated not only the fervour of his devotion, but the breadth of his view as regards the essential sacredness of all natural things. "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." All things beautiful and precious are turned to their true use when dedicated to Him. We cannot be too careful to give Him our richest and best. The true heart says, "I will not offer burnt offering to the Lord of that which doth cost me nothing." Let us not be more concerned for our own houses than we are for the Lord's. The history of the Temple, however, and of all ecclesiology, shows how easily the wealth of outward adornment in worship may become the grave of the spiritual and the veil of the Divine. In proportion as care for the symbolic form—the mere shrine of worship—has increased, the living reality—the worship of the Father "in spirit and in truth"—has passed away.

III. IT EXPRESSES HIS SENSE OF THE FACT THAT THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF GOD IS THE REAL STRENGTH AND GLORY OF A NATION. The Temple was to be dedicated "to the name of Jehovah"—the visible sign and symbol of the sovereignty of that name over the whole life of the people. There was worth in the sign just so far as that sovereignty was real. The Jewish commonwealth was a theocracy—the Temple the palace and throne of the great invisible King. Judaism was not the union of Church and State as two separate or separable powers, but their identification. No distinction between the political and ecclesiastical, the secular and spiritual spheres. The two were one. The ideal Christian nation is a theocracy in which Christ is king. Not made so by its institutions, but by the spiritual life that pervades it. True to its name only so far as the law of Christ is honoured in the homes of the people, moulds the form and habit of their social life, controls commerce, rules in Parliament, strengthens, ennobles, glorifies the Throne. Its Christian Churches are thus the very flower of a country's highest life.

"Those temples of His grace,  
How beautiful they stand!  
The honour of our native place  
And bulwark of our land."

As the graveyard—where "the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep"—tells of the vanity of all earthly things, how the pride and glory of man must one day moulder down to dust, so the church is the memorial of the unfading inheritance of truth and purity and love—the blessed fellowship of the redeemed—the "House of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

IV. IT EXPRESSES HIS DESIRE THAT ISRAEL SHOULD HAVE A CENTRE OF RELIGIOUS ATTRACTION AND BOND OF RELIGIOUS UNITY. The tabernacle had been the movable sanctuary of a wandering people, the Temple should be the resting-place of the Divine presence (Psa. cxxxii. 14). Hitherto there had been a divided

worship, connected both with the tabernacle at Gideon and the ark in the city of David (1 Chron. xvi. 37—39). But in future all sacred associations are to be gathered up in the central glory of the Temple. One nation, one faith, one God, one sanctuary. But this localization of the highest forms of worship had its dangers. Men came to think of "the Holy Presence as belonging to the building, instead of the building as being hallowed and glorified by the Presence." Christ proclaims the infinite Presence, the impartial Love. "The hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain," &c. (John iv. 21). "One greater than the Temple is here"—in whom all its sacred symbols are fulfilled—the attractive centre and bond of union for redeemed souls of every age and nation. Our thoughts are led on to the glorious vision of the holy city of which it is written, "I saw no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it" (Rev. xxi. 22).—W.

**Ver. 5.**—*The building of the Temple.* "Behold I purpose to build an house unto the name of the Lord my God." Every man has some special work given him by God. It is of the utmost importance that he should find out what that work is, if he would not make his life a failure and come short of the purpose of God for him. In the case of Solomon the great work given him to do was not to extend the boundaries of his kingdom, but to build the temple of the Lord. This he clearly understood, as is evident from his saying, "I purpose to build an house to the name of the Lord." This was to him the work of paramount importance. The building of the Temple was to give a religious centre to the theocracy. This was part of the Divine plan, a branch of the education of the people, by which God would prepare the way for the new covenant. The old covenant was essentially preparatory; it was "the shadow of good things to come" (Heb. x. 1). The Temple was to form a part of this preparation.

**I.** IT WAS A VISIBLE SYMBOL OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD WITH HIS PEOPLE. This was the only way in which such an idea could be brought home to men in the state of rude infancy in which they then were, and with their incapacity to apprehend directly spiritual graces. The material was thus the necessary medium of the spiritual.

**II.** THE erection of a holy place for worship REMINDED MEN THAT THE EARTH WHICH THEY INHABITED WAS DEFILED; it developed in them the sense of sin.

**III.** THE POSSIBILITY OF DRAWING NEAR TO GOD IN THIS HOLY PLACE pointed to the time of reconciliation, when every spot of a redeemed earth might be a place of prayer; when there should be no longer one sanctuary for one nation alone, but when all the nations should have free access to God as worshippers in spirit and in truth. The fact that Solomon sought out workmen for the Temple, not only among the Israelites, but among the Gentiles, is prophetic, and prefigures the time when the multitude of worshippers shall be "of every kindred, and nation, and people, and tongue" (Rev. v. 9).

**IV.** THERE IS NOT A SINGLE CHRISTIAN LIVING WHO HAS NOT A TASK LIKE THAT OF SOLOMON TO FULFIL. Every Christian ought to say, "I purpose to build an house to the name of the Lord." (a) He must first become himself a living stone of the spiritual temple (2 Pet. ii. 51). (b) His body must be the temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. vi. 19), his whole being a sanctuary (1 Cor. iii.). His house should be a house of prayer (Josh. xxiv. 15). Are not these human temples themselves the stones elect, precious, to be used by and by in that great heavenly temple which the Lord shall build and not man? (2 Cor. v. 1).—E. de P.

**Vers. 7—12.**—*Lessons from the conduct of a heathen prince.* Describe the condition of Tyre at this period, alluding to its commerce, its religious beliefs, its proximity to the kingdom of Solomon (the capitals being distant from each other about 122 miles), its monarchical institutions, as opposed to the usual republican government of Phœnician settlements—as exemplified in Carthage, the splendid daughter of Tyre, founded about 140 years after the building of Solomon's temple. Point out some of the effects of the intercourse between these two states, as suggested

by Old Testament history. Suggest from this the responsibilities and the perils accruing to us as a Christian people, from the fact that our own destinies are so interwoven with distant and heathen nations. Allude to the fearlessness of Scripture in ascribing what is good and commendable to those whom the Jews generally scorned. Various examples may be given, *e.g.*, Abimelech king of Egypt, Cyrus, Hiram; and in the New Testament, Cornelius, Publius, &c. Compare the words of our Lord (Matt. viii. 11, 12).

The conduct of Hiram teaches us the following lessons.

I. THAT WE SHOULD REJOICE IN THE PROSPERITY OF OTHERS (ver. 7). Hiram was moved to joy, partly because of his love and admiration for David. It is an unspeakable advantage to have the position won by a father's toil, the affection and confidence deserved by a father's worth. In our material possessions, in our worldly occupation, in our ecclesiastical and, above all, our Christian relationships, how much of good has come from parentage! Contrast the possibilities of a lad, born of honoured parents, and therefore trusted till he proves untrustworthy, whose path in life is smoothed by the loving hands of those who care for him, for his father's sake, with the terrible disadvantages of the child of a convict, who is distrusted and ill-treated from his birth. Hiram was well disposed to Solomon for his father's sake. There were many reasons for jealousy. The two kingdoms adjoined each other, and national pride would be fostered by religious differences. It is easier to rejoice over the success of a distant trader than over the prosperity of a neighbour who is our competitor. Nor is it common for a heathen to be glad over the welfare of a Christian. Hiram was large-hearted enough to overlook barriers which were erected by the hands of rivalry and religious distinction.

II. THAT WE SHOULD FAIRLY CONSIDER THE DEMANDS OF OTHERS. "I have considered the things which thou sentest to me for" (ver. 8). The request of Solomon was bold. It would require sacrifice on the part of the Tyrians. They were asked to help in building a temple for another nation, and for the worship of One who was to them a strange deity. No prejudice, however, interfered with Hiram's fair consideration of Solomon's request; and as it was more fully understood, it seemed more and more feasible. How often prejudice prevents men from looking at a novel scheme for work, from welcoming a new expression of old truth, &c. A false patriotism sometimes refuses to see any excellency in another people. Sectarianism checks Christians in learning from each other. There is much presented to us which we cannot at once *welcome*, but at least it should be fairly *considered*. "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good."

III. THAT WHEN WE DO A KINDNESS, IT SHOULD BE DONE WITHOUT GRUDGING. "I will do *all* thy desire." It is not right to ask another for what is unreasonable, or to give to another what is unreasonable for him to expect. Sometimes to grant a request is easier than to refuse it, and we do what is asked to save ourselves trouble. Every demand should be weighed in the balance of equity. But if, after the test, it seems right to accede to it, we should not do it reluctantly, or partially, or murmuringly, lest we should mar the beauty of the act to others, and rob ourselves of the bliss of ministering to others in Christ's spirit. "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men," &c. (Col. iii. 23, 24). "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure," &c. (Luke vi. 38).

IV. THAT WE SHOULD RECOGNIZE AND RECOMPENSE THE ABILITIES OF THE HUMBLEST. In 2 Chron. ii. 13 we read that Hiram chose from amongst his subjects a skilful man, to be set over this business. Christians can serve their Lord in this way amidst their ordinary occupations. In the counting-house, or office, or factory the recognition and encouragement of diligence and skill may be a means of grace to employer and *employé*. We should devoutly recognize that knowledge, skill, capacity of any sort, are the gifts of God; and while we employ our own faithfully, we should, as opportunity serves, aid our fellow servants in the use of theirs.

V. THAT WE SHOULD ACKNOWLEDGE OUR MUTUAL DEPENDENCE. Solomon and Hiram were not independent of each other. It was for the good of these kings and of their peoples that they should be associated in this holy work. Solomon con-

fessed, "There is not among us any that can skill to hew timber like unto the Sidonians" (ver. 6). Each nation, each individual has his own sphere to fill in the economy of God. No one of these can serve well in isolation. See St. Paul's teaching about the body and its members. Show how *nations* are mutually dependent, commercially and in their political relations. Point out the special responsibility of God's people when they are associated with heathen nations. Suggest the possibility that *each section of Christ's Church* may be doing its own appointed service, though all must feel that they are mutually dependent if the prayer of our Lord is to be fulfilled (John xvii. 21). Apply the principle to the *association of Christians* in Church fellowship, in evangelistic enterprise, in religious worship, &c., and show the benefits arising to the individual from the fact that he is one of many.

VI. THAT EACH SHOULD LOYALLY ACCEPT, AND HEARTILY DO, HIS OWN SHARE IN BUILDING THE TEMPLE OF THE LORD. (2 Chron. ii. 16.) Christians are likened to labourers in a vineyard, to servants in a household, to builders of a temple by our Lord and His apostles. In none of these spheres of activity is the work of all the servants alike in its publicity, in its honour, in its immediate effects, in its pleasantness, &c. Yet to every "good and faithful servant" the recompense will come; and he who shaped the stone in the quarry, or bore the burdens for more distinguished builders, will, in the great day, not lose his reward.—A. R.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER VI. 1—88.

**SOLOMON'S TEMPLE.**—The preparations for the building of the Temple having been related in the preceding chapter, the historian now proceeds to describe the edifice. He begins his narrative with a precise statement of the date of its erection (ver. 1); then follows (1) a description of the shape, size, and arrangement of the exterior (vers. 2—10), and (2) a detailed account of its internal fittings and adornments (vers. 15—35). The promise made to Solomon during its erection finds a place in vers. 11—13; while the vessels, &c., used in the Temple service are described in ch. vii. A parallel though briefer account, and one differing considerably in its arrangement, is found in 2 Chron. iii. iv.

The erection of this splendid sanctuary was no doubt the greatest event, both in Jewish and Gentile eyes, in the history of the Holy City. It made Jerusalem what it had not been till then, the religious capital. The stronghold of the Jebusites now became the shrine and centre of the Jewish system. We are not warranted, however, in believing that it shaped the name by which the city was known to the Greeks, Ἱεροσόλυμα (Jos., B. J. 6. 10) and Ἱερὸν Σαλαμῶνος (Bazpolemus in Euseb. Præp. Ev.

ix. 34; see Stanley, "Jewish Church," ii. p. 193), being probably mere attempts to "twist Jerushalaim into a shape which should be intelligible to Greek ears" (Dict. Bib. i. 983).

We find a sufficient indication, however, of the profound importance which this undertaking assumed in Jewish eyes in the fact that four chapters of our history—and three of them of considerable length—are occupied with an account of the materials, proportions, arrangements, and consecration of this great sanctuary. To the historians of Israel it seemed meet that every measurement of the holy and beautiful house should be recorded with the greatest exactness, while the very vessels of service, "the pots and the shovels and the basons," were judged worthy of a place in the sacred page.

But these careful and detailed dimensions are not only proofs of the tender veneration with which the Jew regarded the Temple and its appointments; they are also (as Bähr has well shown, Symbolik, i. pp. 127, 128) indications and expressions of the belief that this house, so "exceeding magnificent," was for the Lord, and not for man. These exact measurements, these precise and symbolic numbers all point to a place for the Divine Presence; they are "the

first requisite for every space and structure which has a higher and Divine destination, and they impart thereto the signature of the Divine" (Bähr). Indeed the very names *templum* and *ῥέμετρος* (=a space measured off) are in themselves in some sort attestations to the ancient belief that the dignity of a temple of the Most High God required that the length and breadth and height, both of the whole and of its component parts, should be carefully recorded. It is this consideration which explains a peculiarity of Scripture which would otherwise cause some difficulty; viz., the detailed and repeated measurements, and the almost rabbinical minuteness, not only of our author, but of Ezekiel and of the Apocalypse. When a "man with a measuring reed" (Ezek. xl. 3, 5; Rev. xi. 1; xxi. 15) appears upon the scene, we are to understand at once that the place is sacred ground, and that we are in the precincts of the temple and shrine of Jehovah.

At the same time it must be added here that, exact and detailed as is the description of this edifice, it is nevertheless so partial, and the account is, perhaps necessarily, so obscure as to leave us in considerable doubt as to what Solomon's Temple was really like. In fact, though "more has been written regarding the temple at Jerusalem than in respect to any other building in the known world" (Fergusson), the authorities are not agreed as to its broad features, while as to matters of detail they are hopelessly divided. On one point, indeed, until recently, there was a pretty general agreement, viz., that the house was "rectilinear and of box-form." But it is now contended that this primary and fundamental conception of its shape is entirely at fault, and that its sloping or ridged roof would give it a resemblance to the ark or to a tent. Nor have we the materials to decide between these conflicting views; in fact, nothing perhaps but drawings would enable us to restore the temple with any approach to accuracy. "It is just as easy to portray a living man from a tolerably well-preserved skeleton as to reproduce a building in a way which shall correspond with reality when we have only a few uncertain remains of its style of architecture in our posses-

sion" (Romberg and Steger, quoted in Bähr, "Bibelwerk," p. 49). And the difficulty is enhanced by the fact that the temple was *sui generis*. It was purely Jewish, so that no information as to its structure and arrangements can be derived from the contemporary architecture of Egyptians or Assyrians. In the absence of all analogies restoration is hopeless. It is well known that all the many and varied representations of different artists, based though they all were on the Scripture account (Exod. xxv. 31—37) of the seven-branched candlestick, were found to be exceedingly unlike the original, when the true shape of that original was disclosed to the world on the Arch of Titus. It is equally certain that, were a true representation of the temple ever to be placed in our hands, we should find that it differed just as widely from all attempted "restorations" of the edifice, based on the scanty and imperfect notices of our historian and Ezekiel.

The mention of Ezekiel suggests a brief reference to the temple, which he describes with so much precision and fulness in his fortieth and following chapters. What is its bearing on the description we have now to consider? Is it an account of the temple as it actually existed in or before his time; is it a plan or suggestion for its restoration (Grotius), or is it wholly ideal and imaginary? The first view, which long found favour with commentators, and which has still some advocates, is now pretty generally abandoned. For while many of Ezekiel's measurements, &c., correspond exactly with those of our historian, and while it may be conceded, therefore, that this delineation has a historical basis, there are features in the narrative which can never have been realized in any building, and which prove the account to be more or less ideal. For example. The outer court of his temple (Ezek. xlii. 16—20) would cover not only the whole of Mount Moriah, but more than the whole space occupied by the entire city of Jerusalem. He speaks again of "waters issuing out from under the threshold" (ch. xlvii. 1), and flowing down eastward to heal the pestilent waters of the Dead Sea, where a literal interpretation is manifestly impossible. And it is to be remem-

bered that the prophet himself speaks of his temple as seen *in vision* (ch. xl. 2; xliii. 2, 3). The true account of this portraiture would therefore seem to be that, while it borrowed largely from the plan and proportions of Solomon's Temple, it was designed to serve as "the *beau ideal* of what a Semitic temple should be" (Fergusson, *Dict. Bib.* iii. p. 1460. In a paper in the "Contemporary Review," vol. xxvii. p. 978, Fergusson adopts the idea that it was designed to serve as a basis for the future restoration of the temple.)

Two other authorities, whose accounts have a direct bearing on the sacred narrative, must be mentioned here—Josephus and the Talmudic tract on the temple, called *Middoth* (i.e., measures). Unfortunately, neither is of much avail for the illustration of the text we have now to consider. Josephus, too often unreliable, would seem to be especially so here. "*Templum aedificat*," says Clericus, "*quale animo conceperat non quale legerat a Salomone conditum*." "Inconsistency, inaccuracy, and exaggeration are plainly discoverable in the measurements given by Josephus" (Conder, "Handbook to Bible," p. 368). "Wherever the Mishna is not in accord with Josephus the measurements of the latter are untrustworthy" (*ib.* p. 369). The writers of the Mishna, again, refer generally, as might be expected, to the temple of Herod, or confuse in their accounts the three temples of Solomon, Herod, and Ezekiel (Bähr). The student of temple architecture consequently derives but scant assistance in his work from the writings of uninspired historians.

Perhaps this is the proper place to remark on the close correspondence between temple and tabernacle. (See Fergusson, *Dict. Bib.* iii. p. 1455). In the first place, in plan and arrangement the two structures were identical. Each faced the east; each had three parts, viz., porch, holy place, and holy of holies, while the side chambers of the temple (ver. 5) were analogous to the verandah formed by the projecting roof, or curtains, which ran round three sides of the tabernacle. Secondly, the measurements both of the whole edifice and of its component parts

were exactly double those of the tabernacle, as the following table will show:—

	TABERNACLE.	TEMPLE.
	cubits.	cubits.
Entire length .....	40	80
„ width .....	20	40
„ height .....	15	30
Length of Holy Place ..	20	40
Width .....	10	20
Height .....	10	20
Length of Holy of Holies,	10	20
Width .....	10	20
Height .....	10	20
Width of Porch .....	10	20
Depth .....	5	10

The only exception to this rule is that of the side chambers, which (on the lowest story) were but five cubits wide, i.e., they were identical in width with the verandah. It is held by some, however, that with the enclosing walls, they were ten cubits. If this were so, it follows that here again the same proportions are exactly preserved.

It will be clear from this comparison that the temple was constructed, not after any Egyptian or Assyrian model, but that it preserved the features and arrangement of the consecrated structure, the pattern of which was showed to Moses in the Mount (Exod. xxv. 9, 40; cf. Acts vii. 44; Heb. viii. 5), so that when "David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch," &c., "and the pattern of all that he had by the spirit" (1 Chron. xxviii. 11, 12), the same arrangement and similar proportions were consciously or unconsciously preserved. The temple differed from the tabernacle only so far as a large house necessarily differs from a small tent.

It is also to be observed that every dimension of the temple was either *ten* cubits—the holy of holies was a cube of ten cubits—or a multiple of ten, just as the dimensions of the tabernacle are either five cubits or multiples of five. Now this decimal arrangement can hardly have been accidental. Not only had the Jews ten fingers, but they had ten commandments, and a system of tenths or tithes, and this number, therefore, was to them, no doubt, the symbol of completeness ("*Symboi der Vollendung und Vollkommenheit*." Bähr,

Symbolik, i. p. 175), just as five was the sign of imperfection (ib. pp. 183—187). The very dimensions, consequently, of the house are a testimony to the perfections of the Being to whose service it was dedicated.

Nor is the recurrence of the number *three*, though by no means so marked, to be altogether overlooked. Considering its Divine original—that it was made after the pattern of things in the heavens—it is not wholly unworthy of notice that the building “had *three* compartments. . . . Each of the *three* sides was flanked by an aisle formed of *three* stories, and the holy of holies was of *three* equal dimensions” (Wordsworth). And if we cannot follow him further and see any significance in the fact that the “length was  $3 \times 30$  cubits, and the height  $3 \times 10$ ,” we may still remember that this house was built, though Solomon knew it not, to the glory of the Triune God. Bähr, however, who also shows at some length how “the number *three* is everywhere conspicuous in the building” (p. 54), accounts for it on the ground that “three is in the Old Testament the signature of every true and complete unit” (*Was drei Mal geschicht ist das rechte Einmal; was in drei getheilt ist ist eine wahre Einheit*), so that practically three would signify here much the same as ten—it would stand as “the signature of the perfect unit, and so also of the Divine Being.”

One remark more may be made here, viz., that in the temple or tabernacle we have the archetype of the Christian Church. The correspondence is so obvious as to strike the most casual observer. Porch, or steeple, nave, chancel, altar, side aisles, these have succeeded to, as they were suggested by, porch, temple of the house, oracle, mercy seat, side structure, of the Jewish sanctuary. Just as Christianity is built on the foundations of Judaism (see Homiletics), so has the Jewish temple furnished a model for the Christian; for, considering how closely the early Church fashioned itself after the pattern of Judaism, the resemblance can hardly be accidental.

Ver. 1.—And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt [This date has been the subject of

much controversy, which cannot even now be considered (*pace* Keil: “The correctness of the number 480 is now pretty generally admitted”) as closed. Grave doubts are entertained as to its genuineness. Lord A. Hervey (Dict. Bib. vol. ii. p. 22) says it is “manifestly erroneous.” Rawlinson considers it to be “an interpolation into the sacred text” (p. 515). And it is to be observed, 1. that the LXX. reads 440 instead of 480 years—a discrepancy which is suspicious, and argues some amount of incertitude. 2. Origen quotes this verse without these words (Comm. in S. Johann ii. 20). 3. They would seem to have been unknown to Josephus, Clem. Alex., and others. 4. It is not the *manner* of Old Testament writers thus to date events from an era, an idea which appears to have first occurred to the Greeks *temp.* Thucydides (Rawlinson). It is admitted that we have no other instance in the Old Testament where this is done. 5. It is difficult to reconcile this statement with other chronological notices both of the Old and New Testaments. For taking the numbers which we find in the Hebrew text of the books which refer to this period, they sum up to considerably more than 480 years. The time of the Judges alone comprises 410 years at the least. It should be stated, however, with regard to the chronology of the period last mentioned (1) that it only pretends to furnish round numbers—20, 40, and the like—and evidently does not aim at exactitude; (2) that there is good ground for suspecting that the periods are not always consecutive; that in some cases, *i.e.*, they overlap. We are not justified, therefore, because of the dates of the Judges in rejecting this statement. The question of New Testament chronology is somewhat more complicated. In Acts xiii. 20, St. Paul states the period between the division of Canaan, by Joshua (Josh. xiv. 1, 2), and the time of Samuel the prophet as 450 years (*καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα ὡς ἔτεσι τετρακοσίοις καὶ πενήκοντα ἔδωκεν κριτὰς κ.τ.λ.*) But Lachmann, on the authority of A, B, C (and we may add N), considers the received text to be corrupt, and would place *καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα* after *πενήκοντα*. Alford, however, treats this reading as “an attempt at correcting the difficult chronology of the verse,” and says that “all attempts to reconcile” it with 1 Kings vi. 1 “are arbitrary and forced.” If, then, the received text is to stand—and it is to be noticed that the reigns of the Judges, including Samuel, sum up exactly to the period mentioned by St. Paul, 450 years—the interval between the Exodus and the erection of the temple cannot well have been less than 99 or 100 years longer, *i.e.*, 580—Josephus makes it

592—instead of 480 years. 6. The chronology of Josephus — to which by itself, perhaps, no great weight is to be attached, agrees with St. Paul's estimate, and of course contradicts that of the text. 7. Nor does it seem to be a valid argument for the retention of the suspected words, that "the precision of the statement is a voucher for its accuracy." (Bähr, who adds, "Not only is the whole number of the years given, but also the year of the reign of the king, and even the month itself," for the genuineness of the later date, "In the fourth year," &c., is not questioned.) The remark of Keil that the building of the temple marked a new and important epoch in the history of the chosen people, and so justified an exceptional reference to the birth or emancipation of the nation, though undoubtedly true, will hardly avail much against the considerations alleged above. On the whole, therefore, I confess to the belief that these words are the interpolation of a later hand (of which we shall find traces elsewhere), though it would, perhaps, be premature, with only the evidence now before us, to exclude them from the text. It is certainly noteworthy that such destructive critics as Ewald and Thenius are satisfied as to their genuineness, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel [according to the chronology of Ussher, this was A.M. 3000], in the month Zif [i.e., May. The word signifies *splendour*. The month was probably so called because of the brilliancy of its flowers (Gesen., Keil, *al.*)], which is the second month [This explanation is added because before the captivity the months (with the exception of *Abib*) appear to have had no regular names, but were almost always designated by numbers. (See, *e.g.*, Gen. vii. 11; 2 Kings xxv. 1). Only four pre-captivity names are recorded, and of these three are mentioned in connexion with the building of the temple, *viz.*, *Zif* here and in ver. 37, *Bul* in ver. 38, and *Ethanim* in ch. viii. 2. It has hence been inferred that these names were not in general use, but were restricted to public documents, &c. (Dict. Bib. ii. 416), a supposition which, if correct, would account for the facility with which the old appellations were superseded by post-captivity names. The later name for this month was *Iyar* (Targum on 2 Chron. xxx. 2)], that he began [not in Heb.] to build the house of [Heb. *to*] the Lord. [The chronicler mentions the site (2 Chron. iii. 1), "In Mount Moriah, . . . in the threshing-floor of Ornan." &c. We know from the extensive foundations yet remaining that the preparation of the platform on which the temple should stand must have been a work of considerable time

and labour, and see Jos., Ant. viii. 3, 9, and Bell. Jud. v. 5. 1. We can hardly be wrong in identifying the remarkable rock known as the *Sakrâh*, over which the mosque of Omar (*Kubbet-es-Sakrâh*) is built—the "pierced rock" of the Jerusalem Itinerary—with the threshing-floor of Ornan. The reader will find an interesting paper on the site of the temple in "Scribner's Monthly," vol. xi. pp. 257—272. According to Mr. Beswick, whose measurements and conclusions it gives, the porch stood on the *Sakrâh*. Mr. Conder, however, urges strong reasons ("Tent Work," pp. 187—9) for placing the *Holy of Holies* on the rock. We should then "see the Holy House in its natural and traditional position on the top of the mountain; we see the courts descending on either side, according to the present slopes of the hill; we find the great rock galleries dropping naturally into their right places; and finally, we see the temple, by the immutability of Oriental custom, still a temple, and the site of the great altar still consecrated [?] by the beautiful little chapel of the chain." But see Porter i. p. 125; Pal. Explor. p. 4, a. so pp. 342, 343; "Our Work in Palestine," chs. viii. and ix.; "Recovery of Jerusalem," ch. xii., &c. *Quot viatores, tot sententia.*]

Ver. 2.—And the house [*i.e.*, not the whole structure, but the main building, exclusive of porch (ver. 3) and side chambers (ver. 5)] which king Solomon built for the Lord, the length thereof was threescore cubits [But what was the length of the cubit? (כֹּחַ) This unfortunately is by no means certain, as the Jews would seem to have had three different cubits. All the ancient measures, both Jewish and Gentile, were taken from parts of the body. Thus we find a "finger-breadth" (Jer. lii. 21), "hand-breadth" (1 Kings vii. 26), "span" (1 Sam. xvii. 24), and the Greeks had their *δάκτυλος πούς* and *πῆχυς*, and the Romans their *cubitus*, *pes*, *digitus*, &c. כֹּחַ is used in its proper sense (*ulna*) Deuteronomy iii. 11. Probably at first it signified, like *πῆχυς*, the length from point of elbow to tip of little or middle finger. But it is obvious that this was an uncertain measure, and hence perhaps arose cubits of different length. According to Gesen. the cubit here mentioned, which was the older or sacred Mosaic cubit (2 Chron. iii. 3), was six palms, while that of Ezekiel (Ezek. xl. 5; xliii. 13), the royal Babylonian cubit, was seven, but on this as well as other points the authorities are very far from agreed. "The length of the cubit is one of the most knotty points of Hebrew archæology" (Dict. Bib. iii. p. 1736). There is a general *consensus* of opinion, however.

in favour of understanding the cubit here mentioned as measuring 18 inches. Fergusson (Dict. Bib. iii. 1451) considers this to be beyond question. It is certainly noteworthy that the measurements of Kings and Chronicles, of Ezra and Ezekiel, of Josephus and the Talmud, all agree, and we know that Josephus always uses the Greek cubit of 18 inches. Mr. Conder, however, maintains that the Hebrew cubit amounts to no more than sixteen inches. He says, "Maimonides tells us that the temple cubit was of 48 barleycorns, and any one who will take the trouble to measure barleycorns, will find that three go to the inch"—which gives 16 inches for the cubit. To this argument, which is not perhaps of much weight, he adds, what is of much greater moment, that "the Galilean synagogues, measured by it, give round numbers" (pp. 187—8) and the breadth thereof twenty cubits, and the height thereof thirty cubits. [It thus appears that the temple was but a small—compared with many churches, a very small—building. But its purpose and object must be considered. It was not for assemblies of the people. The congregation never met *within* it, but the worship was offered *towards* it. It was a place for the Holy Presence, and for the priests who ministered before it.]

Ver. 3.—And the porch (פֶּתַח, forepart, projection (*Vorhalle*, Gesenius). The porch was not a colonnade—that is called a "porch of pillars" (ch. vii. 6), but was formed by simply prolonging the side walls, and possibly the roof (see below). Bähr holds that it had only side walls and ceiling, and was entirely open in front; and the fact that no mention is made of any door or opening, though the doors of the other parts of the edifice are all referred to (vers. 8, 31, 33), certainly favours this view, as also does the position of the pillars of ch. vii. 21] before the temple of the house [The house, or main building (ver. 2), had two parts. (1) "The temple of the house" (בֵּית הַבַּיִת) = "spacious," hence "magnificent building," "palace," as in Prov. xxx. 25; Dan. i. 4. Gesen., Thes. i. 375). The same word is used of the tabernacle (1 Sam. i. 9), of the royal palace (1 Kings xxi. 1; 2 Kings xx. 18; Psa. xlv. 8, 15), and of heaven (2 Sam. xxii. 7, &c.) This was the *voc par excellence*, and is called "the great house," because of its superior size and height, in 2 Chr. iii. 5. (2) *The oracle* (בֵּית הַדָּבָר) see on ver. 5. The two bore a rough resemblance to the nave and chancel of a Gothic church], twenty cubits was the length thereof according to the breadth of the house [The porch, *i.e.* extended across the

entire front, or east end of the temple] and ten cubits was the breadth [*i.e.*, *depth*] thereof before the house. [The height of the porch, of which no mention is made here, is stated in 2 Chron. iii. 4 as 120 cubits (say 180 feet), but there is surely some mistake in the figures. For (1) This is "unlike anything we know of in ancient architecture" (Fergusson). (2) A porch of such dimensions would surely have been called מַרְזֵף not מִזְבֵּחַ (Thenius, Keil). (3) It is doubtful whether an erection of so great a height, with such a slender basis, would stand. It would certainly be out of all proportion. Towers are generally built about three times the height of the adjoining nave, but this would be six times as high, and moreover the porch did not taper to a point like a Gothic spire. It is much more probable, therefore, that there is a corruption of the text of Chronicles (see on 2 Chron. iii. 4)—errors in numbers are by no means infrequent—than that such a column could be erected to serve as a porch, or if erected—and this consideration appears to me to be decisive—could have been passed over by our author without notice. It is impossible, however, to say positively what the height of the porch was. Probably 30 cubits, the height of the house. Stanley characteristically puts it down as "more than 200 feet." It may be remarked here that Fergusson, following Josephus and the Talmud, contends that the temple had another building of the same height above it. See Dict. Bib. iii. p. 1456, and note on ver. 20.]

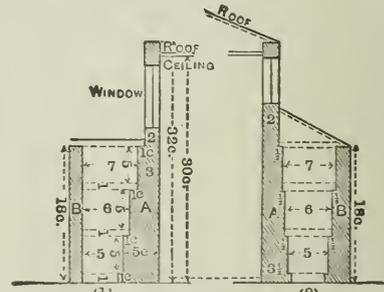
Ver. 4.—And for the house he made windows of narrow lights [There has been much disputation over these words. The older expositors generally follow (as does the marg.) the Chaldee and Rabbin: "windows broad *within* and narrow *without*;" windows, *i.e.*, somewhat like the loopholes of ancient castles. The windows of the temple would then have resembled those of Egyptian sacred buildings. (It is not implied that there was any conscious imitation of Egypt, though Fergusson surely forgets the affinity with Pharaoh (ch. iii. 1), the trade with Egypt (ch. x. 28), and the favour with which some Egyptian fashions were regarded (Cant. i. 9), when he contends that the chosen people would never take the buildings of their ancestral enemy for a model.) But this meaning is not supported by the original (מַרְזֵף מִבְּרֵשֶׁת), the literal interpretation of which is "closed beams" (cf. chap. vii. 4, 5), and which the most competent scholars now understand to mean "closed or fixed lattices, *i.e.*, the lattices of the temple windows were not movable, as in domestic architecture (2 Kings i. 2; xiii.

17; Dan. vi. 10). So Gesenius, De Wette, Keil, Bähr, *al.*

Ver. 5.—And against [or upon,  $\text{לְ}$ ; they rested on the wall] the wall of the house [here meaning both temple and oracle: see below] he built chambers [Marg. floors. The Orig. is  $\text{כְּרִי}$  (Keri,  $\text{כְּרִי}$ )] singular = *stratum* ( $\text{שָׂרַיִט}$ , *stravit*, spread out). Symm. translates *κατάστρομα*. Gesenius remarks that the word is used here and in ver. 10 in the masculine of the *whole* of the side structure, while in ver. 6 it is used in the feminine of the single stories. The floors bore this name,  $\text{שָׂרַיִט}$ , because they were spread upon, not inserted into the walls. Rawlinson has evidently confounded this word with  $\text{שָׂרַיִט}$  (see below) when he says, "The Hebrew word here used would be best translated a *lean-to*." Both words are translated alike "chambers" in the Authorized Version, but the first means *stories* or *floors*; the second may, perhaps, signify *lean-tos* round about, against [It is doubtful whether  $\text{כִּנְיָ$  is here, as commonly, merely the sign of the accusative, or is the preposition "with," meaning "in connexion with," *cum parietibus* (Seb. Schmidt), in which case its meaning would approach very closely to that of  $\text{לְ}$  above. Bähr remarks that  $\text{לְ}$  and  $\text{כִּנְיָ$  are used elsewhere as almost synonymous, and refers to Psa. iv. 7 in connexion with Psa. lxxvii. 2. Keil translates, "As for the walls" (*Anlangend die Wände*), but this gives us an unfinished sentence. It is probably an accusative, explicative of the preceding clause = "I mean the walls," &c., the singular, *wall*, having being used above. This additional clause] the walls of the house round about [would then mean that the term "house" is to be understood as including both temple and oracle (and excluding porch), as the next words define it], both of the temple and of the oracle [The floors, *i.e.*, ran round the south, west, and north sides of the building. Stanley aptly compares them to the little shops which nestle under the continental cathedrals; though the side aisles of some Gothic churches, viewed externally, would perhaps better represent their proportions] and he made chambers [ $\text{חִיטְּוֹת}$ ], literally, ribs, beams, (Gesenius); *Rippen* (Bähr). The design of the word is clearly to convey that the floors were "divided by partitions into distinct compartments" (Merz). According to Ezek. xli. 6 (where, however, the reading is doubtful) there were thirty-three of these side chambers; according to Josephus (Ant. viii. 8. 2) thirty. Thenius is probably not so far wrong when he sees in these chambers bed-

rooms. A sort of monastery would seem to have been attached to the temple. So many chambers could hardly have been required for the "preservation of temple stores and utensils" (Keil), or of offerings (Ewald). Whatever their use, we can hardly suppose that they were wholly without light, though nothing is said about windows. They may have had "fixed lattices." It is to be remembered that the priests and Levites ministered "by night in the house of the Lord" (Psa. cxxxiv. 1)] round about.

Ver. 6.—The nethermost chamber [Heb. floor; cf. Ezek. xli. 6] was five cubits broad [It must be remembered that all the measurements are those of the interior], and the middle was six cubits broad, and the third was seven cubits broad: for [Explanation how these differences of size arose] without [*i.e.*, on the outside] in the



Prepared by Capt. Knoeker B.E.  
Scale  $\frac{1}{450}$ .

wall of [Heb. omits] the house [main building—nave, and chancel] he made [Heb. put] narrowed rests [marg. "narrowings or rebatements." The word  $\text{חִיטְּוֹת}$  means *lessenings, deductions; Absätze*, Gesen. (Thesaurus, i. 304), Bähr. The outside of the temple wall took the shape of three (or four) steps, and presented three ledges for the beams to rest upon. See below] round about [same word as in ver. 5. The recesses in the wall ran round the north, west, and south sides of the building; they were co-extensive, *i.e.*, with the flats or side-chambers], that the beams should not be fastened [Heb. *that no fastening*] into the walls of the house. [The meaning is perfectly clear, *viz.*, that the timbers should not be let into the walls, ("they had not hold in the wall of the house," Ezek. xli. 6); but why this was forbidden is not quite so certain. According to Bähr, it was in order to preserve the great and costly stones of the temple intact: but others, with greater probability, hold that it was because it appeared unseemly to have the side-chambers, which were for semi-

secular purposes (cubicles, perhaps), made an actual part of the sacred edifice. Anyhow, it is clear that the beams rested on ledges made in the walls; but whether in the temple wall only, or in the outer wall of the side structure also, is uncertain. The preceding sketch will not only illustrate the difference, but will help the reader to understand the description preceding. In drawing (1) rebatements are showed only in the temple or inner wall. In (2) they are showed in both walls. In (1) the edifice is represented with a flat; in (2) with a span roof.

Keil decides in favour of the first arrangement (1), and Bähr says somewhat positively, "The outer wall of the structure had no rests." In fact, he suggests that the whole of this side building may have been of wood. It must be admitted that we do know that there were rebatements in the wall A, whereas nothing is said as to the outer wall B. It may also be reasonably alleged that the considerations of fitness and sacredness which forbade the insertion of the beams into the sanctuary wall would not apply to the outer wall, which was a part of the side structure only. Against this view, however, may be urged the extreme thickness of wall which this method of building would necessitate. For unless we suppose that the floor of the ground story rested on the rock, and so was quite detached from the building, we must suppose *four* rebatements, so that if the wall at the top were two cubits wide, it would be no less than six cubits (or nine feet) at the bottom. It is true that the walls of ancient buildings were of extraordinary thickness, but it must also be remembered that the temple was not fifty feet high. However, Ezek. xli. 9 suggests that the outside wall (B) may have been five cubits in thickness, and, if so, the inner wall would hardly be less. Fergusson, therefore, has some justification for putting each wall down as five cubits wide; but on the whole, perhaps, the plan represented in (1) appears the more probable.

The historian here digresses for a moment to speak of the remarkable and, indeed, unprecedented way in which the temple was built. The stories were shaped and prepared beforehand in the quarry, so that there was nothing to do on their arrival in the temple area but to fit them into their place in the building.]

Ver. 7.—And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready [Heb. *perfect*. This does not mean *unhewn*, though *בָּנִים מְעֻבְּרִים* is undoubtedly used

in Dent. xxvii. 6 (cf. Exod. xx. 25) of unhewn or virgin stone; and Gesenius would so understand the expression here. But the context seems rather to convey the idea that the stones were not shaped *on the spot*. It was apparently the belief of the ancients that stones of proper shape and size were provided in their bed by God (so Theodoret and Procopius.) It is inconceivable, however, that no dressing or preparation of any kind would be required; an idea, moreover, which is contradicted by ch. v. 18. When Gardiner (in Bähr, American edition) quotes Keil (in his earlier work) as understanding "all unviolated stones of the quarry," he hardly does justice to that author, who straightway adds, "that is, not altogether unhewn stones . . . but stones that were so hewn and wrought in the quarry that neither hammer," &c. (see below). Similarly Thenius and Bähr before it was brought thither [so the Authorized Version renders *בָּנִים* but mistakenly. It means, *the quarry* (Gesenius, Keil. For the construction, see Ewald, 289a, and Gesenius, Gram. ed. Rödiger, p. 170.) The verb *בָּנִים* is used of quarrying in ch. v. 31 (Heb.) Where was this quarry? The general idea is that it was in the Lebanon. And it is not to be denied that some of the massive substructions and corner-stones of the temple may have been brought from the mountain, along with the wood; but the bulk of the stone, there can be no doubt, was found much nearer home. Some of it, according to the Mishna (*Middoth*, iii. 4), came from Bethlehem; but we can hardly be mistaken in believing that for the most part it was quarried in Jerusalem itself, under the very temple rock, and out of the vast caverns recovered some years ago by Dr. Barclay (see his "City of the Great King"), the "Royal Caverns" of Josephus. See "Quart. Journal," Pal. Explor. Fund (No. vii.), pp. 373, 374, and cf. p. 34. There are unmistakable evidences of these extensive caverns having served as a quarry. Not only are the walls cut straight, but rude masses are left here and there to support the roof, and, what is still more convincing, there are stones more or less cut out of the rock, and incisions are made where stones are to be quarried. There was no reason why the workmen should go far afield for stone when they had it, and of very excellent quality, at their own doors: so that there was neither hammer [Heb. *and hammers*. Keil understands "finished stones of the quarry, and hammer, and axe." But the word "was built" (*בָּנִים*), coming as it does between "quarry" and "hammers," almost forbids this connexion] nor axe

[Heb. *the axe*] nor any tool [Heb. *every tool*] of iron heard in the house, while it was building. [The historian remarks on this, not only because it was so unusual, but with the evident idea that it was a fulfilment of the *spirit* of the law (Deut. xxvii. 5, 6), which required the *altar* to be of virgin stones, untouched by tool of iron. If the quarries are to be identified with the "Royal Caverns," it is easy to understand how the temple rose up in silence.]

Ver. 8.—After recording this interesting and singular fact, the historian resumes his description of the side-building. The door [or entrance, doorway. *דָּוָר*, as in ver. 31] for [Heb. *of*] the middle chamber [generally understood to mean "the middle side chamber of the lower story." But this is by no means necessary, for (1) *בְּתוּמָה* may signify the *suite* of rooms, *i.e.*, the entire story or flat, as well as a single lean-to or compartment, and (2) *הַתְּיִבְיָה* is used in the next clause of the middle *story*. This has led Thenius, Keil, Ewald, Bähr, *al.* to substitute *הַתְּיִבְיָה* (following the LXX. and Targum), which would give the sense of "*lower story*" (as in Ezek. xii. 7). Bähr says this "must necessarily be read." That this emendation has much in its favour must be allowed, but it seems also certain that we get a perfectly clear meaning from the text as it stands, *viz.*, that "the door (leading to) the middle floor was (on the ground floor) on the right side," &c. It is hardly likely that all the compartments on the ground floor had only one approach, and the doors which communicated with them may well have been passed over as requiring no special notice. But the historian feels it necessary to state how the second and third stories were reached, and the staircase which led to them causes him to speak of the position of the door which opened upon it] was in the right side [Heb. *shoulder*. This word (*קַרְתּוֹ*) almost implies that the door was in the *external* wall of the side structure, not in the wall of the holy place (as Böttcher, *al.*) The fact that the floor-joists were not inserted into the temple walls, as being inconsistent with the dignity of the sanctuary, makes it almost a certainty that there was no direct communication between the building and its *dependence*. It is very improbable that the walls of the house were anywhere broken through. The "right side" was the *south* side (chap. vii. 39), *i.e.*, the right, not as one faced the oracle, but, like the building, faced east. What was the exact position of the door, whether in the centre, or at either angle, it is impossible to say] of the

house: and they went up with winding stairs [*לְמַעַל*] is only found here and in 2 Chron. iii. The staircase was obviously unlike those of most Eastern buildings, within the side structure. Even if the outer wall was five cubits thick, of which we have no *proof*, it is very doubtful whether the staircase would or could be constructed within it] into [Heb. *upon*] the middle chamber [or story], and out of the middle into the third.

Ver. 9.—So he built the house and finished it [*i.e.*, the exterior (see on ver. 14)] and covered [*i.e.*, roofed, same word Deut. xxxiii. 21; Jer. xxii. 14; Hag. i. 4. There is no reference to the lining of cedar which was applied to the interior. That is described in ver. 15] the house with beams and boards [Heb. *roofs, ranks*. The same word is used of soldiers 2 Kings xi. 8, 15] of cedar. [It has been universally held till quite lately that the roof was either vaulted (Thenius) or flat (Bähr, Keil). But Mr. Fergusson has alleged some reasons for believing that it was a span or gable roof. It is true that Oriental buildings almost invariably have externally flat (internally arched) roofs. In Palestine, because of the scarcity of timber, no other form is possible. But the temple, as we have seen, was constructed after the model of the tabernacle, and the latter, as the name almost implies, and as necessity would require, had a ridged roof (see Dict. Bib. iii. p. 1453). It does not necessarily follow, however, as Fergusson assumes, that the temple followed the tabernacle in this respect. It is obvious that when a "house was built unto the name of the Lord," the form of the tent might be abandoned as inappropriate. It is true that this shape would be consecrated to them by many centuries of use, but it is also possible that in a house it would strike them as altogether *bizarre*.]

Ver. 10.—And then [Heb. *omits*] he built chambers [Heb. *the door* (*בְּיָבֵיטָה*)]. The word (masculine) is here again used of the entire side structure] against all the house, five cubits high [*i.e.*, each story was five cubits (7½ feet)]. The three stories would altogether measure fifteen cubits, and of course something must be allowed for joists, floors, &c. The entire height of the side structure (exterior) would consequently be about 18 or 20 cubits. And as the house was internally 30 cubits high, the exterior measurement would probably be about 32 cubits. It has hence been inferred that between the side structure and the top of temple wall there would be a clear space of 12 or 14 cubits, in which the windows were inserted. But this is based on the *assump-*

tion that the side structure had a *flat* roof, which is by no means certain. If the roof leaned against the walls of the house, with a low pitch, there would still be space amply sufficient for the clerestory windows. Rawlinson's diagram (p. 511), which gives 30 cubits as the height from basement to *ridge of roof*, and only allows 20 cubits for height of walls, practically makes the house 20 instead of 30 cubits high, for it is hardly likely that it had an open roof. In fact, we know that it had a ceiling (ver. 14), which must have been at the height of 30 cubits (see the diagrams on p. 102. In (1) house and side structure are represented with flat, in (2) with ridged or sloping roofs), unless there was an upper chamber above the house, as to which see ver. 20. Rawlinson's diagram has this further defect, that he allows nothing for thickness of joists, floors, and ceilings. If we allow one cubit for each floor, then, on his plan, there would be little or no room left for the windows. This verse is hardly to be considered as a repetition of ver. 5, the side structure being here mentioned in connexion with its height and the materials used in its construction] and they rested on [the meaning of the Heb.  $\text{נִשְׁכָּנְוּ}$ ] has been much disputed. It is uncertain what is the nominative, Solomon (as in  $\text{נִשְׁכָּנְוּ}$ ), or the "floor" (just referred to in  $\text{קִרְיָוֶה}$ ). Gesenius understands the former, and renders, "he covered the house," &c. Thénius, "he fastened the floor," &c. Keil adopts the latter alternative, "it held to the house with cedar beams." It may be urged against this rendering (as also against Thénius's) that beams which merely rested on the walls would hardly bind or hold the side structure to the main building. But it is almost impossible to decide between these interpretations. We may either render "he covered," &c. (with Chald., Vulg.) in which case ver. 10 would agree with ver. 9 (each, *i.e.*, would refer to the roofing; ver. 9 to roof of temple; ver. 10 to roof of side structure and its stories); or we may take the words to mean "it laid hold of, *i.e.*, rested on] the house with timber of cedar.

At this point the historian interrupts his description of the building to record the gracious promise made to the king during its erection. It should, perhaps, be stated that this (vers. 11—14) is omitted in the Vat. LXX. But it has every mark of genuineness.]

Ver. 11.—And the word of the Lord came to Solomon [probably through the prophet Nathan. It cannot well have been a direct communication, for the *second* direct revelation is mentioned in chap. ix. 2 (cf. iii. 5).

The original promise was made by Nathan (2 Sam. vii. 12). It seems exceedingly probable that the promise would be renewed through him if he were still alive] saying,

Ver. 12.—Concerning [or, *as to*. There is nothing, however, in the Hebrew] this house which thou art in building [ $\text{בְּבִנְיָוֶה}$ ]. Cf.  $\text{בְּבִנְיָוֶה}$ , vers. 5, 9, 10] if thou wilt walk in my statutes [the connexion of ideas seems to be this, "Thou art doing well to build the house; thou art fulfilling my good pleasure (2 Sam. vii. 13); if thou wilt go on and in other matters wilt keep," &c. It is to be observed that this promise contains a faint note of warning. Possibly Solomon had already betrayed some slight tokens of declension], and execute my judgments, and keep all my commandments to walk in them; then will I perform [literally, confirm. Same word as in ch. ii. 3. The "word of the Lord" is the echo of the word of David] my word with thee, which I spake unto David thy father [*i.e.*, the word mentioned ch. ii. 4 and found 2 Sam. vii. 12 sqq.].

Ver. 13.—And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake my people Israel [cf. Deut. xxxi. 6. A fresh element is here introduced into the promise, arising out of the erection of the temple. God had pledged His presence to the tabernacle (Exod. xxv. 8; xxix. 45; cf. Levit. xxvi. 11). And the temple was reared to be His dwelling-place (ch. viii. 13; 2 Chron. vi. 2). He now assures the royal builder that he will occupy it. "Jehovah Shammah" (Ezek. xlvi. 35). The covenant relation shall be more firmly established.

Ver. 14.—So Solomon built the house and finished it [though these words are a repetition of ver. 9, yet they are not without significance. Encouraged by the promise just made, he proceeded with the interior, of which the narrative henceforth treats. Ver. 9 speaks of the finishing of the shell.

Ver. 15.—And he built [*i.e.*, constructed, covered] the walls of the house within [but not without also, as Stanley affirms, "Its massive stone walls were entirely cased in cedar, so as to give it the appearance of a rough log-house"] with boards [or beams ( $\text{לִבְנֵי עֵדָר}$ ): same word as in vers. 5—8] of cedar [Heb. cedars. The practice of covering stone walls with a lining of wood, which in turn was ornamented with gold or colour (Jer. xxii. 14), seems to have had its origin in Phœnicia (Bähr), and may have been suggested to Solomon by his Zidonian workmen (Cf. 2 Chron. ii. 14), both the floor of the house and the walls of the ceiling [This gives no sense and is against the Hebrew, which is as the marg.—"from the floor . . .

unto the walls," &c. The expression „walls of the ceiling," though it may be taken to mean "the walls where they join the ceiling," is peculiar, and the suggestion that for קירות walls, we should read קירות beams—the word of the parallel verse in 2 Chron.—has everything in its favour. The LXX. reads *ὡς τῶν δοκῶν*: and [omit] he covered them on the inside with wood [This is apparently a mere repetition. The A. V. would lead us to suppose that a fresh particular was stated. We learn from 2 Chron. iii. 6 that not only were the walls, or their wooden lining, covered with plates of gold, "gold of Parvaim," but they were likewise ornamented with precious stones], and he covered the floor of the house with planks of fir [see on ch. v. 8].

Ver. 16.—And he built twenty cubits on [Heb. from] the sides of the house both the floor and the walls [Heb. as in ver. 15, "from the floor to the walls" (or beams)]. If קירות is a copyist's error, it is repeated here] with boards of cedar [He is now speaking of the wooden partition which separated the oracle from the temple of the house. At a distance of 20 cubits, measured along the sides from the west end of the house, he erected a cedar wall which reached from the floor to the ceiling] he even built them] i.e., the 20 cubits] for it [the house] within [The meaning is clear, though the construction is somewhat involved, viz., that he reared this partition inside the house to separate a portion for the oracle] even for the oracle [Heb. an oracle] even for the most holy place [Heb. for the holy of holies].

Ver. 17.—And the house, that is, the temple before it [or, the anterior temple. The portion of the structure before the oracle is sometimes called, as here, "the house;" sometimes (as in ver. 5) "the temple;" sometimes (as in ver. 4) "the temple of the house;" or, as here again, "the front temple," לְפָנָי is supposed to be an adjective formed from לְפָנָי. Thenius, however, supposes that דְּבִיר (oracle) has fallen out of the text. Our author now describes the division of the building into holy and most holy place] was forty cubits long.

Ver. 18.—And the cedar of the house within [lit. cedar (wood) was placed against the house inside] was carved with knobs [Heb. sculpture of gourds. The sculpture is in apposition to cedar. The authorities are divided as to the kind of sculpture intended. Keil thinks they were *bassi relievi*; Bähr contends that, like those of the Egyptian monuments, they were *sunken*. דְּבִירִים

is generally assumed to be synonymous with דְּבִירִים "squinting cucumbers" (2 Kings iv. 39, note). Bähr, however, justly observes that a deadly fruit, such as this is described to have been, was hardly likely to be employed in the decoration of the sanctuary, and he would render the word "buds." Keil thinks the gourds were oval ornaments, something like the wild gourd, which ran in rows along the walls. See the illustration, "Slab from Kouyunjik," Dict. Bib. ii. p. 49] and open flowers [lit. *burstings of flowers*. These words again are very variously interpreted. Thenius: *festoons of flowers*; Keil: *open flower buds*; Gesen.: *expanded flowers*]: all was cedar; there was no stone seen. [Really, the cedar was no more seen than the stone, for this in turn was overlaid with gold (ver. 22.)]

Ver. 19.—And the oracle [Heb. an oracle. Heb. דְּבִיר probably from דְּבַר *speak*. Sc Jerome, *oraculum*; and Aquila and Symm. *καταστροφιστήριον*. Genesius, Bähr, *al.*, however, interpret the word to mean the hinder part, *adytum*] he prepared in the house within [lit. in the midst of the house within, i.e., between the Holy Place and the end structure] to set there [the principal purpose which the oracle served. תָּתִין = תָּתַן with repeated syllable. Cf. 1 Kings xvii. 14, *Keri*] the ark of the covenant of the Lord.

Ver. 20.—And the oracle in the forefront [or, the interior of the oracle. Keil, after Kimchi, maintains that לְפָנָי is the construct of the noun לְפָנָי. See ver. 29, where it clearly means interior, as its opposition to "without" shows. The A. V. yields no sense] was twenty cubits in length, and twenty cubits in breadth, and twenty cubits in the height thereof [that is to say, it was a perfect cube. When we consider that the oracle of the tabernacle was a cube of ten cubits and the Holy City (Rev. xxi. 16; cf. Ezek. xlviii. 8—35, especially ver. 20) is a cube of 12,000 furlongs, we cannot but regard these measurements as significant. To the ancients the square seemed the most appropriate shape to express the idea of moral perfection. The idea of the cube consequently was that of entire completeness, of absolute perfection. A little light is thrown on this subject by the use of *τετραγωνος* among the Greeks. See the quotation from Simonides in Plat. Protog. 534 A; Arist. Rhet. iii. 11; Eth. Nic. i. 10, 11, and compare the familiar "*totus teres atque rotundus*." The height of the oracle (internally) being only twenty cubits, while that of the house was thirty (ver. 2), several questions of some interest suggest themselves for consideration. It is perhaps

impossible in the present state of our knowledge to arrive at any very positive conclusions, but it may be well, nevertheless, if only to show in how much uncertainty the architecture of the temple is involved, to state them. First among them is this: Was the roof of the temple flat or ridged? (See above on ver. 9). (2) In either case, was the height of thirty cubits, or any uniform height, maintained throughout, or was the roof of the oracle some ten cubits lower than that of the house? The analogy of the tabernacle, of which the temple was a copy, would lead us to suppose that the ridge—if there was a ridge—of the entire building was level and unbroken, though the analogy of the Gothic church, which, we have already seen, is almost a reproduction of the temple, suggests that the oracle (like the chancel, and, it may be added, like the *adytum* of Egyptian temples) may possibly have had a lower roof. But (3), supposing the same height was maintained from end to end, to what use, if any, was the vacant space of ten cubits (15 feet) between ceiling and roof of oracle applied? It has been held by some that there was a chamber here, but that it was empty, being formed, in fact, not for use, but in order to procure the cubical shape of the oracle. Others contend that this upper room, or one which ran the entire length of the building, was designed to serve as a receptacle for the reliques of the tabernacle, and they would identify it with the Πῑ'ῑϋ (LXX. τὸ ὑπερφῶν)

of 2 Chron. iii. 9. And untrustworthy as Josephus is when not supported by independent evidence, it is worth mentioning here that both he and the Talmud "persistently assert that there was a superstructure on the temple equal in height to the lower part" (Fergusson, who, consequently, is of opinion that there undoubtedly was some such superstructure, as in the tomb of Darius, near Persepolis (see Dict. Bib. iii. pp. 1456, 1457), and that it was used for worship (2 Kings xxiii. 12), where see note). Bähr, however, argues forcibly against this idea. He says, *inter alia*, that there was no approach provided to these chambers; but our account is so manifestly imperfect that this argument is at the best a precarious one. He sees in the "upper chambers" (the Hebrew word is plural) the upper stories of the side structure. He agrees, however, with Ewald that there was a chamber over the oracle, but thinks it was unoccupied. Keil identifies this space with the "upper chambers" of 2 Chron. iii. 9, and upon the whole this appears to be the most feasible view. (4) How was the ceiling, whether with or without this upper chamber,

and whether at the height of twenty or thirty cubits—how was it supported? For "no cedar beam could be laid across a space of twenty cubits without sinking in the centre by its own weight." Fergusson hence argues that the roof must have been carried on pillars—four in the sanctuary and ten in the hall. He remarks that they were used in the house of the Forest of Lebanon, where they were *less* suitable than here; and he overlaid it [lit. *made it shine*] with pure gold [marg. *shut up* (from פָּרַח *clausit*). Cf. Job xxviii. 15 (Heb.) The same gold is described as זָהָב (Exod. xxv. 11) and כֶּהָן (2 Chron. iii. 8). It is called "shut up gold," not because it was *concealed* (κεκρυμμένον), but because of the exclusion of impure ingredients (Vulg. *aurum purissimum*). The lavish use of gold in the interior of the temple—its weight 600 talents (75,000 lbs.), its value almost incalculable—was not for mere display (for most of it was never seen except by the priests), but was symbolical of light and purity (Job xxxvii. 22, 23; Rev. xxi. 18), and stamped the place as the abode of Him who dwelleth in light (1 Tim. vi. 16). See Bähr *in loc.* The palace of the Lord must be "exceeding magnificent." The overlaying was not gilding, but *laminae* of gold were attached to the woodwork with nails. This art was probably derived from Egypt (Exod. xxv. 11, 13). Egyptian figures ornamented with gold plates are found both in the Louvre and British Museum. See Wilkinson, "Ancient Egyptians," ii. p. 233 sqq.) Rawlinson remarks that "such ornamentation was common in Babylon, in Assyria, and in Media." See Isa. xlv. 6; Herod. i. 93; Layard, ii. 264. In addition to the gold, the house was garnished with precious stones (2 Chron. iii. 6). Cf. 1 Chron. xxix. 2, 8; and so covered the [Heb. *an*] altar which was of cedar. [The italics in the A. V. lead us to suspect a mistranslation, and such it proves to be. What the writer means, supposing the present text to be retained, is, not that Solomon covered the cedar altar with gold, but that he overlaid the (stone?) altar with cedar. It is true the article is wanting, but this may perhaps be accounted for by the fact that the altar is now mentioned for the first time (Keil). It is much more probable, however, that the text has been slightly corrupted. The LXX. reads, *καὶ ἐποίησε θυσιαστήριον* (Cod. Alex. adds *κέδρου*), which proves that the Seventy had פָּרַח instead of פָּרַח in their text. If so, the absence of the article is at once explained, and an unmeaning repetition in ver. 22 avoided. The mention of the altar—of course it is the altar of *incense* that is meant: the altar of burnt sacrifice was outside the building—in connexion with the

oracle is significant. In ver. 22 it is called the "altar that (belonged) to the oracle," because it stood just outside it. In the tabernacle it was placed "before the veil" (Exod. xxx. 6; xl. 5, 26; Levit. xvi. 12—18), and it occupied this position because the incense burned upon it was offered before the Invisible Presence within. It is an argument in favour of the textual emendation suggested above that the altar in the tabernacle was of wood (Exod. xxx. 1), and that Ezekiel speaks of the "altar of wood" (ch. xli. 22), the altar of sacrifice being of earth, stones (Exod. xx. 24, 25), or brass (2 Chron. iv. 1). If we retain the Received Text we are almost compelled to believe that this altar was also of stone, as they would hardly cover a wooden altar with wood.

Ver. 21.—So [Heb. *And*. The ornamentation of the holy place is next mentioned] Solomon overlaid the house [as well as the oracle] within with pure gold: and he made a partition by the chains of gold before the oracle [These words are extremely obscure. The prevailing view is that of Gesenius, *al.*, that  $\text{רָבָע}$  = "he bolted," &c. But, if so, what did the chains bolt? Bähr says, the boards of the cedar partition, just as the bars fastened together the boards of the tabernacle (Exod. xxvi. 26—29). Gesen. himself (together with Keil, marg., *al.*) understands the *doors*, "he bolted the doors of the oracle," so as to keep them closed, except on the day of atonement. But the literal rendering is, "he carried over with chains of gold before the oracle," where nothing is said of either boards or doors. The more natural interpretation, therefore, would perhaps be: he carried on the gold plates of the house in chains of gold across the partition, and so fastened it to the side walls. Perhaps this was done to avoid any fracture of, or insertion into, the stonework; and he overlaid it [What? Keil says, the cedar altar last mentioned at the end of ver. 20. But the altar has now dropped out of the reader's, and therefore presumably out of the writer's mind. It would be more natural to understand the words of the oracle just mentioned, but the adornment of the oracle has already been related (ver. 20), and it is hardly likely that having stated that it was covered with *pure gold* in one verse, he would mention that it was overlaid with *gold* in the next. It looks as if the cedar partition were referred to, the boards "before the oracle"'] with gold.

Ver. 22.—And the whole house he overlaid with gold [This no mere repetition, *more Hebraico*, as Bähr and Keil would have us think. Something additional must surely be referred to, and 2 Chron. iii. 4 warrants us in understanding this statement to in-

clude the porch, the interior of which was gilded. Because the porch is elsewhere (ver. 3) distinguished from the "house," it does not follow that it can never be comprehended under that term] until he had finished all the house; also [Heb. *and*] the altar that was by [Heb. *to*. See on ver. 20] the oracle he overlaid with gold.

Ver. 23.—And within the oracle [The description now passes on to the mysterious symbolic figures which were placed in the holy of holies] he made two cherubims [As to the nature, composition, and significance of the cherubim, see notes on Exod. xxv. 19; xxxvii. 7. The only particulars which will require notice here are those in which the cherub of the temple differed from that of the tabernacle] of olive tree [Heb. *trees or wood of oil*. The oleaster (wild olive) is supposed to be intended, the proper name for the olive tree being  $\text{אֵיל}$ ] (Neh. viii. 15). The wood of the oleaster, which is firm, fine-grained, and durable, was used by the Greeks for the images of their gods (Winer). The cherubim of the tabernacle were of solid gold; those of the temple, on account of their great size (fifteen feet high) were necessarily of less costly material. But though of wood, yet the most durable and beautiful of wood, the olive, was employed in their construction. It is noticeable how olive wood is employed for the cherubim and doors of oracle, and for the posts of the temple doorway; the less precious cedar was used for lining the walls and for beams, &c., while for the floor and doors of house, the commoner cypress sufficed], each ten cubits high. [Half the height of the oracle. They occupied its entire width (ver. 24).

Ver. 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. [As the four wings alone covered the whole extent of the oracle, each pair must clearly have been in contact on the body of the cherub.]

Ver. 25.—And the other cherub was ten cubits; both the cherubims were of one measure and one size [or *shape*].

Ver. 26.—The height of the one cherub was ten cubits, and so it was of the other cherub. [The constant recurrence of the number ten, the symbol of completeness and perfection, is not to be overlooked.]

Ver. 27.—And he set the cherubims within the inner house: and they stretched forth the wings of the cherubims [The marg. reading, *the cherubim stretched forth their wings*, is altogether inadmissible], 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. In 2 Chron. iii. 10 we are told that the cherubim were of "image work" (the meaning of the Heb. word is unknown). We also learn that they "stood on their feet" and, unlike the cherubim of the tabernacle, which faced each other (Exod. xxvii. 9), faced the throne, *i.e.*, the cedar partition, and the east. The object of this arrangement probably was to enable the wings to be stretched out across the sanctuary. In the tabernacle the wings were "spread out on high" (Exod. xxv. 20; xxvii. 9). In both cases the ark and mercy-seat were placed under the overshadowing wings (ch. viii. 6). There would be a clear space of eight or nine cubits between the bodies of the cherubim, and the ark only measured 2½ cubits (Exod. xxv. 10) in length and 1½ cubits in breadth. Unlike Ezekiel's cherubim (Ezek. chs. i. x; cf. Rev. iv. 7), these had apparently but one face. The cherub was not a simple, but a complex being, having no unalterable and fixed form. See Bähr, *Symbolik*, i. pp. 313, 314; *Dict. Bib.* vol. i. pp. 301—303.]

Ver. 28.—And he overlaid the cherubims with gold.

Ver. 29.—And he carved all the walls of the house round about with carved figures of cherubims [lit. *openings*, *i.e.*, gravings or indentations of cherubim. כִּרְבָּבִים is used of gravings in stone, Exod. xxviii. 11; xxxix. 6; in metal, xxviii. 36; xxxix. 30] and palm trees and open flowers [The open flowers may well have been lilies (ch. vii. 19, 22, 26). It is uncertain whether there were one or more rows of cherubim and palms. Keil, arguing from the analogy of Egyptian temples, contends for two or three rows, but it is doubtful how far the Israelites, notwithstanding their new and intimate relations with the country, would take Egypt and its idolatrous shrines for a model. Ezek. xli. 18 tends to show that the palm-trees alternated with the cherubs. The cherubim may have had two faces, such as he describes (ver. 19), the face of a man on the one side, and the face of a young lion on the other side; but if so, they must have differed in form from those of the oracle. Possibly the open flowers formed a border, or were sculptured in festoons, above, and the gourds (or buds) formed a border below (as in the Kouynjik slab). But as to this the text is silent.

But while we are ignorant of the precise form and of the arrangement of these ornamental carvings, we are not wholly in the dark as to their symbolism. For everything in the temple, we may be sure, had a meaning. Let us inquire, then, into the

significance of the cherubim, the palma, and the flowers.

1. *The Cherubim* have been regarded by some as symbols of the invisible Godhead, by others as "representations of the heavenly spirits which surround the Lord of glory and set forth psychical life at its highest stage" (Keil); but it seems best to view them as symbols of all animal life, including the highest and perhaps not excluding the thought of Him who is the source and spring of life, the *Animam animantium* (cf. ch. xii. 28). Hence they are spoken of as חַיִּים חַיִּים (Ezek. i. 5, 13, 15, &c.) "the living things" (compare *ῥά ζῶα*, Rev. iv. 6, 8, 9), and even as חַיִּים "the life" (Ezek. x. 14, 15, &c.) The cherubim consequently speak of the great animal kingdom before its Creator. "Creaturally being reaches its highest degree in those which have an *anima*, and among these, the lion, the bull, the eagle, and the man are the highest and most complete" (Bähr). These shapes, accordingly, were not inappropriate or unmeaning in a temple raised by the creature to the glory of the Creator.

2. Just as the cherubim speak of animal, so do the *Palms* of vegetable life. They are "the princes of the vegetable kingdom" (Linnaeus). "Amongst trees there is none so lofty and towering, none which has such a fair majestic growth, which is so ever-green, and which affords so grateful a shade and such noble fruits—fruits which are said to be the food of the blessed in paradise—as the palm" (Bähr), who also adds that it is said to have as many excellent properties as there are days in the year, and cites Humboldt as designating it the "noblest of plants-forms to which the nations have always accorded the meed of beauty." Judæa, he further remarks, is the fatherland of the palm, so much so that the palm in later days became the symbol of Palestine (as on the well-known coin with the legend *Judæa capta*). The palms, therefore, tell of the vegetable world, and of Him who fashioned its noble and graceful forms.

3. And very similar was the testimony of the *Flowers*. "Flowers and bloom have been, from ancient times to our own, the usual symbols of life-fulness. . . . So then by the flower-work, as well as by the cherubim and the palm-trees, was the dwelling of Jehovah, which was adorned therewith, designated as an *abode of life*" (Bähr). On the earthly dwelling-place of the Eternal, that is to say, were everywhere portrayed the various tokens of His Almighty power and goodness. And the significance of each is the same. "Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and

were created." They were graven] within and without. [These words, here and in ver. 30, are generally taken to mean "in the oracle and in the house." But it is worthy of consideration whether they do not rather signify, "in the house and in the porch." The latter was overlaid with gold (2 Chron.

iii. 4). It is doubtful whether  $\text{קְרִיבָן}$  on the outside, can be applied to any part of the interior, and here its application would be to the oracle (Thenius)].

Ver. 30.—And the floor of the house he overlaid with gold, within and without.

Ver. 31.—And for the entering of the oracle, he made doors [which hung on golden hinges (ch. vii. 50) of olive tree [see on ver. 23)], the lintel and side posts were a fifth part of the wall. [The meaning of the Hebrew words has been much disputed. See Gesen. Thesaur., i. pp. 43—45. Gesen. himself interprets as A. V.: *crepido cum postibus erat quinta pars, i.e., quintam parietis partem occupabat*. The Rabbins: the "entablature with side posts and threshold formed a pentagon." But a pentagonal doorway is without example in Eastern architecture.

Thenius: "the strength ( $\text{לֵב}$ ) is generally taken as an architectural term = *crepido portae*, or entablature) of the posts was a fifth." Rawlinson: "the lintel was one-fifth of wall, and each door post one-fifth of its height;" in which case the doorway would of course be a square of four cubits. But perhaps the rendering of A. V. (with which Keil and Bähr also agree) is more natural. The meaning, consequently, would be that the entrance to the oracle, inclusive of the side posts which helped to form it, occupied one-fifth of the extent of the cedar partition. The entrance to the house (ver. 33) was one-fourth of the wall of the house.]

Ver. 32.—The two doors also were [Rather, perhaps, "And he made" is to be supplied from ver. 31, as Keil. Rawlinson remarks that such doors as these are characteristic of Assyrian gateways] of olive tree: and he carved upon them carvings of cherubims and palm trees and open flowers, and overlaid them with gold, and spread  $\text{זָהָב}$  Hiph. of  $\text{זָהָב}$  gold [Heb. *the gold*] upon the cherubims and upon the palm trees [The writer means, not that the carving alone was gilded—as Thenius thinks, who remarks on the effective contrast which the dark red cedar and the bright gold would furnish)—but that the gilding did not conceal the character of the carvings. It is clear from ver. 22 that "all the house" blazed with gold in every part. If the floors

were covered with gold, we may be sure both walls and doors would not be without their coating of the precious metal. Our author does not mention the curtain—it is clear that the doors would not dispense with the necessity for a veil—but the chronicler does (2 Chron. iii. 14). It was necessary in order to cover the ark (Exod. xl. 3, 21); hence it was sometimes called "the veil of the covering." But for this, when the doors were opened on the day of atonement, the priest in the holy place might have gazed into the oracle. See on ch. viii. 8. The doors opened outwardly (into the house). The veil was suspended within the oracle.]

Ver. 33.—So also [*i.e.*, similarly] made he for the door [or entrance, doorway] of the temple posts of olive tree, a fourth [Heb. *from a fourth*] part of the wall. It is uncertain whether we are to understand the "fourth part" of the height or of the breadth of the doorway, though the latter is probably meant. The height of the wall is variously estimated; generally at 30 (ver. 2), but by Rawlinson at 20 cubits. But the breadth is beyond dispute. It was 20 cubits. The doorway, consequently, would be five cubits wide. The effect of the preposition, "from a fourth," is probably this: The entrance with the side posts subtracted one-fourth from the space of the wall.

Ver. 34.—And the two doors were [As in ver. 32, the verb is to be supplied from the verse preceding. "And he made two doors, &c.] of fir tree  $\text{עֵץ אֲרָז}$  see note on ch. v. 8]: the two leaves [lit. *ribs*, same word as in vers. 5, 8, 10] of the one door were folding

[Heb. *rolling*], and the two leaves  $\text{עֵלֶּבֶט}$  is probably a clerical error for  $\text{עֵלֶּבֶט}$  arising out of the  $\text{עֵלֶּבֶט}$  in vers. 32, 35] of the other [Heb. *second*] door were folding. [It seems more natural to suppose that the leaves were formed by a vertical than by a horizontal division. Indeed, it is doubtful

whether the word  $\text{עֵלֶּבֶט}$  would be applied to the latter arrangement. Keil objects to the former on the ground that the leaves would thus be only one cubit broad each, and the opening of one leaf, consequently, would be insufficient to admit of any person's passing through. But to this it may be replied (1) that the opening of two leaves would in any case form a sufficiently wide entrance, and (2) that it is not said that all the leaves were of uniform width. Besides, the other arrangement is without precedent in the public buildings of the East.]

Ver. 35.—And he carved thereon cherubims and palm trees and open flowers [The constant recurrence of the same forms is in

itself a proof that they must have been significant], and covered them with gold fitted upon the carved work [Heb. *made straight upon the engraved work*. That is to say, the gold fitted closely to all the uneven and indented surface of the figures. Elsewhere, *laminae* were simply laid upon the level walls, &c.]

Ver. 36.—The description of the buildings concludes with a brief reference to the *enceinte* or court. And he built the inner court [The mention of an *inner* court, called in 2 Chron. iv. 9 the “court of the priests,” presupposes, of course, the existence of an *outer* court. Our author does not mention this, but the chronicler does, under the name of “the great court.” In Jer. xxxvi. 10, the former is called the “higher court,” because it occupied a higher level] with three rows of hewed stone and a row of cedar beams. [These, it is thought, formed the enclosing wall of the court (the LXX. adds *κυκλόθεν*). The cedar beams were instead of coping-stones. It has been supposed, however (J. D. Michaelis), that these three rows of stone, boarded with cedar, formed the pavement of the court. But the question at once suggests itself, Why pile three rows of stones one upon another merely to form a pavement, and why hew and shape them if they were to be concealed beneath a stratum of wood? It is a fair inference from 2 Chron. vii. 3, that the wall was low enough to permit men to look over it. Fergusson, on the contrary, argues that it must have been twice the height of the enclosure of the tabernacle, which would give us an elevation of ten cubits (Exod. xxvii. 18). It is worth suggesting, however, whether, the inner court being raised above the outer, which surrounded it, these stones may not have formed the retaining wall or sides of the platform. As the outer court had gates (2 Kings xi. 6; xii. 9; 2 Chron. iv. 9; xxiii. 5; xxiv. 8), it also must have had walls. From 2 Kings xxiii. 11; Jer. xxxv. 2; xxxvi. 10, we gather that there were various chambers in the forecourt. Such were certainly contemplated by David (1 Chron. xxviii. 12); but it is not recorded that Solomon built them. Nor have we any warrant, except the bare assertion of Josephus, for the belief that he built a colonnade or cloister on the east side, such as was

known to later ages by the name of “Solomon’s Porch” (John x. 23; Acts iii. 11; v. 12). As to the dimensions of these spaces, we are left to conjecture. If, as in everything else, the dimensions of the tabernacle were doubled, then the court of the priests would measure 200 cubits from east to west, and 100 cubits from north to south. It should be stated, however, that in the temple of Ezekiel, the proportions of which, in the present instance, may well be historical, both courts are represented as perfect squares. Rawlinson inadvertently puts down the length (along the side of temple) at 100 cubits, and the breadth (ends of temple) at 200. The outer court would probably be twice as large as the inner, *i.e.*, 400×200 cubits. But all this is necessarily uncertain.]

Ver. 37.—In the fourth year was the foundation of the house of the Lord laid, in the month Zif [see on ver. 1].

Ver. 38.—And in the eleventh year, in the month Bul [גִּזְרִים = rain. Hence Bul would be the month of rain (Ges.) Keil understands it to signify produce (*proventus*), and sees in it the month of *fruits*. It extended from the November to the December full moon], which is the eighth month, was the house finished throughout all the parts thereof [Heb. *וְכָל־הָעֵצִים*], and according to all the fashion of it [Heb. *וְכָל־הַמְּדִינָה*]. So was he seven years in building it. [As Bul was the eighth month, and Zif the second, the house was precisely seven and a half years in building—a short period, if we consider the magnitude of the undertaking, but long enough, if we remember the enormous number of hands employed upon it, the preparations made by David, and the modest dimensions of the edifice (ver. 2). The commentators all cite Pliny’s statement that all Asia was building the temple of Diana at Ephesus 200 years, but the cases are not at all parallel. We learn from 2 Chron. iii. 2, that it was on the second day of the month that the building was commenced. Bishop Wordsworth, who assigns seven years and seven months as the time occupied in this work, sees in this hebdomatic period an analogy to the seven days of the creation.]

## HOMILETICS.

Vers. 2, 3, 20.—*Christianity built on the Foundations of Judaism.* The Jewish temple in its resemblance to the Gothic church is a not inapt illustration of the relations of Christianity to Judaism. The temple of Solomon was not only architecturally the exact reproduction on a larger scale, and in a

more permanent form, of the tabernacle of witness (see p. 98), it was also the model and archetype of the sacred buildings of the Christian faith. In appearance, no doubt, it was somewhat different—the purposes for which the two edifices were designed were different (p. 101), but the ground-plan and general arrangement were the same (p. 99). The porch, “temple of house,” oracle, side chambers of the one, correspond with the porch (or tower), nave, chancel, and side aisles of the other. Nor was this resemblance accidental. The architects of earlier times—times when men had not come to think that they most honoured Christianity by going as far as possible away from Judaism, times when the first dispensation was regarded as full of significance and guidance for the children of the second—the architects of those days thought they would best serve the God of Jews and Christians by adhering as closely as possible to the Divine “pattern which was shewed in the mount,” the pattern which had served for tabernacle and temple alike.

Now this fact, that the *place* of Divine worship has been, in nearly all ages, built after one model, may suggest the thought that the *principles* of Divine worship, and indeed of religion, have been in all ages the same. And for the good reason that God and man, the worshipped and the worshipper, are in all ages the same. If the successive generations of men who “went up to the temple to pray” went up to an edifice *something* like ours, they also carried with them hearts, sins, sorrows, needs, infirmities, *altogether* like ours. The Gothic church, then, was modelled after the Jewish temple. Even so the Christian religion has been cast in the mould of Judaism. It is not a brand-new religion, utterly diverse from the dispensation which preceded it, but it is built on the old foundations. Its proportions are much stately, its uses are much nobler, but still the Christian Church is the copy of the Jewish, and Christianity is the child of Judaism. There are some of our cathedrals—York Minster, *e.g.*—which occupy the site, and parts of which follow the outlines, of the old Saxon church of wood—another illustration of the relations of our holy religion to the religion which it has replaced. And that Christianity was never designed to be destructive of Judaism, but was meant to be a development, an outgrowth and expansion of it, our Lord’s words (Matt. v. 17) and His apostle’s (Rom. iii. 31; Col. ii. 17) clearly show. The law, *i.e.*, was the outline of which Christianity is the filling up and completion. But observe: the filling up, if it be true to its name, must keep within the lines of the sketch.

It is one of the tendencies of the age to throw over Judaism and its teaching (see, *e.g.*, “Scribner’s Magazine,” vol. xii. pp. 724 sqq., and the letters of Charles Dickens). Men say they want “Christianity without Judaism.” They speak of the latter as a dead letter. But surely it is an unworthy conception of the Supreme Wisdom—the idea that a faith which was adapted to the men of one age has absolutely no lessons or no guiding principles for the men of a later age, but must be cast aside as wholly antiquated and effete. A principle of *continuity* can be distinctly traced operating in the kingdom of nature; are we forbidden to believe that there is any such law in the kingdom of grace? Let us now consider, then, in what ways Christianity is built on the foundations of Judaism, and how the religion of the New Testament follows the lines laid down in the Old.

I. The fundamental idea of Judaism was that of a **VISIBLE CHURCH**. It was that God had “taken a nation from the midst of another nation” (Deut. iv. 32—34) to be a peculiar people to Himself, a “kingdom of priests, a holy nation” (Exod. xix. 5, 6). His purposes of grace, *i.e.*, were to be manifested to the world through a society. Here, then, was a *κλησις* and an *εκκλησία*. Precisely similar is the root idea of our religion. The Son of God came to found a Church (Matt. xvi. 18; Ephes. ii. 20), to regenerate humanity through a brotherhood. Behold the principle of continuity in this “great Church truth of God’s word.” The very words used of the Jewish people are transferred to the Christian Church (1 Peter ii. 9; Rev. i. 6; v. 10). The composition of the two societies was different (one nation, all nations), the rites of admission were different (circumcision, baptism), but the principle—a visible Church—was the same. Every Jew was a priest. Every Christian is the same.

II. The OFFICERS of the Jewish Church correspond with the officers of the Christian Church. "It is an apostolical tradition that what Aaron and his sons and the Levites were in the temple, that our bishops, priests, and deacons claim to be in the Church" (Jerome). No society can exist without at least (1) laws, and (2) officers. The Jewish Church had as its officers, high priest, priests, and Levites. The Christian Church has a great High Priest in the heavens (Heb. iv. 14), and its earthly officers are bishops, priests, and deacons. The analogy is not imperfect, for just as the high priest was of the order of the priests, so are bishops but superintending presbyters. The bishop is *primus presbyter*; the high priest was *summus sacerdos*. The Jewish Church had also its *prophets* (see Introduction, Sect. III., note), corresponding with the *preachers* of the Christian economy. A prophet need not be a priest; a preacher need not be a presbyter. Of course, the nature and functions of these officers of the two dispensations differ, as do the dispensations themselves, but the same outlines are preserved.

III. The SERVICES of the Christian Church are derived from the service of the Jewish synagogue. "Widely divergent as the two words and the things they represented afterwards became, the Ecclesia had its starting point in the Synagogue" (Plumptre). The earliest assemblies of Christians were composed of men who had worshipped in the synagogue (Acts xiii. 14; xiv. 1; xviii. 4, 26; xxii. 19. Cf. Luke iv. 16; John xviii. 20, &c.), and who, in default of directions to the contrary, naturally preserved under the new dispensation the form of worship to which they had been accustomed under the old. St. James, indeed (ch. ii. 1), speaks of the Christian assembly as a "synagogue." The use of fixed forms of prayer, the reading of the two lessons (Luke iv. 18; Acts xiii. 15, 27; xv. 21), and the cycle of lessons; the sermon or exposition (Acts xiii. 15; Luke iv. 21); the chanting of the Psalms of David; the very prayers for the departed which "have found a place in every early liturgy in the world" (Ellicott), all these have come to us from the synagogues of the Jews. The Catholic Church has not disregarded the principle of continuity. She has not thought fit to devise a liturgy of her own heart, or to disregard liturgical forms altogether. She has simply perpetuated, or adapted to its new and more blessed conditions, the form of service delivered unto her by the Jew.

IV. The PRINCIPLES of Christian worship are the principles of Jewish worship. It has been said that the true idea of *worship* as a *Divine service*, as the self-forgetting adoration of the ever-blessed God, was obscured, if not altogether lost, in the Church of England at least, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Men went to church—too often they go still—not for the service, but for the sermon; not for the glory of God, but for their own edification and instruction. It must not be supposed that it is here intended to depreciate edification. If men were perfect, the sermon might indeed be dispensed with. But so long as they are what they are, then those who have "any word of exhortation for the people" must "say on." But all the same, edification is not the *primary* reason for our assembling. The first Christians "came together to *break bread*" (Acts xx. 7), to "show the Lord's death" upon the Lord's day (Rev. i. 10). And God surely should ever come before man. Praise must take precedence either of prayer or preaching. The true idea of worship is the glory of God, not the profit of men. And if this idea was lost, or was obscured, it was because men ignored or despised the lessons and principles of Judaism. The worship of the temple, its psalms and sacrifices, its holocausts and hecatombs, all were designed for the glory and honour and worship of Jehovah—all were primarily to exalt and magnify the Incommunicable Name. And such should be the aim of all Christian worship. Our holy religion was never meant to dethrone the Deity, nor can Christians owe Him less, or less profound, adoration, than did Jews. Was *their* service solemn and stately? so should be ours. Did *they* never come before Him empty? neither should we. Was the altar, not the pulpit, the centre of their worship? the altar, not the pulpit, should be the centre of ours. The principles of Divine service know of no break. They are governed by the same law of continuity.

V. The SACRAMENTS of Christianity are founded upon the rites of Judaism.

Baptism (practised among the Jews before our Lord's time) takes the place of circumcision; the Lord's Supper of the Paschal Supper. Just as the rite of circumcision brought the Jewish child into the bond of the covenant, into the visible Church, so does baptism the Christian child; otherwise our children would be worse off than the children of the Hebrews. And as for the Lord's Supper, it was instituted in the very midst of the Passover (Luke xxii. 1, 7, 15—20), and was clearly designed to take its place. The rites of Judaism warrant our belief in a sacramental religion; they help to explain how it was that our Lord incorporated into His new and spiritual dispensation two outward and visible signs. The Law was full of these: the Gospel could hardly discard them altogether.

VI. The PRECEPTS and COMMANDMENTS of Judaism, again, "the law and the prophets," are not abolished, but fulfilled (Matt. v. 17; Rom. iii. 31) in Christianity. The Sermon on the Mount has given a new meaning to the covenant of Mount Sinai, even the ten commandments (Deut. iv. 13). Out of the law of the two tables has been developed the Christian law of love (Matt. xxii. 36—40; Luke x. 27; Rom. xiii. 8—10). The "new commandment" of Christ (John xiii. 34) is practically "the old commandment" which we had from the beginning (1 John i. 7, &c.)

VII. And—to descend to minor matters—we might show how even the FESTIVALS of Christendom follow the lines of the Jewish feasts. True, Christianity has one blessed festival peculiar to itself—Christmastide, the feast of the Holy Incarnation—but the rest—Easter, Whitsuntide, Harvest Festival—correspond severally with the Jewish Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. The *times* themselves are, perhaps, of no great moment—though the synchronism is remarkable—but the principles on which they are based, the principle, *e.g.*, of setting apart certain seasons for the commemoration of certain facts, or the acknowledgment of certain gifts, these are common to both dispensations. It is this principle which gave the Jew his sabbath: it is the same principle justifies, and indeed requires, the observance of the Lord's day. Christianity has not discarded the day of rest, though it observes the sabbath no longer. It has changed the day of rest into a day of worship, the seventh day into the first, the memorial of the creation into a memorial of the resurrection and redemption.

VIII. But it will be said, Surely Christianity is utterly unlike Judaism in one cardinal point, *viz.*, it has no SACRIFICE. But is it so? Truly, we offer no longer either bullocks or goats. The Christian priest neither pours the blood nor burns the fat, but all the same he offers sacrifice (1 Peter ii. 5), the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving (Heb. xiii. 15), the sacrifice of alms and oblations (Phil. iv. 18), the sacrifice of soul and body (Rom. xii. 1). Nor is that all. For observe: The Holy Supper in the Christian scheme, both as an offering, as a feast, and as a memorial, corresponds with the sacrifices of the law. For what, let us ask, was the meaning of all those sacrifices which the Jews "offered year by year continually"? They could not take away sin. They could not make the comers thereunto perfect. Why then were they offered? *One* reason was, that they might serve as memorials before God of the death of Christ. They were silent, but eloquent, reminders of Him who should put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Perhaps the Jew knew it not. Perhaps the high priest himself did not realize it, but *we* know that all those countless thousands of victims, offered year after year and century after century, were so many mute pleadings of the one priceless death. And as they spoke to the eternal Father of the Lamb who *should* die, precisely so do the bread and the wine of Christ's sacrament of love speak of the Lamb who *has* died. The fat and the blood were, the bread and the wine are, all *ἀγαπήσεις* (Num. x. 10; cf. Levit. xxiv. 7; Luke xxii. 19; 1 Cor. xi. 25; cf. Heb. x. 3). Our Lord Himself calls the wine "my blood of the new covenant" (*τὸ αἶμά μου τῆς καινῆς διαθήκης*), and we are surely justified, with many divines—John Wesley among them—in calling the Holy Eucharist "the Christian sacrifice."

But sacrifice and sacrament have another point of contact. For some at least of the Jewish sacrifices, the peace offerings (see on ch. viii. 63—65) afforded a *feast* to the worshippers. In like manner, the sacramental species serve not only as a memorial of Christ's death (1 Cor. xi. 26), but they are also food to the faithful

soul (1 Cor. x. 16, 17; Heb. xiii. 10; Matt. xxvi. 26; John vi. 54, 55). If, therefore, the Holy Communion is not a sacrifice, properly so called (inasmuch as there is no death), it has these marks of a sacrifice, that it is an oblation, a memorial, and a feast. And when we consider these remarkable analogies, we can hardly doubt that even the *sacrifices* of Judaism have their counterpart in the institutions of Christianity.

It was said by one of the Reformers that the man who can rightly distinguish between the Law and the Gospel should thank God and be assured that he is a true theologian. But theologians too often treat them as if they were antagonistic or irreconcilable, and one of the dangers to which the Reformed Churches are specially obnoxious is to forget the continuity of gospel and law: to forget that the Church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Ephes. ii. 20). If it is true that "*Vetus Testamentum in Novo patet*," it is also true "*Novum Testamentum in Vetere latet*."

Ver. 19.—*The Ark of the Covenant of the Lord.* This temple of Solomon, so "exceeding magnificent," this "holy and beautiful house," "of fame and glory throughout all lands"—why was it built? what its primary purpose? It was above everything else a home for the ark (ch. viii. 1, 6), a place for the Divine Glory which hovered over it.

In this temple, unlike the shrines of Paganism, there was no statue, no similitude of a God. Here was no "image which fell down from Jupiter," no Baal or Asherah, no Apis or Osiris. We may imagine how this would impress the Phœnician workmen. We know how it impressed Pompeius and the Romans. There is deep significance in those words of the Roman historian: *Inania arcana, vacua sedes*. Nothing but the ark. And this ark, what was it? It was a coffer, a chest. It was nothing in itself; but it was meant to contain something. It was the casket of a rare jewel. "There was nothing in the ark, save the *two tables of stone*," &c. (ch. viii. 9). It was the "ark of the testimony." So that the temple was properly and primarily the shrine and depository of the tables of the law graven with the "ten words," "the words of the covenant" (Deut. iv. 13).

Now we have just seen that the temple was the archetype of the Church: we have seen, too, that everything in Judaism has its analogue in Christianity. What, then, let us ask, was the significance of the ark? To what does it correspond in the new dispensation?

In the Church, to nothing. The "words of the covenant" are no longer kept in the dark. No; we now inscribe them on our chancel walls. In the "sanctuary" of the Gothic church the ten commandments are "writ large" for men to see.

But if Judaism was really the outline of Christianity, then there must be something in Christianity answering to that ark which was the core and centre of the Mosaic system. Certainly. But it is to be found, not in "temples made with hands," but in those other "temples" of the Christian faith, the bodies of believers, the temples of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. iii. 16; vi. 19). The ark was the soul of Judaism. It may fittingly represent the souls which Christ has redeemed. Temple, ark, tables of the law—these severally correspond to the "body, soul, spirit" of the Christian man. Within the temple was the ark; within the ark the tables. Within the *σῶμα* is the *ψυχή*; within the *ψυχή* the *πνεῦμα*.

Nor is this so fanciful as it seems. For are not our bodies the "temples of the Holy Ghost"? And are not our hearts—i.e., our inmost being, our spiritual part (1 Peter iii. 4)—the *fleshy tables* on which He writes His law? Yes, in the "new covenant" God writes His law in the heart, and puts it in the inward parts (see Jer. xxxi. 33; cf. Ezek. xi. 19, 20; 2 Cor. iii. 3). In the face of these scriptures, who can deny that the ark and its tables have their analogues in the New Testament?

Such, then, being the symbolism and significance of temple, ark, and tables of law, what are their lessons? Among others these:

1. *That God dwells within us.* No longer in temples made with hands, but "with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit" (Isa. lvii. 15). Did the She-

chinah brood over the mercy seat? Not less truly does God's Spirit dwell (Rom. viii. 9) and witness (ver. 16) with our spirit. Men say the Shechinah has left the world. On the contrary, It has enshrined Itself in the soul. "*Christ in you*" (Col. i. 27); God dwelling *in us* (1 John iv. 12); this is the last best gospel of our religion. The Old Testament, Neander says, tells of a God who is *for* man. In the Gospels we hear of Emmanuel, God *with* man. But the Epistles speak to us of God *in* man.

2. *That God writes His law upon us.* We have seen that in the Church there is neither ark nor tables of stone. It is because there is no need of either. This is the age of that "new covenant" of which the prophet spoke, when the finger of God should write the law upon the spirit, and when the *Bath Kol* should speak within. The laws of our country are so voluminous that no man can hope to know or to remember them, and their "glorious uncertainty" is proverbial. "But God's law is but one (Rom. xiii. 9, 10; Heb. viii. 10; x. 16); and that sweet and blessed statute the Spirit graves within us. Now observe—

3. *The ark, led by God, conducted Israel to victory and rest.* In the journeyings of Israel the ark went before them (Num. x. 33). At the Jordan it opened a way for them (Josh. iii. 14—17). Before Jericho it led them on to victory (Josh. vi. 9—11). Even so the soul, guided and taught of God, passes safely through its pilgrimage, conquers its foes, and gains its heavenly rest. Let us yield ourselves to be "led by the Spirit of God" (Rom. viii. 14).

4. *The ark, led by man, conducted Israel to disaster and defeat.* When the Israelites, instead of following the ark, would lead it (1 Sam. iv. 3), it landed them in a "very great slaughter." It proved to be no *fetish*, as they had hoped; it only led them to a shameful death. "It is one thing to want to have truth on our side; another to want to be on the side of truth" (Whately). It is of no avail to have the commandments of God, unless we keep them; to know His will, unless we do it. And if we lean to our own understandings, the soul will make shipwreck. Reason, it is true, is "the candle of the Lord;" but revelation is the "lamp to our feet and the light to our path" (Psa. cxix. 105; cf. Prov. iii. 5, 6).

5. *The ark, the pride of Israel, on two occasions became its plague.* The men of Bethshemesh looked into it, and died. Uzzah put forth his hand to steady it, and was smitten for his error (2 Sam. vi. 7). So the ark teaches the much-needed lesson of reverence—reverence for God and the things of God. It also suggests that dishonour done to God, or disregard of His law, has a sure retribution. If we stifle our convictions or quench the Spirit's light, the law written within may hereafter become the "instrument to scourge us."

6. *In the second temple there was no ark.* A stone is said to have taken its place. The venerable relic of the wilderness life, the sacred chest, and its still more sacred contents, both perished in the sack of Jerusalem (2 Kings xxv. 9 sqq.) May we not see here a lesson against impenitence? Over how many souls may "Ichabod" be written? The ark of God is taken! The soul is led captive of the devil. The heart of flesh, the "fleshy tables" on which the Spirit loves to write, has given place to a heart of stone—a heart as cold, as hard, as senseless, as void of all grace and blessing as this stone which stood in the oracle in the room of the ark of the covenant of the Lord.

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

**Ver. 1.—*The Purposes of the Temple.*** The three chapters thus introduced describe the erection and dedication of Solomon's temple. Magnificent as the building was, architecturally and artistically, it deserves more consideration as that which was the divinely appointed centre of true worship. Its significance to Christians can hardly be overrated. This the Epistle to the Hebrews clearly shows. While it stood it was for all nations a witness for Jehovah; and now that in substance it has passed away, the spiritual truths it embodied are a heritage for us. Essentially it was one with the tabernacle, the erection and ritual of which were

directly revealed by God on Sinai. Neither in principle nor even in minute detail were the directions of Jehovah about its construction to be disobeyed. From the ark of the covenant down to the hooks for the curtains the command ran, "See that thou make *all* things according to the pattern showed thee in the mount." There are far-reaching issues ever flowing from the smallest details of Divine law. Great meanings are wrapped by God in trifling things. (Give examples of this.) Solomon was right in superseding the tabernacle by the temple. The tent was suitable for the wandering life of an unformed nation, but the stately and stable temple for an organized people whose pilgrimage had ended. God's utterances both to David and Solomon, and the presence of the Shechinah on the day of consecration, prove that the erection of the temple was according to the will of God. The temple had meanings which no other building subsequently erected could have. It was "a shadow of good things to come." It symbolized much that was revealed in the person of Christ (Heb. ix. 11, &c.), and much that is now existing, not on earth, but in heaven (Heb. ix. 24, &c.) But, though its symbolism is a thing of the past, some of its purposes and uses are things of the present, known in the places set apart by Christian men for the worship of God. To some of those we now refer.

I. THE TEMPLE WAS A PLACE OF SACRIFICE (2 Chron. vii. 12). The sin-offering typified the atonement made by the Lamb of God, who once was offered for the sins of the world. This is the fact made known by the ministry of the Word and represented by the broken bread and outpoured wine of the Eucharistic feast. No time and no place can be more suitable than the sanctuary for the acknowledgment of sin, and the expression of faith. There each Christian sings—

"My faith would lay her hand  
On that dear head of Thine."

II. THE TEMPLE WAS A PLACE FOR PRAYER AND PRAISE. Solomon used it thus (ch. viii.) Incense typified it. In Isaiah lvi. 7 we read, "My house shall be called a house of prayer, for all people." The Lord Jesus referred to this when the temple was used for other purposes (Matt. xxi. 13). Describe the *praise* of the temple. Many there understood the words, "Praise ye the Lord; for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant, and praise is comely." Show the advantages of *united* praise, the promises given to *combination* in prayer, *e.g.*, sympathies enlarged, weak faith invigorated by contact with stronger faith, &c.

III. THE TEMPLE WAS A PLACE FOR THE CONSECRATION OF PERSONS AND THINGS. There priests were set apart; there sometimes prophets were called (Isa. vi.); there dedicated things were laid before the Lord (2 Chron. v. 1). Show how in modern days this is still true of the assembly of God's people. Men are there roused to a sense of responsibility, and there consecrate themselves to the service of God. Resolutions and vows are made there which carry with them the impress of Divine approval. The cares of life, its purposes, its companionships are there made to appear in their Godward aspect. Through the worship of the sanctuary heavenly light falls on daily toil, and men learn to call nothing that God has cleansed common or unclean.

IV. THE TEMPLE WAS A PLACE FOR REMEMBERING THE LAW OF THE LORD. The temple was incomplete until the ark of the covenant was brought in; and "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" (1 Kings viii. 9). Show the importance of organized Christian worship as a perpetual witness for the law of God. In the busy week there are temptations to forget it; to put expediency in the place of righteousness, &c. The whole tone of English society is raised by the faithful exhibition of God's requirements each sabbath day.

V. THE TEMPLE WAS A PLACE FOR THE UNION OF THE PEOPLE. The Psalms of the Ascents (Songs of Degrees) show this. The people overlooked their social distinctions and the tribes ignored their tribal jealousies when they ascended the sacred hill to unite as a nation in the worship of the one true God. Jeroboam was shrewd

enough to see that it would be impossible for two separate kingdoms to exist while all the people met in the one temple. Hence the calves at Bethel and Dan, and hence in our Lord's day the temple on Gerizim. Show how in the Christian Church the rich and the poor meet together, and how essential Christian principle is to fuse together the various classes of society. There are many disintegrating forces at work—the capitalists and the working classes, for example, are seriously divided. Common meeting-ground cannot be found in the home, but in the Church. The recognition of the one Fatherhood precedes the realization of the one brotherhood. Christians are, unhappily, divided amongst themselves. Sectarianism has increased the division of society. Relief is to be found not in form, but in spirit; not in union, but in unity. As we worship together and work together, the oneness of which we dream may become a reality.

VI. THE TEMPLE WAS A PLACE FOR THE REVELATION OF GOD (see vers. 10, 11; 1 Chron. v. 13; vii. 2). His presence is not confined to any temple made with hands; but wherever His people meet, there He reveals Himself as he does not do unto the world. "Where two or three are gathered together in My name there am I in the midst of them." It was when the disciples were assembled with one accord for prayer that the Holy Spirit came. So may our assemblies be blessed; and sinners will find pardon, the careworn will find rest, the doubters will find faith, the weakly will find strength, and the despondent will find hope in the house of the Lord our God.—A. R.

Ver. 7.—*Building in silence.* This was due partly to the reverential feelings of those engaged in so holy a work. "The Lord is in his holy temple, let all the earth keep *silence* before him." If we are upbuilding Christian character in ourselves, or in our children; if we are helping to rear the spiritual temple of God, such reverence, as opposed to thoughtlessness, flippancy, &c., should characterize us. The silence of the building was not only the outcome of devout feeling, but it was (like the temple itself) symbolical of spiritual truth; as we propose to show. A noble temple is being reared (1 Cor. iii. 16, 17; Eph. ii. 22; 1 Peter ii. 5). This temple is imperishable and unassailable; that of Solomon's was pillaged (1 Kings xiv. 25; 2 Kings xii. 17), polluted by the unworthy (2 Kings xxi. 4—7), burnt by the enemy (2 Kings xxv. 9). The erection described in our text teaches us something of the work which is still carried on by the builders of the true temple.

I. THE BUILDERS OF GOD'S HOUSE ARE OFTEN DOING A SECRET WORK. Picture the workmen in the quarries, the moulders in the clay, the artist with his graving tool, &c. Their names were unknown, they were unrecognized by the multitudes who would worship in the temple they were helping to build. Illustrate from this the work of mothers influencing their children; of visitors to haunts of sin and sorrow, whose ministry of love is not known to their nearest friends; of literary men in obscure rooms who are influencing the destinies of a people, &c. Draw encouragement from this, *e.g.*, that we do not see all the good that is going on in England and abroad, in the Churches and outside them. So Elijah was cheered by the revelation that there were seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal, when he thought he alone was left to witness for Jehovah. Refer to the Lord's teaching about the secret progress of His kingdom; the leaven hid in three measures of meal; the seed cast into the earth and left buried by the man who sleeps and rises, unconscious that it is springing and growing up he knows not how.

II. THE BUILDERS OF GOD'S HOUSE DO VARIED WORK. Enumerate some of the different kinds of labour and of skill which were required for the temple. Show that the work varied in dignity, in arduousness, in remunerativeness, &c. None of it, however, was without its value or final effect. Describe the multitudinous forms of Christian activity, and the advantages of such diversity. It demands self-abnegation, it calls forth all graces and gifts, it makes one Christian dependent on another, and so evokes sympathy and gives place for co-operation, &c. Let none despise his own work, nor envy another his.

III. THE BUILDERS OF GOD'S HOUSE DO THEIR WORK WITH CAREFUL COMPLETE-

NESS. How exact the measurements, how perfect the finish of work, which only required to be brought together in order to make a complete whole. Piece joined piece in the woodwork, and every separate casting found its appropriate niche. Nothing but painstaking accuracy could have insured such a result. Yet probably no workman knew the whole design; he was only intent on finishing his own appointed work. Observe the carefulness of God in little things, whether in creation or in moral law. Small infringements of Divine ordinances bring lamentable results. Illustrate from the consequences of disobedience to natural law in pain, disease, &c. Argue from this to the higher in mental and moral spheres. Carelessness is not tolerated. How much less in concerns of the soul. Negligence is sin. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" There must be care in laying the foundations of heavenly hopes (see Matt. vii. 24—27). Care also is required in doing work for our Lord. "But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon" (1 Cor. iii. 10—15).

IV. THE BUILDERS OF GOD'S HOUSE ARE MORE ANXIOUS FOR THOROUGHNESS THAN FOR NOISE. No sound of hammer or axe was heard to call the attention of passers by to the noble work going on; but all the inhabitants of the kingdom saw the effects of the quiet labour. Quietude is hard to obtain in the activities of the present day, yet God's servants must have it. Christ saw His disciples were excited, and said, "Come ye yourselves apart into the desert and rest awhile." Moses needed the solitude of Midian and of Sinai; Elijah the loneliness of Horeb, &c. Great souls are fashioned in silence. Our lonely times are our growing times. Exemplify by reference to a man laid aside by illness, to a mother or wife who is for a time absorbed in ministry to some invalid. The busy workers need quiet most. They wait on the Lord, and so renew their strength. Some of the best work done for Christ is silent. It is not proclaimed by large organization, or applauding crowds, but lies in the whispered counsel, the interceding prayer, &c.

V. THE BUILDERS OF GOD'S HOUSE WILL SEE THEIR LABOUR ISSUE IN THE DIVINE IDEAL. The work was widely distributed, secretly done, &c., but all was tending to an appointed end—the temple. The building existed in the mind of the master builder before it had material existence. So with God's work. A Divine purpose is controlling all, appointing all; and out of what seems confusion and contradiction He will bring forth "the new heaven and the new earth." Faithfully doing each one what lies to his hand, we shall all find that what we have done has its place and results; that our "labour is not in vain in the Lord." Forgotten and obscure workers will have their reward from Him who noticed the widow's mite, and gratefully accepted Mary's offering. We shall do more than we expect, if we do what we can.

VI. THE BUILDERS OF GOD'S HOUSE FIND THEIR REWARD IN THE GLORY OF THEIR GOD. Describe the temple—complete at last—resounding with songs of praise, crowded with worshippers, overwhelmed by the Divine presence—and use it as a type of the temple not made with hands, where the redeemed serve God day and night. The wish of God's noblest servant is that God may be glorified whether by life or by death.

*Apply the idea of silent working to what God is doing in each Christian heart by the discipline of life and the influence of the Holy Spirit. It is felt within, but it is not known or heard without.—A. R.*

Ver. 23.—*The Mystery of the Cherubim.* That the cherubim were symbolic no one denies. They are so often mentioned in Scripture that their meaning has been frequently discussed. Enumerate some of the opinions held. The view we accept is that they were symbolic representations of redeemed humanity. They were intended to inspire men with hope of redemption, from the day when the Lord placed them at the east of the garden of Eden, till the vision of John (Rev. xxi.) is fulfilled in the "new heavens and new earth," wherein the cherubim are no longer seen, having vanished before the reality they symbolically represented. In the cherubim we are reminded of the following—

I. THE PERFECTING OF HUMANITY. Some obscurity lingers about the forms of

these beings. They are introduced in Genesis without a word of description; and in Exodus (xxv. and xxxvii.) little is said beyond this, that they had "wings and faces." Turning to their visionary appearances—to Ezekiel and to John—there is variety in form. But whatever latitude there may be in detail, the leading form was always that of a *man*—*e.g.*, Ezekiel says (ch. i. 5), "they had the likeness of a man." With this, other creature forms were combined, *viz.*, the lion, the ox, and eagle. These were selected for special reasons. They belonged to the noblest kingdom, that of animal life, as distinguished from that which was vegetable or mineral. They were amongst the highest after man in the nature of their life; very different, for example, from sea-anemones, &c. They had loftier attributes than those of other creatures; greater powers or wider usefulness. Hence, combined with the image of man to form the cherubim, they suggested the addition to him of the powers they specially represented. The lion, especially to the Hebrews, was a type of kingly *majesty* and glorious *strength*. Give quotations from Scripture. The eagle, with its keen vision and swift flight, was a type of *rapidity* of thought and movement (Deut. xxviii. 49; Job ix. 26; Prov. xxiii. 5). The ox, used in ploughing, harrowing, carrying home the sheaves, and treading out the corn, represented patient and *productive activity*. In the cherubim all these were grafted on man—an ideal combination, to show that, though man was the highest creature of God (he alone having a moral and a rational nature), he could be, and would be, ennobled by having hereafter the powers bestowed, of which in creature life these animals were representatives. Show the Scripture evidence for expecting in heaven the faculties for knowing, for serving, for enjoying, which we have not here.

II. THE FULLNESS OF LIFE. In Ezekiel and Revelation the cherubim are frequently spoken of as "the living ones" (*animantia, ζωα*). This expression is obscured in our translation by the unhappy rendering "beasts" (Rev. iv. 6), &c. The expression denotes *life* in its highest and most active form. In harmony with this, Ezekiel speaks of their "running and returning." John says, "they rest not day nor night." Though the cherubim in the temple and tabernacle were of necessity stationary, the same idea was there expressed by the outspread wings. The cherubim pointed on to the plenitude of life, Divine and spiritual, over which weariness should have no power, and towards which death would never approach. "I give unto them *eternal* life," &c. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly," &c.

III. THE DWELLING WITH GOD. The cherubim were always associated with the Divine Presence. After man was driven from Eden, the cherubim was placed there to occupy the place he had forfeited; where life was full, and where holiness was a necessity. When the tabernacle was constructed, all the inner curtains were inwoven with cherubic figures, and images of cherubim appeared on the sacred ark, which was the throne of Jehovah. This was repeated in the temple, as the passage before us shows; for the magnificent cherubim, each ten cubits high, were stationed in the "oracle," the place where the Shechinah proclaimed God's presence. We must add, therefore, to the ideas we have dwelt on—this thought, that the life represented was life essentially connected with God Himself. Not only will the life of the future be full, but it will be holy. Holiness will be its essence. "The pure in heart shall see God." "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." "Neither shall there enter into it anything that defileth," &c.

IV. THE BLISS OF THE FUTURE. A careful reading of Genesis iii. 24 shows that the "sword" and the "cherubim" were not only distinct, but had different functions. The sword "kept" the way to the tree of life, so that it was more accessible to fallen man. It was a symbol of repulsion and alarm. The cherubim "kept" the garden in a different sense. They did not defend it against man, but occupied it for man, and therefore gave to those who were shut out the hope of that which the promise of Jehovah had already announced. The presence of the cherubim said to fallen man: "This region of life is not destroyed, it is not given over to other creatures, but it is occupied and kept provisionally for you by a being in whom your nature predominates; and hereafter, you yourself changed, enriched with new powers.

restored by redemptive love to holiness, shall share Paradise regained." The means of realizing this became more clear as the ages rolled by. The hope that ideal humanity would inherit bliss did not die out, but the method of its fulfilment was unfolded in the Mosaic institutions. Not only did the cherubim in the oracle witness, as the cherubim in Eden had done, but once a year the high priest, as the representative of the people, went in, and stood with the cherubim in the presence of Jehovah. He entered not "without blood," but after atonement had been made for the sins of the people. Apply this to the truth revealed in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Show how Christ, who has atoned for the world's sin, has entered as our High Priest into the holiest of all, and how He has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. No wonder that in the Revelation "the Lamb that was slain" is depicted as being the object of heaven's praise; the link between man's guilt and God's mercy.

[For justification of this use of the cherubim, see Fairbairn's "Typology of Scripture."]—A. R.

Ver. 2.—The temple is described as "*the house which King Solomon built for the Lord.*" This idea of consecration ran through the whole plan of the building. Without having recourse to a minute and fanciful symbolism, we see clearly that everything is so disposed as to convey the idea of the holiness of God. IN THE CENTRE IS THE ALTAR OF SACRIFICE. The holy of holies, hidden from gaze by its impenetrable veil, strikes with awe the man of unclean heart and lips, who hears the seraphim cry from beneath their shadowing wings, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!" (Isa. vi. 3.) The temple of holiness is not the temple of nature of colossal proportions, as in the East, nor is it the temple of æsthetic beauty, as in Greece. It is the dwelling place of Him who is invisible, and of purer eyes than to behold evil (Hab. i. 13.) Hence its peculiar character. It answers thus to the true condition of religious art, which never sacrifices the idea and sense of the Divine to mere form, but makes the form instinct with the Divine idea. Let us freely recognize the claims of religious art. The extreme Puritanism which thinks it honours God by a contemptuous disregard of the æsthetic, is scarcely less mistaken than the idolatrous materialism which makes beauty of form the primary consideration. It was not for nothing that God made the earth so fair, the sky so glorious; and it was under Divine inspiration that the temple of Jerusalem was reared in such magnificence and majesty as to strike all beholders. Only let us never forget to seek the Divine idea beneath the beauty of the form. When we admire merely the beautiful, whether in a temple, as did the disciples, or in the great world of nature, the warning words of Christ fall upon upon our ear: "As for these things which ye behold, the days will come in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another" (Luke xxi. 6). "*Tous les cieux et leur splendeur ne valent pas le soupir d'un seul cœur.*" Love is the crowning beauty. It is like the precious vase of ointment which Mary of Bethany broke over the feet of Christ. Beauty is the fit associate of worship, so long as it is kept subordinate, and does not distract our minds from the higher spiritual realities of which it is but symbolic. Let us seek in the temple of nature the high and holy God, of whom it is said, that "the invisible things of Him are clearly seen from the creation of the world, being understood by the things that are made" (Rom. i. 19). Let us recognize His presence beneath the arches of the mediæval cathedral, among the memorials of a worship which we ourselves have left behind. Let us seek Him in the great monuments of Christian art, whether reared by poet, musician, painter, or sculptor. Let it be our aim to glorify Him in the forms of our worship, while we sedulously guard against the worship of the form, which is sheer idolatry. Such are the principles of Christian æsthetics, which are one branch of Christian morals. "The beautiful is the glory of the true," says Plato. When one corner of the veil which hides heaven from us is lifted, the Divine life shines forth in all its radiance of purity and beauty.—E. de P.

Vers. 37, 38.—*The Glorious House of the Lord.* In comparison with others

sacred shrines of antiquity the temple of Solomon was small in its dimensions and brief in the time of its building. Nor will the mere fact of its material splendour account for the extraordinary interest with which it has ever been regarded—an interest in which Jew, Mohammedan, and Christian alike participate. The place it occupied, the part it performed in the religious history of the world, will alone account for this. If it is necessary to suppose any pre-existing model as suggesting the plan of its structure, it is to Assyria and not to Egypt, as some have thought, that we should look for such a type. But however this may be, it has a deep Divine meaning which raises it above comparison with any other temple that the hand of man has ever reared. Let us look on it now as the ancient symbol of the Church of the living God, that fellowship of new-born souls of whom St. Peter says, "Ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house," &c. (1 Peter ii. 5). Note certain points of special interest in this analogy—those features of the temple which are suggestive of similar features in the spiritual fabric of the redeemed Church.

I. THE FIRMINESS OF ITS FOUNDATION. The threshing-floor of Araunah, the site of the temple, was part of the plateau on the top of Mount Moriah (2 Chron. iii. 1). Solomon, as we are told by Josephus, in order to enlarge the area, built massive walls on the sloping sides of the mountain, filling in the spaces with earth; and the foundations of these walls were composed of huge stones bedded and, as it were, mortised in the solid rock. How forcibly are we reminded of the word of Christ to Peter, "Upon this rock will I build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. xvi. 18). Whatever the bearing of this word on the disciple himself may be, it is certain that it cannot refer to him apart from the grand confession he has just made—"Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God." Peter may be one of the great foundation stones, but Christ Himself is the solid, primary, unhewn Rock on which the fabric rests. Not so much any truth about Him, but *the personal Christ* in the grandeur of His being, the integrity of His righteousness, the strength and fidelity of His wondrous love, is the Church's firm foundation.

II. THE SILENT PROCESS OF ITS STRUCTURE. "There was neither hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it was in building (ver. 7). This was probably in obedience to the prohibition recorded in Exodus xx. 26 and Deuteronomy xxvii. 5. It expressed the king's sense of the sanctity of the work. The tranquillity of the scene must not be broken by the clang of inharmonious sounds. "Like some tall palm, the noiseless fabric grew." The fact is suggestive. The building up of the Church of God is a silent, hidden process. Outward visible agencies must be employed, but the real constructive forces are out of sight. Truth works secretly and silently in the souls of men. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation." Noise and show are out of harmony with the sanctity of it. Clamour and violence only hinder the work. Let us not mistake a restless, busy, fussy zeal for the externalities of Church life for true spiritual service. This is often in inverse ratio to the amount of real edification. The best machinery works with least friction and noise. The quiet, thoughtful workers, who move on steadily by the inspiration of their holy purpose, without much public recognition, may after all be the most efficient builders of the temple of God.

III. THE VARIETY OF THE AGENCIES BY WHICH THE WORK WAS DONE. Foreign power was enlisted in the service—Hiram and his artificers. Cedars from Lebanon, gold and silver and precious stones from Ophir and Parvaim, brass "without weight" from the foundries of Succoth and Zarethan—all were consecrated to it. So also with the spiritual fabric. The resources of the world are at the command of Him who rears it. "All things serve His might." All beings, with all their faculties, are at His disposal. All streams of human interest, and thought, and speech, and activity may be made tributary to the great river of His purpose. Our faith rests in the assurance that it is so—that just as our physical life is nourished by all sorts of ministries, near and remote, so the kingdom of truth and righteousness in the world is being built up by a vast variety of agencies which it is beyond our power to trace. All human affairs are but as the scaffolding within

which the structure of God's great house is slowly rising to its completion. To this structure it is that the prophetic word, in its deepest meaning, may be applied, "The sons of strangers shall build up thy walls" (Isa. lx. 10). And in its final consummation shall be fulfilled the apocalyptic picture, "The kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it." (Rev. xxi. 22).

IV. THE MINGLED STRENGTH AND BEAUTY OF THE FABRIC. The blocks of stone were lined with cedar planks, and the cedar overlaid with plates of gold; the walls covered with carved "cherubims and palm trees and open flowers;" the brazen pillars crowned with "lily-work." The building was not of large dimensions, but wonderful for its combination of solidity and adornment, partaking of the firmness of the rocky mount on which it stood, glittering in the sunlight, the crowning glory of the royal city. How much more truly may we say of the spiritual temple, "Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary." There is no strength like that of truth and righteousness; no beauty like that of holy character:—strength drawn from Christ, the living Foundation, the reflected beauty of that purer heaven which is the eternal home of God.

V. THE ORDERLY ARRANGEMENT OF ITS PARTS AND APPURTENANCES. The temple was framed apparently after the model of the tabernacle, but with doubled dimensions and more enduring materials, and *that* was "after the pattern shown to Moses in the mount"—all regulated with regard to the due administration of the service of God. Courts, chambers, galleries, altars, lavers, utensils—all consecrated to some sacred use, or meant to enshrine some high symbolic meaning. The gathering up of a complex variety of parts in one grand structural unity. Such is the Church—an aggregate of various but harmonious and mutually helpful parts. "There are diversities of gifts and administrations and operations, but the same Spirit" (1 Cor. xii. 4). "All the building fitly framed together," &c. (Ephes. ii. 18). "The whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth," &c. (Ephes. iv. 16). It would seem necessary that the social religious life should assume some visible organized form; and though there may be no such form or forms ecclesiastical that can claim to have the stamp of distinct Divine approval, yet all are Divine so far as they minister to the general edification and preserve "the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." They each and all have their place in the Divine order, if they help to fulfil the holy uses, and to heighten the glory of the great temple of the Lord.

VI. ITS SUBLIME DISTINCTION AS THE HABITATION OF GOD (see vers. 12, 13, &c.) This was but the repetition of a more ancient promise (Exod. xxv. 8; xxix. 45). And what are all these promises, with all the marvellous manifestations that verified them, but typical foreshadowings of the richer grace by virtue of which the Church becomes "the habitation of God through the Spirit"? "The Most High dwells not in temples made with hands;" His dwelling-place is the fellowship of redeemed souls.—W.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER VII. 1—51.

**SOLOMON'S PALACES AND THE PREPARATION OF THE SACRED VESSELS.**—The first twelve verses of this chapter constitute a break in the long account of the Temple, its furniture and its consecration. The historian having described the Temple buildings, before he passes on to speak of their contents pauses for a moment to record a few particulars as to the building of the suite of palaces which next occupied Solomon's attention. The LXX., possibly following an

older arrangement, but more probably (see next note) adopting an apparently more logical and methodical order, relegates this section to the end of the chapter.

Ver. 1.—But Solomon was building his own house thirteen years [There is no contrast implied between the time spent upon the temple and that occupied in the building of the palace, as the word "but" seems to suggest. The close connexion which exists in the original is interrupted by the division of chapters. In ch. vi. 38 we read, "So was he seven years in building it." Ch. vii. 1 then proceeds, "And he was building his

own house thirteen years." The much longer period occupied in the erection of the royal palace is easily accounted for. In the first place, the buildings were much larger, and the undertaking altogether was a much more extensive one (ver. 2). Then, though seven years only were consumed in the actual building of the temple, yet preparations for the work had been made, both by David and Solomon, for a long time beforehand. Lastly, a special force of labourers would appear to have been employed on the temple, while it is probable that they wrought at the palaces in greatly diminished numbers. So that the longer period spent over his own house does not argue selfishness or worldliness on Solomon's part. On the contrary, it speaks well for his piety that he built the temple first and urged on that sacred work with so much vigour. The thirteen years date from the completion of the seven years of ch. vi. 38. That is to say, the building of the temple and palace together occupied twenty years, as is expressly stated in ch. ix. 10. It is therefore one of Stanley's reckless statements that the palace "was commenced at the same time as the temple, but not finished till eight years afterwards", and he finished all his house. [By Solomon's "house" we are not to understand his private palace, or residence proper, alone (see ver. 8), but a range of palaces, more or less connected, including the "house of the forest of Lebanon" (ver. 2), "the porch of pillars" (ver. 6), the throne-room or judgment hall (ver. 7), his own house and the house of Pharaoh's daughter (ver. 8). That all these are comprehended under the term "house" is evident from ch. ix. 1, 10, 15; x. 12, where Solomon's buildings are always spoken of as *two*, viz., "the house of the Lord" and the "king's house."

The situation of this string of palaces is by no means certain. Josephus says it stood over against (or opposite) the temple, which is highly probable; but this still leaves the question of site open, for the palace would be justly described as *ἀντιπρὸς ἔχων τὸν ναόν*, whether it stood west or south of the sanctuary. Ewald places it on the opposite ridge of Ophel, *i.e.*, on the south prolongation of the temple mount; while Fergusson, Bähr, &c., locate it on the north-east side of Zion, on the opposite side of the Tyropean valley, and overlooking it and the whole city of David. Recent explorations seem to favour Ewald's view. See "Recovery of Jerusalem," pp. 319 sqq., and "Our Work in Palestine," p. 159 sqq. When we remember that the very site of Zion is disputed, it will not surprise the reader that questions of this kind should be involved in uncer-

tainty. And when it is further considered that the accumulated *débris* of Jerusalem at one point reaches a depth of 120 feet, it will be readily understood what obstacles stand in the way of their settlement.]

Ver. 2.—He built also [Heb. *and he built*. The A. V. rendering almost contradicts the view just advanced, viz., that the house of the forest of Lebanon was *part* of "all the house" (ver. 1)] the house of the forest of Lebanon [so called, not because it was a summer residence in Lebanon, as some have supposed, nor yet merely because it was built of Lebanon cedar, but because it displayed a perfect *thicket* or *forest* (עֲבֹת) of cedar pillars]; the length thereof was one hundred cubits [the temple proper was 60], and the breadth thereof fifty cubits [The temple was but 20. It does not follow that this space of 100×50 cubits was all roofed in, for it would seem as if the house was built round a courtyard. Rawlinson remarks that a roof of 75 feet is "much greater than is ever found in Assyria." But it is by no means certain that there *was* any such roof here], and the height thereof thirty cubits [the same as the temple], upon four rows of cedar pillars [How these were disposed of, or what was their number, it is impossible to say. Thenius says they were 400, but this is pure conjecture. The description is so meagre and partial that it is impossible to form a correct idea of the building. The remark made above (ch. vi. Intro. Note) as to the temple applies with still greater force to the palaces. "There are few tasks more difficult or puzzling than the attempt to restore an ancient building of which we possess nothing but two verbal descriptions; and these difficulties are very much enhanced when one account is written in a language like Hebrew, the scientific terms in which are, from our ignorance, capable of the widest latitude of interpretation, and the other, though written in a language of which we have a more definite knowledge, was composed by a person who could never have seen the building he was describing" (Fergusson, Dict. Bib. ii. p. 658)], with cedar beams [עֲבֹת, *cut* or *heven* beams] upon the pillars. [This palace, according to Fergusson, was "the great hall of state and audience" and the principal building of the range. But if it was this, which is very doubtful, for the throne was in the hall of judgment (ch. v. 7), it would seem to have served other purposes besides that of an audience-chamber. Among other things, it was certainly an armoury (ch. x. 17. Cf. Isa. xxii. 8). The Arab. Vers. calls it "the house of his arms." Possibly it was also the residence of the

bodyguard (cf. xiv. 28 with x. 17). Bähr observes that the arrangement of the palaces accords with the Jewish conceptions of the king's office. The first, the armory, represents him in his militant character (1 Sam. viii. 20), the second in his judicial function (1 Sam. viii. 5, 6; 2 Sam. xv. 4; 1 Kings iii. 9), while the third shows him in his private capacity.]

Ver. 3.—And it was covered [or roofed] with cedar above [cf. vi. 9, 15] upon the beams [חַבְלֵי לִיט. *lit., ribs*, the word used in ch. vi. 5 of the *side chambers*, and in vi. 34 (in the masculine) of the *leaves* of the doors], that lay on forty-five pillars, fifteen in a row. [Rawlinson, *al.* are much exercised to reconcile this statement with that of ver. 2, which speaks of *four* rows. But the explanation is very simple, viz., that the "forty-five, fifteen in a row" does not refer to the pillars but to the side chambers or compartments (A. V., "beams"). The description is so very loose and general that positive statements are out of place, but the meaning certainly appears to be this, that there was a roofing of cedar over the *side chambers* (which rested upon the pillars mentioned in ver. 2) *forty-five* in number, fifteen in a row. It is true the Masoretic punctuation is against this view. It is also clear that the LXX. understood the numbers forty-five and fifteen to refer to the pillars, for they have essayed to cut the knot by reading *three* rows instead of "*four* rows," in ver. 2. Similarly the Arab. in ver. 3 reads *sixty* instead of forty-five; obviously another desperate attempt to solve the difficulty by a corruption of the text. But the solution suggested above is so simple and natural that we can hardly be wrong in adopting it. Bähr says positively that forty-five pillars could not have supported a structure 100 cubits by 50 cubits, "nor could the building have been named 'forest of Lebanon' from forty-five scattered pillars." It would follow, hence, that there were side chambers only on three sides of the building, as was the case in the temple. And if (as has been inferred from vers. 4, 5) a three-storied structure is here described; if, that is to say, the forty-five chambers were divided fifteen to a tier or story, it is highly probable that they would be distributed six to each long side and three to the rear (Bähr). This arrangement—a court surrounded by a colonnade and galleries—is still found in the East; as all travellers know. And in its favour it may be said that it is such as to have been suggested by the plan of the temple. The ground-plan is the same, with this difference, that a courtyard occupies the place of the temple proper.]

Ver. 4.—And there were windows [כַּחֲזוֹת] same word as in ch. vi. 4, *i.e.*, beams or lattices. Keil understands, *beam layers*; and Bähr, *übergelegte Balken*. The LXX. has *περὶων*] in three rows [or tiers. All we can say is that there is a possible reference to three stories formed by the three rows of beams], and light [lit., *outlook*. חַחֲזוֹת probably means a wide outlook. LXX. *χῶρα*, *aspectus*, *prospectus*] was against light in three ranks [Heb. *three times*. The meaning is that the side chambers were so built and arranged that the rooms had their windows exactly *vis-à-vis* in each of the three stories. Josephus explains, *θυρώματα τριγλύφοις*, *windows in three divisions*, but this is no explanation of the words "light against light," &c. Fergusson understands the three outlooks to mean, first, the clerestory windows (that there was a clerestory he infers from Josephus (Ant., vii. 5. 2), who describes this palace as "in the Corinthian manner," which cannot mean, he says, "the Corinthian order, which was not then invented, but after the fashion of a Corinthian *oculus*, which was a ball with a clerestory"); (2) a range of openings under the cornice of the walls; and (3) a range of open doorways. But all this is conjecture.

Ver. 5.—And all the doors and posts [For חַחֲזוֹת posts, Thenius would read חַחֲזוֹת outlooks, after ver. 4, which seems a natural emendation, especially as the LXX. has *χῶραι*. We should then get the sense of "doors and windows"] were square of beam. [The word translated "windows" in ver. 4; the proper rendering is *beam*, and the meaning apparently is that all these openings were square in shape. Nothing is said about the height of the rooms, and as the commentators are not agreed whether there was one story or three, that can obviously be only matter of conjecture. Rawlinson, who thinks of but one hall, with three rows of windows, supposes, after Houbigant, that one row was placed in a wall which ran down the middle of the apartment. Such an arrangement, he observes, was found by Layard at Nimrud.]

Ver. 6.—And he made a porch of pillars [Heb. *the porch of pillars*. This was no doubt a covered colonnade, *i.e.*, it had a roof but no sides. The pillars were its only walls. But here the question presents itself, Was this porch the vestibule of the house of the forest of Lebanon, just described? From the correspondence between its width and that of this palace, Rawlinson infers that it was (cf. ch. vi. 2, 3). Bähr believes it to have been the porch or entrance to the hall of judgment mentioned in the next verse,

while Fergusson again assigns it an independent position, separate from either. The term *porch* (פֶּתַח), the meaning of which is surely determined by its use in ch. vi., almost implies that it must have served as the entrance or vestibule to some building. But the size, and the fact that it had itself a porch (see below), favour the idea that it was an independent structure, though Rawlinson shows that "most of the Persepolitan porches had small pillared chambers at some little distance in front of them," and refers to the Egyptian *propylaea*. Keil argues that this *pillar hall*, as he calls it, stood between the house of the forest of Lebanon and the judgment hall. Bähr, as remarked above, sees in it the anterior part of the judgment hall, which latter, he adds, bore to it the same relation that the oracle did to the temple-house. He observes that as the ark was in the oracle, so the throne (ch. x. 18) found a place in the hall of judgment. This structure, therefore, with its porch, mentioned presently, would reproduce the main features of the temple arrangement. We see, consequently, that both the house of the forest of Lebanon and the porch of pillars followed in their outline the ground-plan of the temple. Nor is this at all surprising, considering that all these edifices probably had the same architect or designer; the length thereof was fifty cubits [the length, *i.e.*, according to the view last advanced of the two divisions of the building, *viz.*, the porch of pillars and the porch of judgment. But the correspondence of the length (or width—the same word is used of the width of the temple porch ch. vi. 3) of this porch with the width of the house of the forest of Lebanon is, to say the least, remarkable, and suggests that after all it may have been the porch of that building. If so, the resemblance to the temple would be still more striking], and the breadth [depth?] thereof thirty cubits: and the porch [Heb. a porch] was before them [*i.e.*, the pillars. The words can only mean that a smaller porch stood before the porch of pillars, or colonnade]: and the other [omit] pillars [*i.e.*, the pillars of the minor vestibule or fore porch] and the thick beam [Heb. *threshold*] were before them. [The broad threshold, approached by steps, and the pillars which it supported, together with the roof which covered them, formed the front part and approach to the larger porch or colonnade.]

Ver. 7.—Then he made a porch [for the porch] for the throne where he might judge [*i.e.*, it was at once audience-chamber (throne-room, ch. x. 18) and court of justice], even the porch of judgment [Stanley re-

marks that this "porch, or gate of justice, still kept alive the likeness of the old patriarchal custom of sitting in judgment at the gate." He then refers to the "gate of justice" at Granada and the "Sublime Porte" at Constantinople. It is, perhaps, not quite so certain that "this porch was the gem and centre of the whole empire," or that because it was so much thought of a similar but smaller porch was erected for the queen (ver. 8) ("Jewish Ch.," ii. p. 195)]: and it was covered with cedar from one side of the floor to the other. [Heb. *from the floor to the floor*, as marg. Gesenius understands these words to mean, "from one floor to the other," *i.e.*, to the ceiling (the floor of the other story); in other words, the walls from bottom to top. So the Vulg., *a pavimento usque ad summitatem*, and Syr., *a fundamento ad coelum ejus usque*, which have led Thénius to suggest the reading קִירוֹת עַל (unto the beams) instead of עַל הַפְּתָחַי. Keil thinks the ceiling served as the floor of an upper story, built over the porch of judgment, but, as Bähr observes, no such upper story is even hinted at elsewhere. It seems to me that, on the whole, the A. V. rendering is to be retained, the meaning being that the whole space, both of wall and ceiling, from one side of the floor to the opposite side, was covered with cedar.]

Ver. 8.—And his house where he dwelt [*i.e.*, his private residence. Not to be identified with the "house" of ver. 1. The term is here expressly restricted to his dwelling-house. There it as clearly includes all the several palaces] had [or was. The "court" is apparently in apposition to "his house." The words in italics, here as elsewhere, merely darken the sense] another [Heb. *the hinder*] court within [For the use of לְקִבִּיטָה = *within*, compare ch. vi. 16; Num. xviii. 7, and see Gesen., *Thesaur.* i. 193] the porch, which was of the like work [*i.e.*, the walls were covered with cedar. The reference is clearly to materials, adornment, &c., not to size]. Solomon made also an house for Pharaoh's daughter, whom he had taken to wife [Heb. *he made also a house for . . . whom Solomon had taken, i.e., married*], like unto this porch. [This would seem to have been the private residence of the queen, not the harem, where all the wives and concubines (ch. xi. 3) were collected. It was evidently distinct from and behind the residence of the king, an arrangement which still prevails in Eastern palaces.]

Ver. 9.—All these [*i.e.*, buildings, palaces] were of costly [or precious; cf. ch. v. 31

and vers. 10, 11] stones, according to the measures of hewed stones [lit., of *squaring* or *heaving*, same word in chs. v. 31 (Heb.), vi. 36, and Isa. ix. 9, &c. All the stones in these several buildings were shaped to certain specified dimensions], sawed with saws [כַּרְבֵּי is obviously an onomatopoeic word, like our *saw*. Gesenius cites *σαίρω, serro*, &c. The Egyptians, whose saws were apparently all single-handed, do not seem to have applied this instrument to stone, but part of a double-handed saw was found at Nimrud (Layard, p. 195, and Dict. Bib., art. "Saw"). That saws were in common use and were made of iron is implied in 2 Sam. xii. 31], within and without [It is not quite clear whether the meaning is that the two surfaces exposed to view, one within and the other without, the building were shaped with saws, or that the inner and hidden surface of the stone was thus smoothed as well as the exposed parts], even from the foundation unto the coping [or *corbels*. It is generally agreed (Gesen., Keil, Bähr) that the reference is to the "projecting stones on which the beams rest," though Thenius would understand *battlements* (Deut. xxii. 8) to be intended. But for these a different word is always used, and the LXX. *ὑψιστος* signifies the projection of the roof, not an erection upon it], and so on the outside toward the great court [i.e., the pavement of the court was of sawed stones (see ver. 12).]

Ver. 10.—And the foundation was of costly stones, even great stones [Bähr says, "Even the foundations which from without were not seen, were composed of these great stones." But the meaning evidently is that the foundation stones were larger than those reared upon them], stones of ten cubits [i.e., ten cubits long, and of proportionate width, &c.], and stones of eight cubits [The foundations of the palaces, consequently, were much less than those of the temple platform, some of which would measure 16 cubits. See note on ch. v. 17.]

Ver. 11.—And above [i.e., upon the foundation stones just described] were costly stones, after the measures of hewed stones [It is implied here that the stones of the superstructure were less than those of the foundation. It is also implied that the former were more carefully smoothed and faced than the latter] and cedars. [Heb. *cedar*.]

Ver. 12.—And the great court round about [The palace, again like the temple, had two courts. The lesser is referred to in ver. 8, and was enclosed among the buildings. The great court probably surrounded the entire structure] was [enclosed by a wall] with three rows of hewed stones, and a row of cedar beams [The

latter formed the coping. The wall of the court of the palace thus resembled that of the temple. See on ch. vi. 36. In all these coincidences we have tokens of the same designing hand], both for the inner court of the house of the Lord. [This sudden digression from the court of the palace to the temple is suspicious, and suggests either a mistranslation or corruptior of the text. The historian evidently meant to say that the wall of the court, in its three rows of stones and its cedar coping, resembled the inner court of the temple; and, according to some grammarians (Gesen., Ewald), this meaning may well be conveyed by the text as it stands,  $\text{ו}$  in Hebrew serving sometimes to institute a comparison (Prov. xxv. 3, 12, 20; xxvi. 14, &c.) "As in the court," &c. But the instances just cited, being proverbs or apophthegms, are not strictly parallel with our text. It seems better, on the whole, however, to retain the text in this sense than to replace  $\text{ו}$  by  $\text{כ}$ , reading כְּהִצֵּר כְּהִצֵּר for כְּהִצֵּר (וְהִצֵּר). כְּהִצֵּר (Horsley) is quite inadmissible, as the constr. case never has the art.], and for the porch of the house. [It is almost impossible to decide whether the porch of judgment (ver. 7) or the porch of the temple is here meant. The immediate context favours the latter. But this does not seem to have had any court or enclosing wall other than the inner court. Rawlinson decides for the porch of judgment, "which," he says, "had a planking of cedar over the stone pavement" (ver. 7). But ver. 7 (where see note) rather excludes than includes the pavement. The reference is probably to the "court within the porch," mentioned in ver. 8.]

After this brief account of the royal palaces, the author proceeds to mention the vessels, &c., used in the temple service, pre-facing his description by a few words respecting the great Tyrian artist, by whom they were for the most part cast, and possibly designed also.

Ver. 13.—And king Solomon sent [rather, had sent (2 Chron. ii. 13)] and fetched Hiram out of Tyre. [This is our historian's brief version of the transaction which is recorded in 2 Chron. ii. 7—14. He has not mentioned before (ch. v. 6) Solomon's request for a master-builder. Hiram, like his namesake the king, is elsewhere (2 Chron. ii. 13; iv. 11, 16) called *Huram* or *Hiram* (ver. 40). See note on ch. v. 1. In the first of these passages the king calls him "Hiram my father" (see note there); in the last he is designated "Hiram his father." The title "Ab" (cf. Gen. xlv. 8, 41, 43; 2 Kings ii. 12; v. 13; vi. 21; cf.

viii. 9) shows the high esteem in which he was held. It can hardly be, as some have supposed, a proper name. It may signify "counsellor," or master, *i.e.*, master-builder. The Tyrians evidently regarded him with some pride.]

Ver. 14.—He was a widow's son of the tribe of Naphtali [In 2 Chron. ii. 14 he is described as the "son of a woman of the daughters of Dan." The discrepancy is only apparent. For in the first place it is not absolutely necessary to understand by Dan the tribe of that name. It may well refer to the town, formerly Leshem (Josh. xix. 47), or Laish (Judg. xviii. 7, 27), colonised by the Danites, and thenceforward bearing their name (ver. 29), which was situated within the borders of Naphtali. If, however, it is preferred to see in the "daughters of Dan" a tribal reference, we may suppose (with Keil, *al.*) that the woman was originally a Danite, but became, through her first husband, "of the tribe of Naphtali." But the first explanation is the more simple and obvious], and his father was a man of Tyre [*i.e.*, Hiram was the son (not stepson, or adopted son, as the Rabbins) of a mixed marriage. In earlier times Laish had but little intercourse with the Zidonians (Judg. xviii. 28). It is nowhere stated that the inhabitants were of Phœnician extraction; nor can it be justly inferred from this passage], a worker in brass [or copper. Brass is a compound of copper and zinc; but כֹּפֶר originally and strictly signifies a pure metal (Deut. viii. 9; xxxiii. 25, &c.; Job xxviii. 2). There were copper mines in Palestine, and the art of working this metal was known at a very remote period (Gen. iv. 22, Heb., and see Wilkinson's "Ancient Egypt," vol. iii. p. 243; and De Rougemont, "Âge du Bronze," p. 180). In later times the word sometimes denoted brass (χαλκός), or copper-bronze (a mixture of copper and tin). Cf. Jer. vi. 28. From 2 Chron. ii. 14 we learn that Hiram was "skilful to work in gold and in silver, in brass, in iron, in stone, and in timber," &c. From the mention of brass only in this passage, and in ver. 45, it has been somewhat hastily concluded that "the work that he personally did for Solomon" was "limited to works in brass" (Rawlinson). It is, perhaps, safer to say that brass only is mentioned here, because the following section treats exclusively of the brazen ornaments, &c., of the sanctuary (Keil). It would almost seem, however (see note on ver. 48), as if he was not employed to make the vessels of gold. Nor does this supposition really contradict the statement made below, *viz.*, that he wrought all Solomon's

work]: and he was filled with wisdom, and understanding, and cunning [or knowledge, as the same word is rendered Exod. xxxi. 3, where similar language is used of Bezaleel. It is noticeable, however, that the words "filled with the spirit of God," used of the Hebrew, are not applied to the Tyrian workman] to work all works in brass. And he came to king Solomon [probably with a considerable number of assistants], and wrought all his work.

Ver. 15.—For he cast two pillars of brass [The process of casting, as practised by the ancients, receives considerable illustration from the paintings of Thebes (see Wilkinson, "Anc. Egypt." ii. pp. 234, 256; Kitto, "Daily Bib. Illus." Sol. and Kings, pp. 72, 73)], of eighteen cubits high apiece [Heb. *eighteen cubits was the height of the one column*. This was the height of the shaft (cf. 2 Kings xxv. 17; Jer. lii. 21). To this must be added the capital (vers. 16, 19), which measured five (or, according to some, nine) cubits, and probably the pedestal. The pillars were hollow, the metal being four finger breadths thick (Jer. lii. 21). In 2 Chron. iii. 15 the height is given as thirty-five cubits—a discrepancy which has been variously explained. According to some writers (*e.g.*, Abrahanel, Movers, Wordsworth), this represents the total length of the two pillars (each pillar consequently being 17½ cubits)—an idea which, perhaps, finds some slight support in the word employed קִוְיָ length. Here it is קִוְיָ height. By others it has been supposed that the total height of base, column, and capital was thirty-five cubits, which, if not incredible, is very improbable. Others think it a part of that systematic reduplication of the heights of edifices by the chronicler, of which we have already had an instance in ch. vi. (where see note). But the true explanation would seem to be that,

by a clerical error, thirty-five (הֵל) has been substituted in the text for eighteen (חֵל). So Keil and Bähr]: and a line [or thread] of twelve cubits did compass either of them [Heb. *the second column*] about. [It must not be supposed, from the fact that the height of the one column is given, and the circumference of the other, that they were dissimilar in height and breadth or girth. There has probably been an accidental abbreviation of the full expression, "Eighteen cubits was the height of the one pillar, and eighteen cubits was the height of the other pillar; and a line of twelve cubits compassed the one pillar, and a line of twelve cubits compassed the other pillar." It is just possible, however, that the peculiarity results from the actual system of

measurement employed in this case. As they were castings, it would be needless to measure both pillars, and so the length may have been ascertained from the first, and the breadth from the second. The columns would thus be about twenty-seven feet high, and about six feet in diameter.]

Ver. 16.—And he made two chapters [or capitals] of molten [Heb. *poured*] brass, to put upon the tops [Heb. *heads*] of the pillars: the height of the one chapter was five cubits, and the height of the other chapter was five cubits [In 2 Kings xxv. 17 the height is given as three cubits; but this is obviously a clerical error. See 2 Chron. iii. 15; Jer. lii. 22. A much more important question is whether the chapter (כִּתְּרֵי) same word, akin to כִּתְּרֵי, crown] of four cubits mentioned in ver. 19 is to be understood as a part of this chapter, or something additional and superposed, the entablature, e.g. The former appears the more probable. See note on ver. 19. But it is not a fatal objection to the latter view that it would make the entire chapter, or both members, nine cubits high; no less, that is, than one-half the length of the shaft. No doubt to modern ideas this appears wholly disproportionate; but a double chapter, bearing the same proportion to the shaft, is found in some of the buildings of Persepolis (Fergusson, Dict. Bib. iii. p. 1457). From the expression of vers. 41, 42, “the bowls of the chapters” (cf. 2 Chron. iv. 12, 13; Jer. lii. 23), and the word “belly” (בֶּטֶן) in ver. 20, we gather that the chapters were bowl-shaped, or belled out something like the so-called “cushion capital” in Norman architecture.

Ver. 17.—And nets [Gesen., *lattice*; Keil, *plait*. “It seems almost in vain to try and speculate on what was the exact form of the decoration of these celebrated pillars. The nets of checker-work, and wreaths of chain-work, &c., are all features applicable to metal architecture; and though we know that the old Tartar races did use metal architecture everywhere, and especially in bronze, from the very nature of the material, every specimen has perished, and we have now no representations from which we can restore them” (Fergusson, Dict. Bib. l.c.)] of checker work [the Hebrew repeats the word: nets of *net-work*, or plaits of work of *plait*], and wreaths [or cords, twisted work, i.e., festoons] of chain work [the wreathed or twisted festoon probably resembled a chain], for [or, *to*, i.e., were on] the chapters which were upon the top of the pillars; seven for the one chapter, and seven for the other chapter [The LXX. having here *δικτυον*, it is clear that the text they had read שֶׁבַע “a net,” and not שֶׁבַע

1 KINGS.

“seven.” Some, accordingly, would read, “a net for the one chapter, and a net,” &c. But there is no sufficient reason for the change. “This decoration consisted of seven twists arranged as festoons, which were hung round the capitals of the pillars” (Keil). The comparison with “chain work” was probably suggested by the fact that the intertwined threads, which crossed and recrossed each other, bore a rough resemblance to the links of a chain.

Ver. 18.—And he made the pillars [There is evidently a confusion of the text here. Probably we should read, with some MSS. הרמנים, the *pomegranates* (so LXX.), instead of העמודים, or rather, we should transpose the two words, reading *pomegranates* where the Masoretic text has *pillars*, and *vice versa*. “The pomegranate was one of the commonest ornaments of Assyria. . . . It is doubtful whether a symbolical meaning was attached to it, or whether it was merely selected as a beautiful natural form” (Rawlinson). Wordsworth characteristically sees in its many ripe seeds, “an expressive emblem of *fruitfulness in good works*.” According to Bähr, it is an image of the law or covenant of Jehovah, and the seeds represent the separate commands (Symbolik, ii. 122, 123). In the tabernacle it was portrayed in works of divers colours on the hem of the robe of the ephod (Exod. xxviii. 33, 34; xxxix. 24). All the Scripture notices of this fruit prove its great abundance in Palestine (Num. xiii. 23; Josh. xv. 32; xxi. 25;—in the two last passages it appears as the name of a town—Cant. iv. 3, 13; viii. 2; Joel i. 12; Haggai ii. 9, &c.) It was also well known to the Egyptians (Num. xx. 5)], and [or *even*] two rows round about upon the one network [“The relation between the two rows of pomegranates and the plaited work is not clearly defined, but it is generally and correctly assumed that one row ran round the pillars below the plaited work and the other above” (Keil). The pomegranates, one hundred in number in each row (2 Chron. iii. 16), four hundred in all (2 Chron. iv. 13; Jer. lii. 23), would thus form a double border to the chain work], to cover the chapters that were upon the top, with pomegranates [rather, *on the top of the pillars*, as the transposition mentioned above and the sense require]; and so did he for the other chapter.

Ver. 19.—And the chapters that were upon the top of the pillars [It is difficult to believe that these words, which are identical with those in vers. 16, 17, 18, can refer to a different—a second and superposed capital (Rawlinson), or to the entablature (Fergusson)] were of lily work [i.e., *bassi-*

2

*relievi* in imitation of flowering lilies. Probably the bowl-shaped chapter was treated as a full-blown lily, just as the capitals of Egyptian pillars took the form of the lotus. The molten sea was similarly treated (ver. 26). The lily (לָילִי, from שָׁיִט, *to be white*), was undoubtedly an emblem of purity. Bähr observes that it may justly be named “the flower of the promised land,” and that as the lotus was the religious flower of the Indian and Egyptian religions, so was the lily of the Jewish [These words, לָילִי, are very obscure. Keil understands “as in the hall” (cf. *κατὰ τὸ ἀνάμ*, LXX.) But that idea would have been expressed by לְיָלִי, and nothing is said elsewhere about any lily-work in the porch (Bähr). Ewald, too, thinks the decoration of the porch is referred to, and holds that a description of this lily-work must once have preceded this statement, though it is now wanting. Thenius, *al.* suppose them to refer to the position of the pillars within the porch, and the “four cubits” mentioned presently, they take to indicate the diameter of the capitals. Wordsworth would render “inside or toward the porch,” and understands that the lily-work was only on the *inside* of the pillars. It is, perhaps, impossible to arrive at any certain conclusion], four cubits. [This may either mean that of five cubits (which was the height of the entire capital), four, and these the upper four (ver. 22), were covered with lily-work, while one cubit at the bottom of the capital was ornamented with chain-work or festoons—we can hardly believe that nets, chains, and lily-work were all combined in the same space, or it may refer to the position of the pillars in the portico.]

Ver. 20.—And the chapters upon the two pillars had pomegranates [Instead of the italics, Keil would supply *Hiram made*, but it is doubtful whether this is any improvement. We have already heard more than once that he made the chapters. It is better to supply *projected* or *were*, as in the preceding verse. This verse is extremely obscure; but its design *appears* to be to explain how the bowl of the chapter projected above its base] also above [*i.e.*, above the neck, or lowest cubit, on which was the net and chain-work], over against מִלְּעֵבֶר with two prefixes is a rare form] the belly [or “bowl” (ver. 41)] which was by [Heb. *beyond, on the other side of, i.e.*, as it appeared to a spectator standing below] the network: and the pomegranates were two hundred in rows [This agrees with the total

of four hundred, as given in ver. 42, and in 2 Chronicles, and with the “hundred round about” (*i.e.*, the number in each row) mentioned in Jer. lii. 23. We gather from this latter passage that ninety-six out of the hundred faced the four quarters, for this is apparently the meaning of רִיחָה, *windwards*; see Ezek. xlii. 16—18, not that the pomegranates could be “set in motion by the play of the wind,” as Ewald confidently affirms. The remaining four pomegranates, of course, occupied the four corners. The necessary inference from this statement, viz., that this part of the capital was four-square, seems to have escaped the notice of the commentators] round about upon the other chapter. [Some words have evidently dropped out of the Hebrew here, as in ver. 15. The text, no doubt, originally stood “two hundred in rows round about the one chapter, and two hundred in rows round about upon the other chapter.” There has been no intentional compression—that is not the genius of the Semitic languages—but an accidental omission, occasioned by the recurrence of almost identical words.

Ver. 21.—And he set up the pillars in the porch [We are now confronted by the much vexed questions, (1) What was the position, and (2) what the purpose, of these two columns? Were they *in* the porch, or before it? And were they architectural or monumental? Did they support the roof of the porch, or were they isolated and detached, after the manner of obelisks? I incline to the opinion of Bähr, that they stood *in* the porch, but that they formed no part of the building, *i.e.*, that they were not for any structural use, but simply for ornament. This appears to me, on the whole, to result from the following considerations: (1) The language used favours a position within the porch. We have here מִלְּפָנָיִם (=“at or *in* the porch,” perhaps for the porch, as Bähr), and in ver. 19 (where see note) מִלְּפָנָיִם. And with this agree the expression of the Chron. “before (מִלְּפָנָיִם) the house,” and “before (מִלְּפָנָיִם) the temple” (2 Chron. iii. 15, 17). The pillars would, however, be “before the temple,” whether they stood within or in front of the porch, and it may be safely allowed that the language of the historian is not *decisive* one way or the other. The prepositions of the text, however, seem to lend some support to Bähr’s view. (2) We know that “the Phœnicians used *isolated* metal columns as sacred ornaments, so that Hiram would be familiar with such a mode of ornamentation” (Rawlinson). “Whenever in coins or histories we get a representa-

tion of a Phœnician temple, it always has a pillar or pillars standing within or before it" (Stanley). (3) It is extremely doubtful whether these columns, twenty-three feet in height, were adapted to serve as supports to the roof of the porch. The height of the latter has been variously estimated at twenty, thirty, and sixty cubits, and whichever estimate is preferred, the columns would appear to be of an unsuitable altitude. Fergusson says they were "appropriate to support the roof of the porch," but then he conceives the columns to be in all twenty-seven cubits high (see on ver. 19), and allows the remaining three cubits for the slope of the roof). But, as we cannot be certain either of the height of the porch or of the column, this is an argument of which very little can be made. (4) If the pillars were part of the building, they would almost certainly have been of the same material, *i.e.*, wood or stone. Their metallic composition is certainly an argument for their monumental character. It can hardly be alleged in favour of this view, however, that they are mentioned amongst the vessels or articles of furniture, for the historian might fittingly describe the pillars here, as being the principal of the "works in brass" which Hiram wrought, even if they did form the supports of the roof of the porch. Nor are we justified, considering the extreme brevity and the partial character of the description of the temple, in affirming that they would have been mentioned in connexion with the building, had they formed part of the edifice. (5) The remark of Stieglitz (cited by Bähr) that "it was their separate position alone which gave these pillars the impressive aspect they were designed to wear," lends some little support to this view. So also does (6) The fact that these columns, and these alone, received special names. "No architectural portion of the building received a name" (Keil). But this argument, again, is not to be unduly pressed, for to some it may seem that the names they bore would have a special propriety and an enhanced significance, if the columns contributed to the *strength and stability* of the edifice. The question, therefore, is one of considerable complexity, the more so, as it is maintained that it would be almost impossible to construct a roof thirty feet in width without some such pillars to support the beam (Fergusson); but the balance of evidence appears to favour the view that Jachin and Boaz were monuments erected in the porch, to dignify the sanctuary, and to symbolize the power and eternity of the Being to whom it was dedicated; and he set up the right pillar, and called the name thereof Jachin

[*i.e.*, he shall establish, as marg. The name expressed the belief that God would preserve and protect the new fane. It is true that a Jachin is mentioned (1 Chron. ix. 10; xxiv. 17), as head of the 21st course of priests in the reign of David, while a Boaz was one of Solomon's ancestors, but the columns could hardly be named after them, or any private persons. Ewald suggests that they were named after "some favourites of the time, perhaps young sons of Solon." The idea of Thenius that these names were engraved upon the pillars is not wholly improbable, though of course it finds no support in the text] and he set up the left pillar [the left as one faced them from the house. The right hand is identified with the south in ver. 39], and called the name thereof Boaz. [Marg. *in it is strength*. Probably "*in Him, i.e.*, God, is its strength" (cf. Isa. xlv. 24). The thought of Jachin, "*He will establish*," is thus continued; and the two pillars pointed alike to the God of Israel as the true support and upholder of His sanctuary. The LXX. interpretation of these two names, Κατόρθωσις and ἰσχύς (2 Chron. iii. 17), *success and strength*, though very far from literal, preserves their fundamental ideas.

Ver. 22.—And upon the top of the pillars was lily work [a repetition, in the Hebrew manner, of ver. 19. The "lily work," which probably involved two things, (1) that the capital had a rude resemblance to a "full blown lily-cup" (Bähr), and (2) that representations of the leaf of the lily were portrayed upon it (as in the cornice of I ersepolis, an illustration of which will be found Dict. Bib. iii. p. 1457), was a not unfitting finial to the column, as it formed a sort of crown or chaplet upon it. The two pillars would thus resemble two giant plants, the column answering to the stalk, the capital to the flower. The ideas of architecture, it is well known, have very frequently been derived from the vegetable kingdom.

Ver. 23.—The writer now passes on to describe the brazen vessels made by Hiram for the temple use. And he made a [Heb. *the*] molten sea [so called on account of its unprecedented size and capacity. It was designed, like the laver of brass in the tabernacle (Exod. xxx. 18—20), to contain the water necessary for the ablutions of the priests. For its size and shape see below], ten cubits from the one brim to the other [Heb. *from his lip to his lip*] round all about [*i.e.*, circular], and his height was five cubits [this was the depth of the vessel, exclusive of its foot or base]: and a line of thirty cubits did compass it round about. [The historian obviously uses round numbers when he speaks of the diameter as ten

and the circumference as thirty cubits. If the diameter was exactly ten, the circumference would of course be about  $31\frac{1}{2}$  cubits. But the sacred writers seldom aim at precision.

Ver. 24.—And under the brim of it round about [The edge of the laver was curved outwards (ver. 26)] there were knobs [see note on ch. vi. 18. The text of 2 Chron. iv. 3, בקרית ("the similitude of oxen"), is obviously a clerical error for פקעים (Keil), but whether לרבות is an interpolation may well be doubted. Keil thinks it was introduced to explain the mention of oxen] compassing [Heb. *surrounding*, some word] it, ten in a cubit [It does not follow from this that each gourd or knob was "a little over two inches in diameter" (Keil), for they may not have been in close contact, and, moreover, the cubit was probably 18 inches], compassing the sea round about: the knobs were cast in two rows, when it was cast. [Lit., *two rows; the knobs were cast in its casting*. The "brass," of which the laver was composed, had been taken by David from the cities of Hadazerer (1 Chron. xviii. 8; 1 Sam. viii. 8, LXX.)]

Ver. 25.—It stood [Heb. *standing*] upon twelve oxen [The import of the number twelve is well explained by Bähr, Symbolik, i. 201 sqq. Like *seven*, it is compounded out of three and four. But the primary reference here is to the twelve tribes, three looking toward the north, and three looking toward the west, and three looking toward the south, and three looking toward the east [So the tribes in the camp formed a square round the tabernacle, three on each side—east, south, west, and north (Num. ii.)]; and the sea was set above upon them, and all their hinder parts were inward. [The same regard of the cardinal points (see Bähr, Symbolik, i. 210 sqq.) has been noticed in the pomegranates on the capitals of the two columns. See note on ver. 20. Keil says the feet of the oxen no doubt rested on a metal plate, so that they were fixed and immoveable; but this lacks proof. The oxen would be immoveable in any case, owing to the weight of the metal and the water. All conjectures as to the height and size of the oxen are necessarily of little value.]

Ver. 26.—And it was a handbreadth thick [i.e., three inches], and the brim thereof was wrought like the brim of a cup [Heb. *and his lip like the work of the lip of a cup*, i.e., curved outwards], with flowers of lilies [lit., "a blossom of lily." Keil understands "ornamented with lily flowers," but the strict interpretation—the "lily blossom" being in apposition to "cup"—requires us to refer the words to the shape rather than

to the ornamentation of the laver. The lip was curved like a lily: it contained two thousand [In Chron. and by Josephus the number is given as 3000. This may have resulted, as Keil thinks, from confounding 2 and 3 but it is suspicious that so many of the numbers of the Chronicles are exaggerations. The common explanation of the discrepancy, viz., that it held 2000 baths "when filled to its ordinary height, but when filled to the brim 3000" (Wordsworth), appears to me hardly ingenuous] baths. [The data for determining the value of the bath or ephah are both scanty and conflicting" (Dict. Bib. iii. p. 1741). Josephus, the only authority on the subject, says that it equalled the Attic *metrētēs* (about  $8\frac{1}{2}$  gals.), but it is very doubtful whether he was "really familiar with the Greek measures" (ib.) At any rate, if this statement is correct, his other statement as to the shape of the laver must be altogether erroneous, since 2000 baths would equal 17,000 gals., and a hemispherical laver could not possibly have contained more than 10,000. The attempt has been made, on the assumption that the sea was a hemisphere, as Josephus affirms, to calculate from its capacity the value of the bath, which in that case would be about four gallons. But there is good reason for doubting whether the laver was hemispherical—such a shape would be ill adapted to its position on the backs of oxen—and some have maintained that it was cylindrical, others that, like the laver of the tabernacle, it had a foot (Exod. xxx. 18) or basin. The prevailing opinion of scholars, however, appears to be that it was 30 cubits in circumference only at the lip, and that it bellied out considerably below. While the shape, however, must remain a matter of uncertainty, we are left in no doubt as to its purpose. It was "for the priests to wash in" (2 Chron. iv. 6)—not, of course, for immersing their whole persons, but their hands and feet (Exod. xxx. 19, 21). The priests (after Exod. iii. 5; Josh. v. 15, &c.) ministered barefoot. It was, according to Rabbinical tradition, provided with taps or faucets (Bähr). It has, however, been held by some that the water issued forth (as in the Alhambra) from the lions' mouths. It is probable that a basin of some sort was attached to it. Whether the laver was filled by the hand or by some special contrivance, it is quite impossible to say. We know that provision was made for storing water hard by. The present writer was privileged in 1861 to explore the great reservoir, the *Bahr el Khebir*, still existing underneath the Haram area, at a time when very few Europeans had seen it (see Pal. Explor. Fund, No. vii.; Barclay, "City of the Great

King;" Porter, Handbook, i. pp. 134, 138). The water was probably brought from Solomon's pools at Bethlehem, though "a fountain of water exists in the city and is running unto this day, far below the surface" ("Our Work in Palestine," p. 103). Tacitus mentions the *fons perennis aquae* and the *piscinae cisternaeque servandis imbribus*.

Ver. 27.—And he made ten bases [or stands, *כִּיבּוֹנוֹת*, from *בָּנָה*, erectus stetit. The description of both the bases and the lavers which they supported (vers. 27—39) is extremely obscure. We know, however, that the bases (as the name implies) were simply stands or pediments for the lavers] of brass; four cubits was the length of one base and four cubits the breadth thereof, and three cubits the height of it [they were rectangular, or box-shaped, six feet square and four and a half feet high.

Ver. 28.—And the work of the bases was on this manner [Heb. *and this the work of the base*]: they had borders [*כַּסְפָּרֹת* (from *כָּסַף*, claudit) means strictly enclosings, i.e., sides, forming the stand. They were panels, because of the borders or ledges mentioned presently, but this was the accident of their construction. The translation "border" gives a totally wrong impression], and the borders were between the ledges [Heb. *the sides were between the borders, i.e.*, were enclosed by ledges or frames.

Ver. 29.—And on the borders [panels] that were between the ledges were lions [i.e., figures or bas-reliefs of lions], oxen, and cherubims ["The lion and the ox are the two animal forms which occur most frequently in Assyrian decoration" (Rawlinson). They have also found a place through the cherubim, in the symbolism of Christianity]: and upon the ledges there was a base above [i.e., there was a pedestal or stand (*יָד*; see ver. 31) of some sort for the laver, upon the square basis]: and beneath the lions and oxen were certain additions [Heb. *wreaths, festoons, יָרֵךְ* (cf. Prov. i. 9), *corona*] made of thin work. [Heb. *pensile* or *hanging work, כְּוֶרֶךְ* from *וָרַךְ* descendit; Vulgate, *dependentia*. It would seem that on the panel, beneath the figures of animals, &c., were sculptured hanging festoons of flowers.

Ver. 30.—And every base had four brazen wheels [As the lavers were used for washing "such things as they offered for burnt offering" (2 Chron. iv. 6), and consequently would require to be continually emptied and refilled, they must of necessity be moveable, so that they could be taken, now to the sea, or other reservoir, now to the altar], and plates [Heb. *axles*] of brass: and the

four corners [Heb. *feet*; *עַצְמֵי* signifies *step*, thence *foot*, and is here used of artificial feet. These were, no doubt, at the four corners, and served to raise the stand above the wheels, so that the foliage, &c., was not hidden] thereof had undersetters [Heb. *shoulders*. "The bearings of the axle" (Gesen.) must be meant. The bases had four feet, which apparently terminated in a sort of socket or fork, into which the axletrees were inserted]: under the laver were undersetters [Heb. *the shoulders*] molten [or cast], at the side of every addition. [Lit., *opposite to a man* (i.e., each) *were wreaths*. The explanation of Keil is that "from the feet . . . there ascended shoulder pieces, which ran along the outside of the chest and reached to the lower part of the basin, which was upon the lid of the chest, and, as shoulders, either supported or helped to support it." He thus understands the "shoulder" to extend from the foot, or axletree, to the bottom of the laver. But it seems quite as likely that these shoulders were *within* the stand; that they started from its upper corners, i.e., "from under the laver" (as in the Hebrew), passed down along its inner angles, and emerged below—the stand may well have had no bottom—in the shape of feet or forks, which rested on the axletrees, and supported both stand and laver. Over against this internal shoulder-blade or support was placed externally a wreath. But Bähr despairs of arriving at any just and adequate understanding of this arrangement, and, in the absence of drawings, it is perhaps hopeless that we shall ever interpret the words with certainty.]

Ver. 31.—And the mouth of it [Heb. *his mouth*. I incline, with Keil, to think the mouth of the laver just mentioned (*וָיָד* masc.) is referred to rather than the stand (Thenius), which would require a fem. suffix] within the chapter [By this we are, perhaps, to understand a round ornament, resembling the capital of a pillar, which stood in the centre of the dome-shaped covering (see ver. 35) of the stand, and on which the laver rested (so Keil, Bähr). Rawlinson says, "No commentator has given a satisfactory explanation of this passage": and above [Heb. *upwards*] was a cubit [i.e., the neck or foot of the laver measured uniformly one cubit, in width apparently]: but the mouth [Heb. *and her mouth, fem*. This last-mentioned mouth is probably the mouth of the capital (fem.) The neck or mouth of the laver would appear to have been fitted into the mouth of the crown-shaped pedestal] was round after the work of the base [Heb.

**stand-work**,  $\int$  here fixes the meaning of the word in ver. 29, *i.e.*, it decides it to be the substantive (Keil, after Chald.), not the adverb (as Thenius, Bähr, *al.*) a cubit and a half [so that the first mouth would fit easily into the second], and also upon the mouth of it [Heb. *her mouth*, that of the capital, which was external. The mouth of the laver was partially concealed] were **gravings** [Keil understands this of the carving of the *stand* already mentioned, ver. 29. But a *mouth* is mentioned, which the square stand lacked. Besides the word "also" points to additional carvings. I understand the chapter which formed the mouth of the stand to be meant] with [Heb. *and*] their borders, foursquare, not round. [*i.e.*, the capital had panels like the stand, and the former, like those of the latter, were square.]

Ver. 32.—And under the borders [*i.e.*, panels] were four [Heb. *the four, i.e.*, those mentioned in ver. 30] wheels ["The wheels reached no higher than that portion of the sides of the base which was ornamented with garlands" (Rawlinson). It would be more correct to say that the wheels did not cover any portion of the sides; they were *under* them]; and the axletrees [Heb. *hands*, as holding the wheel to the base or stand. *Axletrees* is altogether misleading. The hands were the parts connecting the wheels and axles] of the wheels were joined to [Heb. *in*, as marg.] the base: and the height of a wheel was a cubit and half a cubit. [*i.e.*, 27 inches.]

Ver. 33.—And the work of the wheels was like the work of a chariot wheel [Heb. *the chariot, i.e.*, the ordinary chariot]: their axletrees [Heb. *hands*], and their naves [Gesenius understands *rims*. He derives  $\text{גב}$ , *gibbus*, from  $\text{גבב}$ , *curvatus est*], and their fellows [or *fellies*, as the word is now written. These are the parts which compose the circumference of the wheel; but Gesen. translates *spokes*, because they are the joinings ( $\text{גבב}$  *conjunct*) of nave and rim], and their spokes [ $\text{גבב}$  Gesen. would render *naves*, because the spokes *collect* at that part], were all molten.

Ver. 34.—And there were four undersettors [It seems probable that this is not a repetition of ver. 30 (Rawlinson), but that the reference is to the upper part (cf. ver. 35) of the shoulder pieces, which, according to Keil's view, supported the laver] to the four corners of one base: and the undersettors were of the very base itself. [Heb. *from the base, its shoulders*. Whether these words mean that the shoulders projected from the base, that "they rose above the corners with a slight curve" (Keil), or

that they were cast with the base, *i.e.*, from the same mould, as in the next verse, it is impossible to say.]

Ver. 35.—And in the top [Heb. *head*] of the base was there a round compass [Probably "the base above" (ver. 29) or stand for the laver. This was apparently *arched* to the height of nine inches above the top of the base] of half a cubit high: and on the top of the base the ledges [Heb. *hands*. These can hardly be either "the hands of the wheels" (ver. 32) or the "shoulders" of ver. 30 or ver. 34, but what they were it is difficult to say. They may have been arms or projections supporting the laver] thereof and the borders thereof were of the same. [Heb. *from it, sc.*, of one piece or casting.]

Ver. 36.—For on the plates of the ledges [hands] thereof, and on the borders [*sides, panels*] thereof, he graved cherubims, lions, and palm trees, according to the proportion [Heb. *nakedness*, hence naked space, void. The meaning is that he filled all the spaces with carvings] of every one, and additions [wreaths, festoons] round about.

Ver. 37.—After this manner he made the ten bases: all of them had one casting, one measure, and one size.

Ver. 38.—Then made he ten lavers of brass: one laver contained forty baths [*i.e.*, about 340 gals., if we accept the account of Josephus, Ant. viii. 2. 9. But see on ver. 26]: and every laver was four cubits. [It is uncertain whether the height or the diameter is meant. Keil decides for the latter—and four cubits, the width of the sides of the stand, may well have been also the diameter of the basin—on the ground

that as "the basins were set upon ( $\text{גב}$ ) the stands," it can hardly refer to the height. But it is worthy of remark that "the height of all the other parts has been mentioned" (Rawlinson). See vers. 27, 32, 35, and without this particular we could not calculate the *entire* height, which, if the laver were four cubits, would be about thirteen feet. This surprising size is accounted for by remembering the height of the altar, to which the fat and other sacrificial portions had to be transferred from the laver]: and upon every one of the ten bases one laver. [Ten lavers would not be at all too many when we remember the prodigious number of victims which were occasionally offered.]

Ver. 39.—And he put five bases on the right side [Heb. *shoulder*] of the house, and five on the left side of the house [*i.e.*, on the south and north sides of the court of the priests]: and he set the sea on the right side of the house eastward over against the south. [This passage is deci-

sive as to which was the right and which the left. The right side was the south. It was probably for convenience that the sea did not stand due east of the house, *i.e.*, between the porch and altar.]

Ver. 40.—And Hiram made the lavers [So the Rec. Text. But perhaps we ought to read כִּירוֹת, *i.e.*, pots, here, as in ver. 45 and 2 Chron. iv. 11. This word is joined with shovels and basons, not only in these two passages, but also in Exod. xxvii. 3, 2 Kings xxv. 14, Jer. lii. 18; in other words, the appropriate term in this connexion would be “pots,” while “lavers,” having been just mentioned in ver. 38, would involve an idle repetition. Altogether, therefore, there can be little doubt that we should here read הַכִּירוֹת הַדְּסִירוֹת. It is apparently the reading of the Chald., LXX., and some MSS. These “pots” were used, not for carrying away the ashes (Keil), but, as the name implies (דִּי, *effervescere*), for boiling the flesh of the peace offering (1 Sam. ii. 13, 14), and the shovels [these, again, as the name implies (שֶׁ) from יָחַב] *absultit*; see Gesen., Thesaurus, p. 607], were used for taking away the ashes from the altar (Exod. xxvii. 3; Num. iv. 14), and the basons. [The sacrificial bowls for receiving the blood of the victims (Exod. xxxviii. 3; Num. iv. 14).] So Hiram made an end of doing all the work [the writer now recapitulates the work of Hiram. The repetition may be due to the fact that the history was compiled from various lists and documents] that he made king Solomon for [Heb. omits the prep.] the house of the Lord.

Ver. 41.—The [Heb. omits the art. and reads pillars, two] two pillars, and the two bowls of the chapters that were on the top of the two pillars; and the two networks to cover the two bowls of the chapters which were upon the top of the pillars. [See on verses 16—20.]

Ver. 42.—And four hundred pomegranates [Heb. the pomegranates, 400] for the two networks, even two rows of pomegranates for one network, to cover the two bowls of the chapters that were upon the pillars [Heb. upon the face of the pillars]. A chapter could hardly be correctly described as עֲלֵי־פְּנֵי. It is probable that this is a clerical error, and that we should read עֲלֵי־פְּנֵי הַעַי (Bähr, Keil), “upon the two pillars.” So LXX. ἐπὶ ἀμφοτέροις κ.τ.λ. This is a more likely emendation than עַל־רֹאשׁ. It is true this latter is the reading of some MSS., and is followed by the Syr. and Vulg., but it can easily be accounted for, being a repetition of the last words of ver. 41, while

it fails to account, as the first-named emendation does, for the עֲלֵי־פְּנֵי.

Ver. 43. And the ten bases and the ten lavers [Heb. “the bases, ten and the lavers, ten”] on the bases. [See on vers. 27—37.]

Ver. 44.—And one [Heb. the one] sea and twelve oxen [Heb. the oxen twelve] under the sea [vers. 23—26].

Ver. 45.—And the pots [see on ver. 40], and the shovels, and the basons, and all these vessels [according to the *Keri*] which Hiram made [There is no mention of the altar, as in 2 Chron. iv. 1, possibly because it was not made by Hiram (Bähr)] to [rather, for] king Solomon for [Heb. omits] the house of the Lord, were of bright brass. [Marg. made bright, *i.e.*, polished after casting.]

Ver. 46.—In the plain [Heb. Ciccar, *i.e.*, circle or circuit, the word used only of the Ghor or Jordan valley. This tract is called “The Ciccar” Gen. xiii., 11, xix. 17, &c. See Stanley, “Sinai and Palestine,” App., § 12] of Jordan [in the Heb. this river (“the descender”) always takes the art.] did the king cast them, in the clay ground [Heb. as marg. in the thickness of the ground. Whether the soil was made thick by stamping (Keil) it is impossible to say. It looks as if this site had been chosen because the soil was suitable] between Succoth [Gen. xxxiii. 17. It appears from Judg. viii. 5 that it lay east of the Jordan (cf. Josh. xiii. 27, where it allotted to the tribe of Gad); “and indeed it has been recovered, under its later name Tarala, at Tell Dar’ala, north-east of the Dâmieh ford” (Conder, p. 229). As Zarthan was almost certainly west of the Jordan, and as the casting—from the nature of the country—must as certainly have been done to the west of the river, it is somewhat surprising to find a trans-Jordanic town mentioned as one of the landmarks defining the site. It is possible that there was a western Succoth—a place named *Sâkit* was discovered by Robinson and Van de velde, a few miles south of Bethshean; but this name is radically different (Conder). It is, therefore, more probable that, being near the ford of the river, this place was so well known that it would serve better than any of the less familiar western towns to identify the site of the foundry] and Zarthan. [See note on chap. iv. 12.]

Ver. 47.—And Solomon left all the vessels *uneighed* [the interpretation of the A. V. italics is justified by the next clauses] because they were exceeding many: neither was the weight of the brass found out. [Marg. searched. So Gesen. *al.* This does not mean that the “brass for each

vessel was not weighed out" (Bähr), but that the total weight of the metal was not, perhaps could not, be ascertained.]

The sacred record now proceeds to enumerate the vessels, &c., used *inside* the temple—those hitherto described having been for external use. These latter, as became the furniture of a house which blazed in gold, were all of gold, while the former were of brass. It would seem to be a fair inference, from the omission of Hiram's name, that he was not employed on the manufacture of these latter vessels.

Ver. 48.—And Solomon made all the vessels which pertained unto [neither word in Heb.] the house of the Lord: the altar of gold [the altar of incense. See on chap. vi. 20, 22] and the table of gold [The Heb. shows the meaning to be, He made the table out of gold, not "He made the golden table," as Keil. 2 Chron. iv. 8 (cf. ver. 19 and 1 Chron. xxviii. 16) speaks of ten tables] whereupon the shewbread was.

Ver. 49.—And the candlesticks [Exod. xiv. 31—37; xxxvii. 17—24. According to Jewish tradition, the seven-branched candlestick was preserved in the temple in addition to the ten named here] of pure [Heb. *shut*] gold, five on the right side and five on the left, before the oracle ["These are said to have formed a sort of railing before the veil, and to have been connected by golden chains *under* which, on the day of atonement, the high priest crept" (Dict. Bib. i. 249). The idea that the ten candlesticks rested on the ten tables mentioned in the Chronicles is entirely groundless. *Eleven* tables would in that case have been necessary (Bähr). Besides we are distinctly told that the tables were for the shewbread (2 Chron. iv. 19), not for the candlesticks], with the flowers [ornaments of the candlestick (Exod. xxv. 31)], and the lamps [the seven extremities of the candlestick which held the oil and the wicks (ver. 37). It is highly probable that the temple candlesticks were fashioned after that of the tabernacle], and the tongs [*ib.* ver. 38. Heb. *two takers*] of gold.

Ver. 50.—And the bowls [same word in

Exod. xii. 22. The "dishes" of Exod. xxv. 29, and xxxvii. 16, with which Rawlinson identifies them, are expressed by a different word. He thinks they were for the oil—while the connexion would seem to imply—but they *may* have been for the blood], and the snuffers [Heb. *knives*, כַּנִּי, *carpit*. The word is used of the pruning-hook in Isa. ii. 4; cf. Levit. xxv. 3. They served the purpose though they had not the shape of our snuffers], and the basons [same word as in vers. 40, 45. These latter, however, were of brass, while those of the text were of pure gold. According to 2 Chron. iv. 8, they were a hundred in number. As the root (קַנֵּן) signifies to *sprinkle*, they were probably either for the water or the blood of sprinkling. Keil thinks they were for the wine of the libations], and the spoons [פַּתְּוֵן, lit., *palms* (of hands), hence used of shallow vessels (Exod. xxv. 29; Num. vii. 84, 86. The last cited passage (cf. vers. 14, 20, 26) shows that they were used for the incense (Lev. xxiv. 7, &c.), LXX. *θυσιακα*], and the censers [or snuffers, *extinguishers*; marg. *ash-pans*. In Exod. xxv. 38 the word is translated *snuff-dishes*. In Num. iv. 14, xvi. 6, it signifies *censers*, which may well be the meaning here] of pure gold; and the hinges [or sockets of the hinges (Gesen., Keil)] of gold, both for the doors of the inner house, the most holy place [Heb. *for the holy of holies*], and for the doors of the house, to wit, of the temple. [These were evidently of inferior (not *pure*) metal.]

Ver. 51.—So was ended all the work that king Solomon made for the house of the Lord. And Solomon brought in the things which David his father had dedicated [marg. *holy things of David* (2 Sam. viii. 8, 10, 11; 1 Chron. xxii. 3, 14, 16; xxviii. 14—18). Cf. xxvi. 26—28]; even the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, did he put among the treasures of the house of the Lord. [So that all the store of precious metal and the brass that David had prepared was not absorbed in the decoration and furniture of the temple. There would seem to have been a considerable overplus, which was stored in the temple treasury.]

### HOMILETICS.

Vers. 15—22.—*The Pillars of Brass*. If, as some think, the importance of any Scripture subject is to be gauged by the space assigned to it in the sacred page, then surely the fact that eight long verses of this chapter are occupied with the description of these two columns and their capitals proves, first, their importance in the eyes of Jewish writers, and, secondly, that they must have a significance for the minds of Christian readers.

But the importance of these monuments (which is also attested (1) by their *position*—in the very forefront of the temple—the first objects that would strike the eye of the beholder—and (2) by their *isolation*—they were apparently unconnected with the edifice and served a purpose of their own) is not due to what they were in themselves. No doubt they were regarded in that age as wonderful works of art. Probably they were the largest castings either accomplished or attempted up to that date. And from the minute details of their capitals, the chequer-work, chain-work, net-work, lily-work—details evidently recorded with some degree of pride and wonderment on the part of the historian—we may reasonably infer that there “were not the like made in any kingdom” (ch. x. 20). But it is not because of this that so much prominence is accorded to them in Scripture; it is because of their connexion with the temple. Their glory is reflected on them from the sanctuary. They are mentioned “because of the house of the Lord our God,” of which they were the handmaids and ornaments. We are led, therefore, to inquire—

I. WHAT MEANING THEY HAD FOR THE JEW?

II. WHAT LESSONS THEY HAVE FOR OURSELVES?

I. But in order to arrive at their *meaning*, we must first consider their *purpose*. We have seen that they were not structural, but monumental (note on ver. 21); in fact they served instead of an inscription upon the building. The Western world, with its love of the concrete, often stamps its great edifices with appropriate legends. But the children of the East have ever preferred the mystical teaching of symbolism. For them there has always been a charm in “the view of things half seen.” And so the Jewish temple bore no letters on its front, but its representative pillars stood forth, embodiments in themselves of the ideas of the building, and silently proclaimed its object and character. And this is the teaching they had for the wise—

1. *That the temple was strong and firm and lasting.* Their very materials proclaimed this. They were not of perishing wood or stone, but of enduring bronze. Then, they were of unusual girth in proportion to their height, for whereas the shaft was 12 cubits in circumference, it was but 18 cubits high (Jer. lii. 21). The first impression they gave, consequently, would be that of strength, of fixity, and so they spoke, by their very character as well as by their names, of the *stability* of the house. It was no longer a tent (cf. Isa. xxxviii. 12), it was a house of cedar (2 Sam. vii. 2), it was a *kriju ig dei*. The two columns, that is to say, served instead of these two inscriptions, “*I have surely built thee a house to dwell in, a settled place for thee to abide in for ever*” (ch. viii. 13), and “*This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it*” (Psa. cxxxii. 14).

2. *That its strength and stability were in God.* Of course this is an idea which symbolism could only express imperfectly. And yet it may be (as some have thought) that the brazen pillars would recall to some minds the pillar of cloud, the token of God’s presence. And if we may see in the steeple a “silent finger pointing to the sky,” then surely these erect columns may have carried men’s thoughts upwards to the throne of God. But if not, the names, *Jachin*, *Boaz*, at any rate, witnessed for Him and proclaimed Him to all as the hope and stay of the new sanctuary. It was, therefore, as if in the place of pillars these superscriptions also had been conspicuous on the temple: for *Jachin*—“*God is in the midst of her; she shall not be removed*,” and for *Boaz*—“*Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it*” (Psa. cxxvii. 1. Note. This psalm is ascribed to Solomon. And these words were inscribed on the late Eddystone lighthouse).

3. *That it was the shrine of a holy God.* The two columns, standing as sentinels over the house, confronted all who came into its courts with the idea of *consecration*. We have seen that column and chapter together bore a rough resemblance to a lily—the column the stalk, the chapter the flower. Now the lily is the emblem of purity (see on ch. vii. 19). The “lily-work in the porch” proclaimed the house as belonging to the All-Holy One of Israel. The columns, therefore, in their esoteric symbolic language, spoke to the same effect as if these words had been blazoned on the temple’s front (as on the high priest’s mitre): “*Holiness unto the Lord*” (Exod. xxviii. 36; xxxix. 30), or these, “*I the Lord your God am holy*” (Levit. xix. 2; xxi. 9).

4. *That it was for the worship of a holy people.* The chapters were fashioned after a lily-cup. The columns, *i.e.*, blossomed into purity under the shelter of the sanctuary, and so proclaimed that holiness was to be the *product* of the temple services and ritual. They served accordingly as *memoranda* both to priests and worshippers. It is said that on the front of the second temple words were inscribed, *viz.*, these: "Know before whom thou art going to stand." In this first temple the two columns spoke to the same purport. To the priests they cried, "*Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord*" (Isa. lii. 11); to the people they spoke, like the "fringe with the ribband of blue," "*Be ye holy unto your God*" (Num. xv. 38, 40).

5. *That it was for a people zealous of good works.* On the columns were 400 pomegranates. Pomegranates are said to be emblems of *fruitfulness*. If so, they taught the Hebrew worshipper this last lesson—they served instead of this inscription, "*Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits*" (Exod. xxii. 29); or this, "*He looked that his vineyard should bring forth grapes*" (Isa. v. 2).

II. But what lessons have Jachin and Boaz for ourselves? Do they not speak to us (1) *of the Church*, the "*pillar and ground of the truth*" (1 Tim. iii. 15); (2) *of the Christian*, who shall be "*a pillar in the temple of God*?" (Rev. iii. 12.)

1. *Of the Church.* The lessons these brazen columns had for the Hebrew people, the same they have for ourselves, with this difference, that they also speak to us by their *fall*. They image forth the *stability* of the Church—that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; that its *strength* is in God—its weapons are not carnal, but spiritual (2 Cor. x. 4; Matt. xxviii. 20; John xv. 4); that its object is *holiness* (Ephes. v. 27; i. 4; Titus ii. 12) and *fruitfulness* (John xv. 8; 2 Cor. ix. 10; Phil. i. 11). But they have an additional lesson for us, derived from their destruction. For why were these splendid works of art removed out of their place, broken up, and carried to Babylon? (Jer. lii. 17, 21.) It was because their lessons were unheeded, because the people were *not pure and holy* (Jer. xxii. 8, 9; v. 31; Acts vii. 43). And so we learn—not that the Catholic Church will "likewise perish;" that can never be (Matt. xvi. 18); of that it might be said, with a propriety of which the Latin poet was all unconscious, "*Exegi monumentum aere perennius*"—the columns lasted 423 years, the Church 1800 already—but that particular churches, if unfaithful, shall have their candlesticks removed out of their places (Rev. ii. 5). "*If God spared not the natural branches,*" &c. (Rom. xi. 21).

2. *Of the Christian.* He may learn hence—(1) To be rooted and grounded in faith and love (Eph. iii. 17; Col. i. 23). (2) Not to be carried about by every wind of doctrine (Eph. iv. 14; James i. 6; note on ver. 20). (3) That "God is our refuge and strength" (Phil. iv. 13; Col. i. 11; 1 Peter v. 10). (4) That we are to "wear the white lily of a blameless life" (cf. 2 Peter iii. 14). (5) And to "bring forth much fruit," and (6) that if we overcome, we shall be pillars in the heavenly temple, not to be broken, or cast into the fire, or to share in the destruction of Babylon (Rev. xviii. 2), but to "go out no more for ever" (Rev. iii. 12).

**Vers. 23, 24.—The Molten Sea and the Brazen Lavers.** If the two pillars teach the lesson of purity, of personal holiness, how much more the sea and bases! For observe—

1. Sea and bases had the same end in view, *viz.*, *purification*. The first was for the cleansing of the *priests*. The second for the cleansing of the *sacrifices* offered by the priests.

2. The extraordinary provision of water for the service of the temple. Underneath the temple area was a great reservoir (it is said to be some fifty feet deep), no doubt the same which exists at the present day, near the Mosque el Aksa (note on ver. 26). This was connected by an aqueduct (which can still be traced) with Solomon's Pools at Etham, near Bethlehem. Whether these great works were purely for the use of the temple, or whether the city also shared in their benefits, may be doubtful, but that the temple occupied the first place in the scheme is beyond all question. From this subterranean sea—whether by pipes or by the labours of the *Nethinim*, we cannot be certain—both molten sea and brazen lavers were filled.

But here a distinction must be made. The priests were *commanded* to wash, under pain of death (Exod. xxx. 19 sqq.; xxix. 4; xl. 30—32), but there was no such command with respect to the victims. No; the sacrifices would seem to have been washed because the Jewish mind instinctively felt that this was right and fitting. And that it *was* right and fitting is proved by the fact that the service was accepted, and here enjoys the Divine sanction. We should hardly have had twelve verses of Scripture devoted to the description of the lavers and their bases, had not God Himself approved of the washing of "the work of the burnt offering" (2 Chron. iv. 6, Heb.)

Hence we may learn—

I. That Christian priests *must* be washed.

II. That Christian sacrifices *should* be cleansed.

I. CHRISTIAN PRIESTS MUST BE WASHED. Here two questions arise. (1) *Who are Christian priests?* (2) *What is this washing?*

1. By *Christian priests* we may understand here all Christians. For all Christians *are* priests, precisely as all Jews were priests (cf. 1 Peter ii. 5, 9, with Exod. xix. 6). Of course, there is a priesthood among Christians, just as there was a priesthood among the Jews (see page 113). It is often said, and said truly, that the word *ιερεύς*, *sacerdos*, is nowhere applied to the ministers of the New Testament; but the answer is that it *could* not have been so applied, so long as the Levitical priesthood existed, without risk of confusion. It is also true that the functions of the Christian presbyterate are very, very different from those of the Jewish priesthood; but all the same, if Christianity is filling up, and not the reversal or the negation of Judaism (Col. ii. 17; Matt. v. 17), then, assuredly, it must not only have its altar, (Heb. xiii. 10), but its priesthood. But let us understand the word here of the body of believers: for clearly, if we can prove that *all* Christians must be washed, how much more those who minister in holy things, and bear the vessels of the Lord? (Isa. lii. 11.)

2. By *Christian washing* we may understand, primarily, THE washing (*καὶ ἕξιψη*) of the New Testament, "the washing of regeneration" (Titus iii. 5; cf. 1 Cor. vi. 11; Eph. v. 26; Heb. x. 22; cf. vi. 2). For to all Christians is the command addressed, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins" (Acts xxii. 16; cf. ch. ii. 38). Of all may our holy Lord be heard to say, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me" (John xiii. 8; cf. iii. 5; Mark xvi. 16).

But is this all? Are we only to find here a lesson as to Christian baptism? Certainly not. For observe, (1) by baptism, the initial rite of our religion, men are *made* priests (Rev. i. 5, 6). (2) The washing of the priests was a washing of the *hands and the feet* (Exod. xxx. 19); and (3) it was to be *repeated* as often as they "went into the tabernacle of the congregation or" came near unto the altar (ver. 20; ch. xl. 32). Clearly, then, the "one baptism" of Christianity cannot respond to this exclusively. No; that rather corresponds to the washing of the whole person (Levit. xvi. 4, 24), which the Rabbins say was performed in the molten sea, or in its basin; but which may possibly have been performed in private. That there *was* such complete ablution on the part of the priests needs no proof; it is presupposed in the directions about the hands and feet. It would have been mockery to wash the extremities of the body, while the body itself remain unclean. But the priest who went to the temple pure might, perhaps, contract some defilement on the way; the exposed parts, the hands and the feet, might be stained and so become unfit for the service of the All-Holy. It was for this the molten sea was provided, and this helps to illustrate our Lord's words, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet" (John xiii. 10). Even so we, though, as St. Paul says, we "*were* washed" (*ἠμελοὐσασθε*, aor.) "in the laver of regeneration," have sullied our baptismal robes in our passage through and contact with the world (James iii. 2), and need, day by day, cleansing and forgiveness (Matt. vi. 12). The text teaches, then, that we are unfit for the service of the Most Pure until we have washed our *hands and feet*; until, *i. e.*, we are purged from the soils and stains of this wicked world. Not only must "our bodies be washed with pure water," our "hearts" must also be "sprinkled from an evil conscience," before we can draw near with acceptance to

God (Heb. x. 22). "I cannot pray, but I sin; I cannot hear, or preach a sermon, but I sin; I cannot give an alms or receive the sacrament, but I sin; nay, I cannot so much as confess my sins, but my very confessions are still aggravations of them; my repentance needs to be repented of, my tears want washing, and the very washing of my tears needs still to be washed over again in the blood of my Redeemer" (Bp. Beveridge).

What, then, let us now ask, is the "sea," what the "laver," for the washing away of these daily sins and defilements? It is a fountain of blood ("Not by water only, but by water and blood," 1 John v. 6); it is the other sacrament of our religion, the "blood of the new covenant shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. xxvi. 28). "The one baptism for the remission of sins" (Nicene Creed) cannot apply to the sins of later life. For this, other provision is needed, and in the mercy of God other provision is made in the sacrament of love and the ministry of reconciliation. (Cf. also Matt. xvi. 19; xviii. 18; John xx. 23; Matt. xxviii. 20.)

But here one word of caution may possibly be needful. It must not be supposed for a moment that there is any other source or ground of cleansing and forgiveness than the free, unmerited mercy of God in Christ; that there is any hope for the sinner except in the "full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction" once made by the one Saviour "for the sins of the whole world;" or that any rites or ordinances can have any virtue or efficacy apart from His meritorious death and His now victorious life. The sacraments are not, cannot be, the *sources* or the *grounds* of forgiveness, nor do they work like a charm—*ex opere operato*. But in the all-wise appointment of God, they are the *means* of grace, the *channels* through which His infinite mercy *ordinarily* flows (*gratia non ligatur mediis*) to the penitent and believing soul.

Nor must it be supposed that the generous provision made by God for the cleansing of all sin obviates the need for striving against sin (Heb. xii. 4). We are to "*cleanse ourselves* from all filthiness of flesh and spirit" (2 Cor. vii. 1). We are to "*purify ourselves, even as He is pure*" (1 John iii. 3). The priests of the Holy God must "live a clean life" (Wyclif).

II. CHRISTIAN SACRIFICES SHOULD BE CLEANSED. Here again two questions arise. (1) What are Christian sacrifices? (2) How can they be cleansed?

1. *Christian sacrifices.* Those which all Christian men are ordained to offer (1 Peter ii. 8) are these—(1) The living sacrifice of body and soul (Rom. xii. 1). (2) The sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving (Heb. xiii. 15). (3) The sacrifice of alms and oblations (Heb. xiii. 16; Phil. iv. 18).

2. The *Cleansing* of these sacrifices is that which takes place in a "pure heart and good conscience." It is a matter of motive, of *intention*. The quality of the sacrifice depends on the spirit of the sacrificer. It is a sacrifice, howsoever offered—there is such a thing as "the sacrifice of fools" (Eccles. v. 1)—but it may be, and often is, a maimed, or unclean, or unworthy sacrifice. If our praise, for example, be prompted by the love of music rather than the love of God; if our alms be offered for the praise of men (Matt. vi. 1) and not "for His name's sake," then the sacrifice is unclean. The Christian priest, consequently, should "interrogate his heart"—"*Interroge viscera tua*" (Augustine)—before he enters on Divine service. It has been well said that we ought to wash our prayers and praises in our hearts before we put them into our lips. The customary "prayer before service" and the self-examination before communion (1 Cor. xi. 28), if made more real, would ensure the cleansing of the sacrifice. (Compare James i. 27.)

Ver. 46.—*The Clay Ground in the circuit of the Jordan.* These things are an allegory. These words suggest some thoughts as to the soil in which the King of Heaven moulds the vessels for His service (2 Tim. ii. 20, 21; Acts ix. 15; Rom. ix. 21, 23). They, too, are prepared in the *plain*: they are cast in the *clay ground*.

Observe (1) that both *pillars* and *vessels, i.e.,* Jachin and Boaz, as well as "the pots and the shovels and the basins," were cast in this same clay ground. In the two pillars we may fitly see for our present purpose emblems of those two "*pillars and basements of the truth*" (1 Tim. iii. 15), the Jewish and Christian churches:

in the vessels, emblems of those "*vessels* unto honour," the "messengers of the churches," Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, &c. (2 Cor. viii. 23; Acts ix. 15). We shall find that the great Master Builder has prepared them all in the *plain*; that all alike have been moulded in the *clay*.

As to the *plain*, the figure is obvious enough, and a few words will suffice to expound it. From the Mesopotamian immigrants into Palestine, the first fathers of the Jewish people, down to the peasants and fishermen of Galilee, aye, and to the poor monk, Luther, and the poor servitor, Whitfield, history constantly teaches the same lesson—that not many wise men or mighty or noble (1 Cor. i. 26) are the vessels chosen of Heaven to do God's work in the world. The apostles did not issue forth from "king's houses" (Matt. xi. 8). Just as "the gentle rain from heaven" leaves the mountains and descends into the vales, so does the grace of God ever condescend to men of low degree. Not "the princes of this world" (1 Cor. ii. 8), not its rich men (James ii. 6), but the "poor of this world" hath God chosen (ib. ver. 5). "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?" (Joh. vii. 48). No, it was the "common people"—the despised *amhaaretz*—"heard him gladly" (Mark xii. 37). The early adversaries of Christianity used to sneer at the humble origin and occupations of its champions, and the apologists would not and could not deny the charge.

Now as to the "*clay ground*," observe that while the text gives this rendering, the margin has, "*thickness of the ground*." It is not a distinction without a difference, for the latter rendering would import that the soil had been *made* thick, for the purpose of casting, by stamping or puddling. And which of these translations is the true one; whether, *i.e.*, the soil was naturally clayey—perhaps from the overflow of the Jordan (Josh. iii. 15, Heb.), perhaps from the springs which make much of the Jordan valley into a swamp (Conder, pp. 226—229)—or whether it was artificially prepared for castings, it is perhaps impossible to say. Nor need we wish to decide, since for our purpose both meanings are true. Whatever Hiram did, God casts His vessels, some in the clay, *i.e.*, in the most unpromising soil, with the most ungenial surroundings; some "in the thickness of the ground," *i.e.*, in soil which has been trodden by the iron feet of the persecutor; and some in both.

I. Let us now see how (1) THE CHURCHES—we regard them as two for our present purpose, though strictly the Christian *ἐκκλησία* is but the development of the Jewish (see p. 112)—and (2) THEIR MESSENGERS have both been prepared in the *clay ground*. But first, let us carry our thoughts to that foundry in the Jordan valley. We now assume that it was a bed of clay in which the castings were made. If so, it is probable this tract of land had hitherto laid waste. The ox had not drawn the plough through it; it had yielded neither seed to the sower, nor bread to the eater; the farmer had not planted it with olive or vine. And in a land so small—Palestine is about the same size as Wales—and so densely populated as the Holy Land; in a country where every available yard was cultivated, and where even the steep hill sides were laid out in terraces to increase the acreage; in a land, too, of great fertility (Deut. viii. 7—9)—for the whole realm was remarkably prolific, and "the plain of the Jordan" was the garden of the whole (Gen. xiii. 10)—this barren tract could not fail to be noticed. It had long been an eyesore, we may well believe, to the *fellahin* who tilled the neighbouring fields. The traveller who passed it on his way to the fords of the Jordan (Judg. viii. 5; xii. 6; Gen. xxxiii. 17) pronounced it unprofitable, and altogether it was "nigh unto cursing" (Heb. vi. 8).

And so it lay, century after century, a marsh, or piece of scrub, a blot on the landscape. Men thought it was irreclaimable. But now the temple is being built, the vessels of brass have to be cast, and through the length and breadth of Palestine they find no spot so suited to the purpose as the "clay ground between Succoth and Zarthan." Here shall the foundry be. And so from this despised and desolate tract the burnished brass went forth to adorn the temple of the Lord. Even so—

1. *The Jewish Church was moulded in the clay.* Where was it constituted? In the desert of Sinai, in the "great and terrible wilderness." In the Red Sea was its baptism (1 Cor. x. 2); at Horeb (lit., *dry ground*) it entered into the covenant. From the "backside of the desert," from the plain of *Rahah*, where "desolation

keeps unbroken sabbath;” from a “frozen tempest of black, weather-worn, rugged mountain peaks,” the Hebrew Church went forth to witness for God. Nowhere, perhaps, under the whole heaven is there a more arid and rugged and desolate and uninhabitable land. Yet God chose it to be the school and training ground of His Church.

2. *The Christian Church was cast in the clay.* Not in Greece, amid the schools of philosophy, not in Rome, among senates, and armies, and subject kings, but in Palestine, a despised corner of the empire, among Jews, who were hated of all men. And in what part of Palestine? Not in Jerusalem, among the scribes and doctors, but in the provinces, in “Galilee of the Goim.” The question was often asked, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? (John i. 46.) The answer was often given, “Out of Galilee ariseth no prophet” (John vii. 52). Surely this was clay ground. Yet there it pleased God to found the Holy Catholic Church. And this, which is true of the Church, is equally true of its vessels. For—

3. *The lawgivers and prophets of the Jewish Church were shaped in the clay.* Moses, it is true, was bred in the court, but he was not prepared there for his work. No, it was necessary for him to *leave* the court in order to become a “vessel meet for the Master’s use.” It was in this same desert of Sinai, amid the Bedouin, while keeping an Arab’s flock, and leading a nomadic life, after forty years of solitude, that God appeared unto him. The lawgiver himself came from the clay. So did Elijah, the restorer of the law. He was a Gileadite. It was a wild, unsettled, semi-civilized, trans-Jordanic region gave to the world the greatest of the prophets. And he too must go into the desert, and must be trained for his work at Horeb—the “dry ground” (1 Kings xix. 8). And the same remark applies to nearly all the prophets, judges, &c. Occasionally we have a Jeremiah, the son of a high priest (Jer. i. 1), or a Daniel of the royal seed (Dan. i. 3), but more frequently a herdman, a gatherer of sycamore fruit (Amos vii. 14; 1 Kings xix. 19), or a captive by the river Chebar (Ezek. i. 3), rises up to speak for God.

4. *The apostles and preachers of Christianity were fashioned and prepared in clay ground.* (1) The founder of Christianity was well called a “root out of a dry ground” (Isa. liii. 2). “Is not this the carpenter’s son?” (Matt. xiii. 55). “Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph” (John i. 45). “How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?” (*ib.* vii. 15.) (2) The apostles, too, came from the fisherman’s boat at Bethsaida (John i. 44), and from the receipt of custom (Matt. ix. 9) in Capernaum. Only one out of the entire college had studied in the schools (Acts xii. 3). They were justly described as “ignorant and unlearned men” (*ib.* iv. 13). (3) And the same may be said of nearly all the early Christians and confessors. It was a most unpromising and unlikely soil in which the Church first took root. “Publicans and sinners.” M. Renan has given a graphic description of the early Christians of Rome—a “longshore population,” sleeping on the straw, “clad in malodorous stable slops,” “smelling of garlic,” “with fetid breath like that of ill-fed people,” &c. It is not improbable that the bulk of the early Christians were men of this sort, tentmakers like Aquila, slaves like Onesimus, gaolers like him of Philippi, soldiers like those of Cæsar’s household. And eighteen centuries have only served to establish more firmly the truth that “not many mighty,” &c. It is curious and suggestive that so many of the saints of the Roman calendar are said to have been of noble birth. It is easy thus to glorify *dead* saints, but if, with Chateaubriand, we ask to see *living* ones, we frequently find them in the homes of the poor, and almost invariably amid cares, worries, temptations, hindrances, persecutions of every kind. The saints are still fashioned in the clay.

II. But let us now assume that this foundry of the Jordan valley was not a bed of natural clay, but that the soil had been prepared by stamping. We shall find that both (1) the Churches and (2) the messengers of the Churches have been prepared “in the thickness of the ground,” under the heel of persecution and oppression. And first of the Churches.

1. *The Jewish Church came out of the house of bondage.* “Out of the iron furnace” (Deut. iv. 20; 1 Kings viii. 51: cf. Exod. v.) “Dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers” (Acts vii. 19). It was among the brick-

*fields*—the thick Nile mud—of Egypt, and their hardships and oppressions, that God disciplined and prepared His people.

2. *The Christian Church has come out of great tribulation.* Its history begins with a shameful crucifixion, and it is a history written in blood, a history of "stripes" (Acts xvi. 23; 2 Cor. vi. 5), beatings (Acts v. 40), stonings (*ib.* vii. 59; xiv. 19), the sword (*ib.* xii. 2), "great persecution" (*ib.* viii. 1), and the like. Nero, Decius, Aurelian, Diocletian—what tragedies are connected with these names! Yet "the blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the Church," and in the reign of Constantine the empire awoke to find itself Christian. Persecution only evolved progress (Phil. i. 12, 13). And what is true of the pillars is also true of the vessels. For—

3. *The heroes of the Jewish Church passed through fire and sword.* Moses must flee his country, must learn obedience by the things which he suffered. Elijah—they sought his life (1 Kings xix. 10). Jezebel sought to slay the prophets of the Lord. Daniel is cast into the lions' den; the Hebrew children into the fire; Jeremiah into the mire and clay (Jer. xxxviii. 6). Isaiah is sawn asunder (Heb. xi. 37). Zechariah is slain between the temple and the altar, &c. See Heb. xi. 34—38. What evidences of stamping are here! Surely the ground bears the marks of a struggle!

4. *The saints of the new dispensation have been made perfect through suffering.* For St. Paul, see 2 Cor. xi. 23—33, and remember that this list only extends, at the latest, to A.D. 58. That "chosen vessel" was first showed "what great things he must suffer" (Acts ix. 16). For the early Christians see Rev. ii. 10. 13; vi. 10; vii. 14, &c.; 1 Cor. iv. 13; 2 Cor. vi. 5—10. Polycarp, Augustine, Cyprian, Chrysostom—the time would fail me to tell of those bright vessels of grace, some in the dark ages, some in our own time, who were prepared for the ministry and the inheritance of the saints in "the thickness of the ground," and who, "after they had suffered awhile," were made perfect.

#### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 21.—*Jachin and Boaz.* No features in Solomon's temple have given rise to so much controversy as these two famous pillars; the beauty of which Jewish writers are never tired of recounting. They were marvels of the glyptic skill for which the Phœnician workmen were distinguished. Homer speaks of such metallic work. In II. xxiii. 741—744, he thus describes the prize assigned by Achilles for the foot-race at the funeral of Patroclus—

"A bowl of solid silver, deftly wrought,  
That held six measures, and in beauty far  
Surpassed whatever else the world could boast;  
Since men of Sidon, skilled in glyptic art,  
Had made it, and Phœnician mariners  
Had brought it with them over the dark sea."

(See also his description of Menelaus' gift to Telemachus, Od. iv. 614—618.) Hiram, the Phœnician artificer, lent by the king of Tyre to Solomon, was specially skilled in such work (2 Chron. ii. 14). "In the plain of Jordan, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zarthan," he cast these two great bronze pillars, each  $17\frac{1}{2}$  cubits high, with capitals five cubits high, adorned with pomegranates, and "nets of checker-work, and wreaths of chain-work." They were placed on the right and left of the porch of the temple, and probably were not obelisks, but were necessary as "pillars" to support the roof, which was thirty feet in width. That these were symbolic is evident from their names, which may be rendered, "Stability" and "Strength." The reference is not so much to the material building, but to the kingdom of God in Israel, which was embodied in the temple. They pointed then, and now, to the beauty and strength of the dwelling of God.

I. THE FASHIONING OF THE PILLARS. Made of bronze cast in the earth. None

but the initiated would expect such an issue from such a process. Picture the anxiety of those in charge when the mould was constructed, when the metal was molten, &c. Apply to the anxiety and care of those rearing the spiritual temple.

1. *They were the product of human skill.* This skill was devoutly recognized as the gift of God. Compare ver. 14 with the description of Bezaleel's artistic "gifts." If wisdom of that kind is from God, how much more is the highest wisdom needed for the upbuilding of the true temple (1 Cor. iii. 12—17). Turn to the promises of the Holy Spirit to the apostles, and of wisdom to all who seek. Refer to times of difficulty and anxiety in which only this heavenly help could avail the teachers and rulers of the Church. Observe such expressions as that in which Paul speaks of himself as "a wise master builder." Indicate special gifts still required by those who succeed to this work. "If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God," &c.

2. *They were the result of marvellous diligence.* Years and generations of effort had made these artificers what they were, and now daily they applied themselves to their toil, nor was it without reward. Nothing great can be attained in this world without work. God has not made things pleasant by ordaining that the way to them should be easy, but He has made them precious by ordaining that the way should be hard. The hardships endured by miners, pearl divers, agricultural labourers, &c. The strenuous toil of the student, the man of business, the explorer, the scientist, &c. No wonder that in the highest sphere diligence is essential. It is required for the upbuilding of our Christian character; e.g., "Give diligence to make your calling . . . sure," &c. "Work out your own salvation," &c., "Not as though I had already attained," &c. Similar diligence is required by the Church for the evangelization of the world. Contrast the diligence shown in other pursuits with the indolence in this.

3. *They were the product of combined effort.* The wealth of Solomon was added to the skill of Hiram. Observe the diversity of workmen essential for the designing, moulding, fashioning, uprearing of these pillars. Each did his own work, did it heartily, completely. All was not equally honourable, easy, remunerative; yet none neglected his share of the toil. Speak of the millions now constructing God's spiritual temple; how the various races of men, how the differing sects of Christians, how the peculiar tastes and gifts of individuals, are rearing "the house not made with hands," "the habitation of God, through the Spirit."

II. THE SYMBOLISM OF THE PILLARS. 1. *Stability* (Jachin). In this the temple was a contrast to the tabernacle. Yet even the temple and all that was material of the old worship passed away to make room for the spiritual realities which abide eternally. In Hebrews (xii. 27) we read of "the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain." Show how, amidst the fall of empires, the Church has lived, in spite of all that evil powers could do (Matt. xvi. 18). Speak of the safety, for time and eternity, of those who are in Christ (John x. 28), &c.

2. *Strength.* The Church needs more than endurance, it wants vigour. Resistance must be supplemented by aggression. Far more than the Jewish Church the Christian Church is to be characterized by this. The apostles were not merely to hold their own, but to go "into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Only the active Church, only the active Christian, has a robust and wholesome life. Let "Boaz" stand beside "Jachin."

3. *Beauty.* The lilies and pomegranates adorning the pillars not only showed that there should be beauty in the *worship* of God, and that the noblest art should be consecrated to Him, but symbolized the truth declared in Psa. xcvi. 6, "Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary." Strength needs beauty to adorn it. Beauty needs strength to support it. Illustration: the ivy clustering round the oak. Let the courageous man be gentle; the stalwart man tender; the sweet girl morally strong, &c. If we would have it so, we shall find those graces in the holy place of God, the sacred place of prayer, whether public or secret, for strength and beauty are in His sanctuary. Emblems of stability and strength, yet exquisite in their beauty, let Jachin and Boaz, in the porch of the temple, remind us of what God would see in the Christian Church, and in every Christian character.—A. B.

## EXPOSITION.

## CHAPTER VIII. 1—66.

**THE DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE.**—The stately and impressive service with which the Temple, the character and contents of which have now been described, was dedicated, is related in this chapter, and divides itself into four sections. We have (1) the removal of the ark and Solomon's ascription of praise on the occasion (vers. 1—22). (2) The prayer of consecration (vers. 23—54). (3) The benediction of the congregation (vers. 55—61), and (4) the festal sacrifices which followed on and completed the dedication (vers. 62—66). The inaugural rites, it is clear, were on a scale corresponding with the magnitude and renown of the undertaking (1 Chron. xxii. 5).

SECTION I.—*The Removal of the Ark.*

**Ver. 1.**—Then [*i.e.*, when the work of the house of the Lord was practically ended, as stated in ch. vii. 51. But the precise date of the dedication is a matter of dispute and uncertainty. We know that it took place in the seventh month of the year, but of what year we cannot be so sure. Was it the same year in the eighth month of which (ch. vi. 38) the house was finished (Ewald)? Was the dedication, that is to say, one month anterior to the completion of the house and its appointments? Or are we to understand "the seventh month" to mean the Eihanim of the following year (Bähr)? are we to assign the dedication, that is, to a date eleven months after completion? Or, finally, are we to believe with the Vat. LXX. *μετά τρεῖς ἔτη* (the LXX. text is here, however, in great confusion), that the temple was not dedicated until the palaces were also built (see ch. ix. 1—9); are we to hold, *i.e.*, that though finished and ready for use, it remained unused for a period of thirteen years (Thenius, Keil)? These are questions which we cannot perhaps answer with absolute certainty, but, to my mind, every consideration is in favour of the date first mentioned, *i.e.*, the seventh month of the eleventh year of Solomon's reign. It is true Bähr says that this opinion "needs no refutation," while Keil pronounces it "directly at variance with chap. vii. 51." But it is worth while to inquire whether this is so? And, first, as to the bearing of the passage just cited, "So was ended all the work which," &c., taken in connexion with ch.

viii. 1, "Then Solomon assembled," &c. To the cursory reader it appears no doubt as if this "then" must refer to the completion of the work of which we have just heard, and which was not effected until the eighth month of the year (ch. vi. 38). But (1) *אָז* though probably a mark of time (= *tunc*), is clearly a word of great latitude of meaning, and may apply as well to one month before completion (the time specified in ch. vii. 51) as to eleven months after; and (2) it would be quite consistent with the *usus loquendi* of the sacred writers to describe the temple as finished, when in reality it was incomplete in a few minor particulars (*De minimis non curat scriptura*). Further more, if the temple was finished in every detail, and in all its furniture and appointments, in the eighth month, as we learn from ch. vi. 38, we may be perfectly sure it would or could be practically finished—finished so as to be ready for consecration—by the seventh month. Indeed, it is not an unreasonable presumption, that it hardly would be perfect and complete on the day of dedication. Those who have built or restored churches, not to speak of cathedrals, which would perhaps afford a closer analogy to the temple, know how extremely difficult, if not impossible, it is to have every detail finished and arranged for the day of consecration. Some few accidental omissions will have to be supplied afterwards, or experience will suggest certain alterations and improvements which have to be made. There is no inherent improbability, therefore, that the temple should be dedicated in the seventh month, though it was not finished *לְכֹל דְּבָרָיו* until the eighth month, *i.e.*, three or four weeks later. And there was a strong reason why the dedication should take place at the earliest possible date. There had been a long period of preparation, extending back into the preceding reign (1 Chron. xxviii., xxix.); the dedication consequently had long been eagerly looked for; moreover, the erection had evidently been hurried forward, a prodigious number of labourers having been employed in order to expedite the work. It is almost inconceivable, therefore, that, after these energetic measures had been taken, either the king or the nation should have been content to wait thirteen years—nearly twice the time it had taken to build the temple—until the palaces, which were entirely independent and secular buildings, were also completed. If the great national sanctuary, which was the glory of the land, was ready for use, as we know it was, we

can hardly believe, considering the natural eagerness and impatience of men, that the tribes of Israel, or their ambitious monarch, would, of their own choice, defer the consecration for an indefinite number of years. It would appear consequently that it is the view that the dedication was postponed for thirteen years "hardly needs discussion" (see below on ch. ix. 1). And the same considerations apply, though perhaps with diminished force, to their waiting one year. For if it be said that the delay was occasioned by the desire to connect the dedication with the feast of tabernacles, which was *par excellence* the feast of the year (נִתְּנָה) the answer is that it is more likely that the work would be hurried on by the employment of additional hands, if need be, or that the edifice would be consecrated, though not complete in all its details, at the feast of the eleventh year, than that, for the sake of one month, they should wait eleven months. And if the objection be raised that a feeling of religious awe would forbid the dedication of an imperfect building, or of a perfect building with imperfect arrangements, it is easy to reply that both building and furniture may have been practically complete, and may have been believed at the time to be perfect, but that the experience of the first few days suggested a few alterations or additions which threw the completion of the work in all its particulars into the eighth month. It is worthy of notice that Josephus distinctly states that the dedication was in the seventh month of the eighth year (Ant.

viii. 4. 1) Solomon assembled (נִתְּנָה). See Ewald, 233 b) the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the chief [Heb. *princes*] of the fathers of the children of Israel. [This great assembly (compare Dan. iii. 2) can hardly be said to have been suggested to Solomon by the precedent afforded by David (Keil), when bringing up the ark (2 Sam. vi. 1), for it was only natural that he should summon the representatives of the people to witness an event of such profound importance in the national history, as the dedication, after years of waiting (2 Sam. vii. 6—13), of a national sanctuary intended to supersede the tabernacle, at which for five centuries their forefathers had worshipped. And the more so, as they had been called together by David to consult about the erection (1 Chron. xxviii. 1), and had offered willingly of their treasures (ib. xxix. 6—9) towards its decoration. It is inconceivable, therefore, that the temple of the Jews could have been formally opened, except in the presence of the "elders and heads of the tribes." Nor can we (with Rawlinson) see a contrast between

the more popular proceedings of David, who "gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, *thirty thousand* (2 Sam. vi. 1), and the stately, more aristocratic system of his son, who merely summons the chief men;" for Solomon's "elders," &c. (Deut. xvi. 18; 1 Sam. xvi. 4; xxx. 26—31), may well have equalled David's "chosen men" in number. It is quite likely that there was more formality and stateliness in this latter case, but it was practically the same class of persons, *i.e.*, the leading men by birth, talents, or prowess, that were present on both occasions. In fact, it was the Jewish Church by representation] unto King Solomon in Jerusalem, that they might bring up [Heb. *to bring up*] the ark of the covenant of the Lord [so called because it contained the tables of the covenant which the Lord made with the children of Israel (ver. 9). The temple being really, or principally, a receptacle for the ark, the removal of this venerated relic to its place in the oracle is narrated first, as being of the first importance] out of the city of David, which is Zion. [Cf. 2 Sam. vi. 12, 17.]

Ver. 2.—And all the men of Israel [not all the heads of the tribes just mentioned (ver. 1), as Keil, but all who came to the feast, as every male Israelite was under obligation to do (Deut. xvi. 16)] assembled themselves unto King Solomon at the feast [the Heb. word נִתְּנָה (with the art.) always means the feast of tabernacles. The same word is used of the feast of passover (Exod. xxiii. 15) and pentecost (ib. ver. 16), but "the feast" here can only mean that of tabernacles. As the "feast of ingathering" (Exod. xxiii. 16), as commemorating the deliverance from Egypt (Levit. xxiii. 43), and as peculiarly a social festival (ib. vers. 40—42; Num. xxix. 12 sqq.), it was the most joyous as well as the greatest (ἡγορῆ ἀγυωρῆν καὶ μεγίστην. Jos., Ant. viii. 4. 1) gathering of the year. (Compare the Jewish saying of a later date: "He who has never seen the rejoicing at the pouring out of the water of Siloam, has never seen rejoicing in his life.") It was doubtless for this reason that tabernacles was selected for the dedication. A special feast of dedication, however, was held for seven days before the feast of tabernacles proper commenced (see on ver. 65). It did not displace that great feast, however (Stnley), but simply preceded it. It is worthy of notice that Jeroboam selected the same feast (ch. xii. 32) for the inauguration of his new cultus. The idea of Josephus, that the feast of tabernacles "happened to coincide with the dedication" hardly seems probable] in the month Ethanim [variously interpreted to mean *gifts*, *i.e.*, fruits (Themius), *flowing streams* (Gesenius)—it

falls about the time of the early rains—and *equinox* (Böttcher)], which is the seventh month. [This is added because the month was subsequently known as Tisri (see on ch. vi. 1), or to show that “the feast” was the feast of tabernacles.]

Ver. 3.—And all the elders of Israel came [Not a mere repetition. The men who were summoned to Jerusalem (ver. 1) were all present, of their own accord, to witness the removal], and the priests took up the ark. [In the parallel account in 2 Chron. v. 4, we read that “the Levites took up the ark.” But there is no contradiction, as has been too readily supposed. For ver. 7 of the Chronicles, “the priests brought in the ark,” &c., confirms the statement of the text. And the explanation is suggested in ver. 5 of the same chapter, “These did the priests, the Levites (so the Heb.) bring up.” Same expression in Josh. iii. 3. All the priests were Levites—Keil translates, “the Levitical priests”—and this somewhat singular expression is no doubt used to remind us that such was the case. Nor need it cause us any surprise to find the priests employed in this service. It is true that the ark was given into the charge of the Kohathite Levites (Num. iii. 30, 31); and it was their duty to bear it (*ib.* iv. 15; vii. 9; x. 21; cf. 1 Chron. xv. 2, 11, 12). But the real care and supervision of the ark always belonged to the sons of Aaron. It was their office, *e.g.*, to put on or take off the covering of the ark and of the vessels, which the Levites were forbidden directly to touch (Num. iv. 5—15). It was quite in accordance with the *spirit* of these provisions that Solomon now entrusted the carriage of the ark to the superior order. But more than that, Solomon was not without precedent to justify his choice. Indeed, we may see in his selection of the priests a minute mark of truth, amounting almost to an undesigned coincidence. For we find that on occasions of extraordinary solemnity—at the crossing of the Jordan, *e.g.* (Josh. iii. 6, 15, 17), and at the siege of Jericho (Josh. vi. 6), the priests had borne the ark (cf. 1 Sam. iv. 4; 1 Chron. xv. 11, 12). It was no doubt these familiar precedents guided Solomon, or the ecclesiastical authorities, in their selection of the priests on this occasion. A “settled place,” a “house of cedars” (2 Sam. vii. 7), “having now been found for the ark” to abide in, after it had “dwelt in curtains” for 500 years, it was taking its last journey, and in order to mark this journey as exceptional, in order to show both the ark and the house the greater reverence, it was determined that it should be borne for the last time by the priests. Keil suggests that the ark may

have been uncovered, but this is very improbable. Why, we may ask, were coverings provided, and their use prescribed (Num. iv. 5—15), if they were to be arbitrarily dispensed with? He also adds that Levites were not allowed to enter the most holy place. But neither, it may be added, was this lawful for the priests. Levites and priests might enter that day, because the house was not then dedicated. The cloud (ver. 10) claimed it for God.

Ver. 4.—And they brought up the ark of the Lord [which had now been for nearly 40 years “in the tabernacle that David had pitched for it” on the Mount Zion (2 Sam. vi. 17)], and the tabernacle of the congregation [Heb. “the tabernacle of meeting” (Exod. xxix. 42, 46. See Dict. Bib. ii. p. 1414; Bähr, Symbolik, i. 80, 81). This had been for many years at Gibeon. (Cf. ch. iii. 4; 2 Chron. i. 3; 1 Chron. xvi. 39. See note on ch. iii. 4.) The tabernacle of Mount Zion is never called “the tabernacle of the congregation”—indeed, it is expressly distinguished from it, 2 Chron. i. 3, 4. The ark and the tabernacle were now reunited in the temple of Solomon, thus “marking the identity and continuity of the life and ritual of the Hebrew Church” (Wordsworth)], and all the holy vessels that were in the tabernacle [Perhaps the brazen altar. Certainly the altar of incense, the table of shewbread, the candlestick, and also the brazen serpent (Stanley)], even those did the priests and Levites bring up. [We are hardly justified in saying (as Keil, *al.*) that the Levites carried all but the ark. The text rather favours the view that the priests assisted in bringing up the tabernacle and its furniture. So 2 Chron. v. 5. Neither the tabernacle nor its vessels were designed for further use in the temple; the latter had been replaced by vessels better suited to the enlarged sanctuary—they were simply preserved, so far as we know, as relics of the past, in the treasury or side-chambers.]

Ver. 5.—And king Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel, that were assembled unto him were with him, before the ark [Prayers and sacrifices alike were offered toward the mercy seat (Psa. xxviii. 2; cf. Exod. xxv. 22)], sacrificing sheep and oxen [apparently the ark rested *en route* (cf. 2 Sam. vi. 13) whilst the sacrifices were offered. The object of the sacrifice was to testify the grateful joy of the people at the proximate realization of their hopes. There may have been also in the background the idea of averting the Divine anger, of making a propitiation for possible errors and imperfections in their service. There were tragedies connected with the removal of the ark in time past (1 Sam. iv. 17; vi. 19; 2 Sam.

vi. 7) which, we may be sure, were not altogether forgotten on this occasion] that could not be told or numbered for multitude. [Cf. 2 Sam. vi. 13. But the sacrifices on that occasion were on a much smaller scale (1 Chron. xv. 26). Josephus adds (Ant. viii. 4. 1), that a vast quantity of incense was burnt, and that men preceded the ark, singing and dancing, until it reached its destination].

Ver. 6.—And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant unto his [i.e., its. But this word is never found in the A. V. It has come into use since the date of our translation] place [cf. ch. vi. 19] into the oracle of the house, to the most holy place [Heb. *holy of holies*], even under the wings of the cherubims [ch. vi. 27. Whether the ark stood with its length east and west, or north and south, it is somewhat difficult to decide. But see on ver. 8].

Ver 7.—For the cherubims spread forth their two wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubims covered [כָּסְפוּ from כָּסַף, *tezt*; hence כֶּסֶף, *booth*; LXX. περιεκάλυπτον, i.e., overshadowed and concealed. This word is of some importance as showing that the ark would thenceforward and always be in complete darkness, under the outstretched wings of the cherubim—a fact which suggests the true explanation of the following verse] the ark and the staves thereof above [Heb. *from above*].

Ver. 8.—And they drew out [It is uncertain whether כָּסְפוּ is transitive, as our A. V. renders it, and as in ch. iii. 14 = *lengthen*, in which case, however, it should almost be followed by מִן, or intransitive, as in Exod. xx. 12; Deut. v. 16; xxv. 15, when the meaning would be, “The staves were long,” but the latter rendering has the support of most scholars. As the oracle in the tabernacle was a cube of ten cubits, they cannot have been more than eight or nine cubits, and it is doubtful whether, the ark being only 2½ cubits, they would be so long. Their length is mentioned in order to account for the ends being seen. It is immaterial to the meaning of the passage, however, which interpretation we put upon this verb. If we adhere to the A. V. then we must understand that, as it was forbidden to remove the staves from the rings at the corners of the ark (Exod. xxv. 12—15), they drew the staves forward towards one end of the ark; that they removed the staves altogether from the ark (Stanley is a view to which the text lends no support) the staves, that the ends [Heb. *heads*. It is possible the ends of the staves were fitted with knobs. This would prevent their removal] of the staves were seen out in

[Heb. *from*] the holy place [Marg. *ark*, the word found in the Chron. v. 9. It is questionable, however, whether שָׁרְפוֹת is ever used, by itself, of the ark (Gesens. Thesaurus, s.v.) It may be used of the most holy place (see on ver. 10), but here it would appear to designate the הַיָּקֹל (ch. vi. 17), the body or “temple of the house” (Exod. xxvi. 33; Heb. ix. 2). Its meaning appears to be so defined by the next words] before the oracle [i.e., a person standing in the holy place, but at the west end, near the entrance to the oracle (ch. vi. 31), could see the ends of the staves. Several questions of considerable nicety suggest themselves here. 1. What was the position of the ark? Did it stand, that is to say, east and west, or north and south under the wings of the cherubim? 2. What was the position of the staves? Were they attached to the ends or to the sides of the ark? 3. How could the ends of the staves be seen, and by whom and when—on the occasion of the dedication only or in later years? 4. Why has our author recorded this circumstance? As to 1, the balance of evidence is in favour of the ark having stood north and south, in a line, that is, with the wings of the cherubim. For (1) only thus apparently could the cherubim have “covered the ark and the staves thereof.” (2) If it had been otherwise, the “cherubim overshadowing the mercy seat,” presuming that they were retained in the temple, would have had an unequal and one-sided position, for instead of being equally prominent, they would have stood, one with the back, the other with the face to the entrance and the holy place. (3) Had the ark stood east and west the projecting staves would surely have been in the high priest’s way in the performance of his solemn functions (Levit. xvi. 12—15). That they served to guide him to the mercy seat is of course mere conjecture, and as such of no weight. 2. As to the staves, Josephus states (Ant. iii. 7. 5) that they ran along the *sides* of the ark, and this would appear to be the natural and proper arrangement. It follows hence again that they cannot have been more than eight or nine cubits long, inasmuch as they found a place between the bodies of the cherubim, which cannot have been more than nine cubits apart. 3. The explanation of the Rabbins is that the ends of the staves were not really *seen*, but that they projected into the curtain and so made two visible protrusions or prominences. But this view hardly satisfies the requirements of the text, and it assumes that the ark stood east and west, which we have found good reason to doubt. But even if this were so, it is doubtful

whether the staves, so long as they remained in the rings, could be made to reach to the door of the oracle, unless indeed they were lengthened for the purpose. How then *were* they seen? The following considerations may assist us to answer this question. (1) The oracle, of course, in its normal state was in perfect darkness (ver. 12). Once a year, however, a gleam of light was admitted, when the curtain was drawn partially aside to permit of the high priest's entrance. (2) When the curtain was drawn to one (probably the left) side, the light would fall, not on the ark, but on the ends of the staves projecting from the right or north end of the ark, which would thus be distinctly visible to the high priest. But (3) at this time the high priest was not alone in the holy place. It was not required that "there should be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation," except when the high priest went in to make an atonement for the *holy place* (Levit. xvi. 17). At an earlier stage of the service he would seem to have required assistance. According to the Mishna (*Yoma*), a priest held the basin of blood and stirred it to prevent coagulation, at the time of his first entry. Moreover (4) it is extremely doubtful whether the high priest can have drawn aside the curtain himself. Whether he entered three or four times on that day, at his first entry his hands were certainly full. If he carried "a censer full of burning coals of fire" . . . "and his hands ( $\text{לְיָדָיו}$ , both fists) full of sweet incense beaten small" (*ib.* ver. 12), it is clear that some other person must have drawn aside the veil for him. It is to this person, I take it, the priest who was privileged to draw aside the curtain, and possibly to others standing near—certainly to the high priest—that the ends of the staves were visible. Nor would a reverent look directed towards these objects—made originally for the Levites to handle—involve unhallowed curiosity. And if this were so, it would help to explain (4) the mention of this circumstance by our author. If it were a fact that year by year a gleam of light fell upon the staves, and if priest after priest testified of what he had seen, up to the time of writing ("unto this day;" see below), we can readily understand why a circumstance of so much interest should be recorded. And we have not an adequate explanation of its mention here, if we are to understand that the staves were seen on the day of dedication, when of course they must have been visible, and never afterwards, or that the staves were partially drawn out of their rings in order to show that the ark was now at rest], and there they are unto this day. [Same expression ch. ix. 21; xii. 19; 2 Kings

viii. 22. At the date of the publication of this book, the temple was of course destroyed (2 Kings xxv. 9), so that at that day the staves were *not* there. But the explanation is very simple. Our historian has copied the words he found in the MS. he was using.]

Ver. 9.—There was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone which Moses put there [Exod. xxv. 16; xl. 20; Deut. x. 5. This statement appears to be at variance with Hebrews ix. 4, which mentions "the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded," as in the ark, along with "the tables of the covenant." And it is to be observed that, while our text excludes these relics from the ark (*temp.* Solomon), no other scripture save that just cited expressly includes them. In Exod. xvi. 34 and Num. xvii. 25 (Heb. A. V., xvii. 10) they are commanded to be laid up "before the testimony," words which no doubt may mean, as they were long interpreted to mean, "before the tables of testimony in the ark"—observe, the words are "before the *testimony*," not "before the *ark*"—but which are now generally thought to import "in front of the ark which contained the testimony." We know the book of the law was put "at the side ( $\text{לְצֶדֶד}$ ) of the ark" (Deut. xxxi. 26), and hence it is held by some that the golden pot, &c., occupied a similar position. It seems preferable, however, considering the distinct statement of St. Paul, or the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which, to say the least, embodies Jewish tradition, to adhere to the ancient interpretation that the golden pot of manna and Aaron's rod were in the ark. And this in no wise conflicts with the statement of the text, for these treasures might well have been removed by the Philistines, whose first thought, we may be sure, would be to open their new acquisition. It is not improbable, indeed, that the object of the men of Bethshemesh in looking into the ark was to see whether these treasures were still there. For if the golden pot ever was in the ark, we can hardly suppose it would escape the rapacity of the Philistines, who would leave the two tables of stone as things of no value. Indeed, it is just possible that the trespass offering, the golden mice, &c., were designed as a return for the golden pot which had been removed. And the statement of the text, "there was nothing," &c., almost implies that there *had* been something there at one time (see Alford on Heb. ix. 4). It seems probable, therefore, that the golden pot and Aaron's rod were originally deposited "before the testimony" *in* the ark; that they were removed during its captivity (1 Sam. v., vi.);

and that the sacrilege was discovered at Bethshemesh (1 Sam. vi. 19). This last-mentioned episode explains how it came to be known that "there was nothing," &c. It is hardly likely after that memorable visitation that Solomon could have opened the ark and taken out the two relics, as Rawlinson suggests. Nor have we any warrant for the view that the mercy seat, with the cherubs, was removed to make way for a new lid without them, and so the interior of the ark was disclosed to view (Stanley) at Horeb [See Exod. iii. 1; xvii. 6; xxxiii. 6; 1 Kings xix. 8. This name, which means *dry ground, desert*, would appear to have belonged to two or three different places in the wilderness. But as the name of the place where the law was given and the covenant with God made (Deut. iv. 10, 13) it became subsequently a *nomen generale* for the whole of the Sinaitic region (Diet. Bib. iii. p. 1326). Here the mount of the law is clearly meant] when [Heb. *which*, *הַר*, is occasionally found in the sense of *quum*, as in Deut. xi. 6; Psa. cxxxix. 15; 2 Chron. xxxv. 20; cf. ch. ix. 10 (Gesens., *Thes.*, s.v.)] the Lord made a covenant [Heb. *cut*; see note on ch. v. 12. *כָּתַב* is to be understood. Same ellipsis in 1 Sam. xx. 16; xxii. 8] with the children of Israel when they came [Heb. *in their coming*] out of the land of Egypt. [Exod. xxxiv. 27, 28; Deut. iv. 13.]

Ver. 10.—And it came to pass, when the priests were come out [Rather, *as the priests came out*] of the holy place [It has been supposed that "the holy" (*הַקֹּדֶשׁ*) is here put for the *most* holy place, as in Ezek. xli. 23. But this is not by any means the necessary interpretation. The cloud may obviously have filled the *entire* building only as the priests left it. It would seem, however, from verse 11 as if the priests, having left the *oracle*, were about to minister in the holy place], that the cloud [Observe the article; the well-known cloud which betokened the Divine presence. It had rested upon the tabernacle on the day that it was dedicated (Exod. xl. 34), had accompanied it in its journeys (*ib.* ver. 38), and had apparently been specially displayed at certain junctures in the history of Israel (Num. xii. 5, 10; xvi. 42; Deut. xxxi. 15). It was thus the acknowledged symbol of God's presence, and as such was a visible sign that He now accepted the temple, as He had formerly accepted the tabernacle, as His shrine and dwelling-place. It is hardly correct to identify the cloud with "the Shechinah of the Targums" (Rawlinson), for it is noticeable that the Targums never render "the cloud" or "the glory" by "the Shechinah." In fact, as regards the

use of the word by Jewish writers, it would seem to be a periphrasis for God (Diet. Bib. iii. p. 1241). We may see in the cloud, however, the *seat* of the Shechinah (Kitto, Cyclopædia, iii. p. 821) filled the house of the Lord.

Ver. 11.—So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud [They were overpowered by the manifestation, precisely as Moses had been before (Exod. xl. 35). It was at the moment when the singers and trumpeters, standing at the east end of the altar, began their service of praise—and the re-appearance of the priests may well have been the signal for them to begin (2 Chron. v. 13)—that "the house was filled with a cloud." Possibly the priests were about to burn incense. Evidently ministrations of some sort were intended and were interrupted. The exact correspondence with Exod. xl. 35 (cf. Ezek. xlv. 4) is not to be overlooked. The idea obviously is that the Divine approval vouchsafed to the tabernacle was now in turn granted to the temple], for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord. [Is the "glory of the Lord" identical with the cloud, or is something additional intended by these words? It is certainly noticeable that what ver. 10 says of the cloud—that it "filled the house"—ver. 11 says of the glory. It is also true that there is no mention of any light or fire. And the "darkness" of ver. 12 might naturally seem to refer to the cloud, and therefore to exclude the idea of light. But surely the words *כְּגֹלוֹר* are to be interpreted here by their signification and use elsewhere, and we find "the glory of the Lord elsewhere mentioned as something distinct from the cloud. We must remember that what by day was a pillar of cloud, by night was a pillar of fire (Exod. xiii. 21, 22). In Exod. xix. 9, 16, the mention of the "thick cloud" is followed by the statement that "Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke because the Lord descended upon it *in fire*" (ver. 18). Similarly, in Exod. xxiv., we are told that "the glory of the Lord appeared upon Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it (the glory?) six days; and the seventh day He called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like *devouring fire*" (vers. 16, 17). But perhaps the most decisive passage in this connexion is Exod. xl. 34, where we are told that "the cloud abode upon" the tent of meeting, while "the glory of the Lord filled the (interior of the) tabernacle." Compare Exod. xvi. 7, 10; Levit. ix. 6, 23; Num. xiv. 10; xvi. 19, 42. It would appear, therefore, that "the glory of the Lord" was not the cloud, but,

as the word almost seems to imply, a "light from heaven above the brightness of the sun" (Acts xxvi. 13; cf. Rev. i. 14, 16). It is hardly necessary to add that the glory, though apparently resident in the cloud, was not always luminous; the cloud veiled it from the eyes of men.

Ver. 12.—Then spake Solomon [in a transport of emotion at the sight. The cloud and the glory proved that his pious work was accepted. These blessed tokens assured him that "the Lord was there" (Ezek. xlvi. 35); that the incomprehensible Godhead had entered the earthly shrine he had prepared, and would dwell there]. The Lord said that he would dwell in the thick darkness. [Heb. עֲרֵפֶל, lit., darkness of clouds. When did God speak of dwelling in dark cloud? The reference, probably, is to Exod. xix. 9; xx. 21; Deut. iv. 11; v. 22 (note that, in the three last cited passages, this same word is used, and in the last two in connexion with cloud, which would appear to be a practically synonymous term), but especially to Levit. xvi. 2, "I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat." Solomon had thus every warrant for connecting a theophany with the thick dark cloud. Cf. Psa. xviii. 11; xxvii. 2. The words cannot refer to "the holy of holies not lighted by windows" (Wordsworth).

Ver. 13.—I have surely built [Heb. to build, I have built] thee a house to dwell in for ever. [The temple was primarily, as already remarked, a shrine for the ark, between the cherubim of the mercy seat of which God dwelt. This was a כִּבְיִן (from כָּבַן, statue), a settled place. The tabernacle was but a poor and transitory abode, partaking of the frailty of the shepherd's tent (Isa. xxxviii. 12). For עֹלָמִים (aiōnes), cf. Isa. xxvi. 4; li. 9; Dan. ix. 24; Psa. cxlv. 13.

Ver. 14.—And the king turned his face about [He had been earnestly gazing toward the house where the cloud appeared. He now faced the congregation] and blessed [This word here, and in ver. 55, is used somewhat loosely. The blessing was in both cases addressed to God. The Hebrew king was not authorized to bless the people—that was the prerogative of the priests (Num. vi. 23; cf. Levit. ix. 22), and he is only said to bless here as felicitating, as wishing them a blessing. Dean Stanley ["Jewish Ch.," vol. ii. p. 218] characteristically asserts that Solomon "performed the highest sacerdotal act of solemn benediction." But the same word is used in ver. 66, of the people blessing the king. "Did

the people," as Wordsworth pertinently asks, "also perform a priestly act?" The word is elsewhere used of saluting. See note on ver. 66, and Gesen. s.v.] all the congregation of Israel: (and all the congregation of Israel stood); [Heb. were standing (עָמְדוּ)]; "stood" conveys the idea that the congregation rose as Solomon spoke, whereas they were standing already in the temple courts.

Ver. 15.—And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel [ch. i. 48], which spake with his mouth unto [or, concerning; אַחַר after verbs of speaking has the force of de (Gen. xx. 2; Jer. xl. 16; Psa. lxix. 27). David my father [The words were really spoken to Nathan], and hath with his hand [i.e., power; cf. Job xxxiv. 20; Acts iv. 28: xiii. 11; Ezra vii. 6] fulfilled it [the spoken word He has fulfilled in deed], saying, [The reference is to 2 Sam. vii., of which Solomon merely gives the substance. Much of what he says here is not recorded there.]

Ver. 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 a house, that my name might be therein [The chronicler adds here, "Neither chose I any man to be ruler," &c. Probably our account comes nearer to the words actually spoken. The speech in the Chron. looks as if it had been somewhat amplified, though it only completes the sense (Rawlinson)], but I chose David to be over my people Israel. [Cf. Psa. lxxviii. 70. This psalm pursues much the same line of thought as this address.]

Ver. 17.—And it was in the heart of David my father [2 Sam. vii. 2; 1 Chron. xvii. 1] to build an house for the name of the Lord God of Israel.

Ver. 18.—And the Lord said unto David my father [Not, perhaps, totidem verbis. The Divine approval was implied in 2 Sam. vii. 11—16, and it may have been expressed at the same time. The narratives of Scripture are necessarily greatly condensed], Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart.

Ver. 19.—Nevertheless thou shalt not build the house [Wordsworth observes that it was filial reverence prevented Solomon's mentioning the cause of this prohibition, which, however, is mentioned with appropriate humility by David himself (1 Chron. xxii. 8)]; but thy son that shall come forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house unto my name. [2 Sam. vii. 11, 12. The recurrence of "the name" of the Lord is to be noticed (see vers. 16, 17, 18, 29, 43,

&c.) The name of God is the expression to man of His nature, attributes, &c.]

Ver. 20.—And the Lord hath performed [Same word as in ch. ii. 4. Lit., “bath raised up” (LXX. ἀνέστη). Also same word as “risen up” (LXX. ἀνέστην) below, and as “set up” in 2 Sam. vii. 12. We might translate “established” throughout] his word that he spake, and I am risen up in the room of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel [ch. i. 48], as the Lord promised [2 Sam. vii. 12], and have built an house for the name of the Lord God of Israel [ib. ver. 13].

Ver. 21.—And I have set there a place for the ark, wherein is the covenant of the Lord [Hence its name, “the ark of the covenant” (Exod. xxxiv. 28; cf. Deut. ix. 11)] which he made with our forefathers when he brought them out of the land of Egypt [ib. ver. 16].

#### SECTION II.—The Prayer.

The prayer of dedication, properly so called, now begins. This solemn and beautiful composition was probably copied by our author from the “Book of the Acts of Solomon” (1 Kings xi. 41), possibly from the “Book of Nathan the prophet” (2 Chron. ix. 29). It was evidently committed to writing beforehand, and would, no doubt, as a matter of course, be religiously preserved. The later criticism objects to its authenticity that the many references to the Pentateuch (compare ver. 12 with Exod. xix. 9; ver. 31 with Exod. xxii. 11, Levit. v. 1; ver. 33 with Levit. xxvi. 17, Deut. xxviii. 25; ver. 36 with Levit. xxvi. 25; ver. 50 with Levit. xxvi. 40, 42; ver. 51 with Deut. iv. 20, &c.) prove it to be of a later date. Ewald assigns it to the seventh century B.C.; but this is simply to beg the question of the date of the Pentateuch. It is obviously open to reply that these references only prove that the king was acquainted, as he was bound to be (Deut. xvii. 18), with the words of the law. It divides itself into three parts. The first (vers. 22—30) is general; the second (vers. 31—53) consists of seven special petitions; the last (vers. 50—53) consists of a general conclusion and appeal to God’s covenant mercy.

Ver. 22.—And Solomon stood [i.e., took his stand (LXX. ἀνέστη)]. Not “was standing.” It was but for a moment, however, for we find him presently kneeling (ver. 54;

2 Chron. vi. 13). The latter passage informs us that he both stood and knelt upon a “brazen scaffold,” three cubits high] before the altar of the Lord [i.e., the brazen altar of sacrifice. The platform or scaffold was “set in the midst of the court” (2 Chron. i.c.) All these rites took place in the open air. The king had no place *within* the edifice] in the presence [the word is not to be pressed to mean “facing the people.” It is hardly likely he would pray towards the people—he was their προφήτης, i.e., he spoke for them to God—or turn his back on the sacred Presence just manifested], and spread forth his hands towards heaven: [one attitude of earnest prayer throughout the East, as may be seen at the present day amongst the Mohammedans. (See Lane’s “Modern Egyptians,” ch. iii., “Religion and Laws.”) So completely was this posture identified with supplication that to “lift up the hands” came to be a synonym for prayer (Exod. ix. 29, 33; Psa. xli. 20; cxliii. 6; Isa. i. 15; lxxv. 2.)]

Ver. 23.—And he said, Lord God of Israel, there is no God like thee [Similar words are found in Exod. xv. 11; Psa. lxxxvi. 8, &c. They do not at all imply the existence of other gods, but are explained by other passages (e.g., ver. 60; Deut. iv. 39, “the Lord He is God and none else;” 2 Sam. vii. 22; xxii. 32) as meaning that the God of Israel stands alone, and alone is God. It would be strange, indeed, if the people whose great *peculium* was the unity of the Godhead (Deut. vi. 4; Isa. xlii. 8) recognized other deities. Observe: Solomon begins his prayer with an act of *praise*; with a recognition at once grateful and graceful of God’s past mercies (cf. Psa. lxxv. 1, 2; Phil. iv. 6). *Exaudit Dominus invocantem, quem laudantem vidit* (Augustine)], in heaven above, or on earth beneath [Josh. ii. 11]. who keepest covenant and mercy [same words in Deut. vii. 9] with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart. [Cf. ch. ii. 4.]

Ver. 24.—Who hast kept with thy servant David my father [Solomon sees in this a special pledge of God’s faithfulness and truth] that thou promisedst [Heb. *spakest*, same word as below. The alteration in the A. V. obscures the connexion]: thou spakest also [Heb. *and thou spakest*, i.e., “yea,” or “for thou spakest”] with thy mouth and hast fulfilled it with thine hand [ver. 15, and ch. iii. 6. The completion of the house, following the establishment of Solomon upon the throne, was to him proof conclusive that the promise of 2 Sam vii. had received its fulfilment], as it is this day.

Ver. 25.—Therefore now [Heb. *And now*. The promise has been but partially fulfilled. The house is built; he now prays that the succession may be continued in David's line] keep [cf. ver. 24. "thou hast kept"] with thy servant David my father that thou promisedst [Heb. *spakest to*, as above] him, saying [The reference is of course to the great promise of 2 Sam. vii. 12—16], There shall not fall thee a man in my sight to sit on the throne of Israel [cf. ch. ii. 4], so that [margin, *if only*. As to the condition, see note on ch. ii. 4, and cf. ch. vi. 12, 13] thy children take heed to [Heb. *keep*. Same word as above. The repetition is suggestive. God's keeping His promise was contingent on their keeping His commandments] their way, that they walk before me as thou hast walked before me.

Ver. 26.—And now, O God [The LXX., Vulg., Syr., and Arab. read, *O Lord God*, as do many MSS. But the word is more likely to have been inserted (in conformity with vers. 23, 25) than to have been left out] let thy word [The Keri has *thy words*. Keil sees here a reference to "all the words" of 2 Sam. vii. 17; but this, especially when the reading is doubtful, is somewhat too remote], I pray thee, be verified [יִשְׁמְרָן, optative form. Gesen., Gram. 126. 2] which thou spakest [Psa. cxxiii. 14] unto thy servant David my father.

Ver. 27.—But [בָּ]. Bähr refers for this use of the word to 1 Sam. xxix. 8; 1 Kings xi. 22; 2 Kings viii. 13; Jer. xxiii. 18] will God indeed [Heb. *verily*; same root as that of preceding verb, "verified." The repetition shows the connexion of thought. "But can these words be verified? Will God verily," &c.] dwell on the earth? behold the heaven and heaven of heavens [Same expression Deut. x. 14. Cf. Psa. cxv. 16; cxlviii. 4; Isa. lxvi. 1. The Jewish belief respecting the seven heavens (see Wetstein on 2 Cor. xii. 2; Stanley, "Corinthians," &c.) is of much later date, and a reference to it, or to the belief of some Rabbins in two heavens (after Deut. x. 14), is altogether out of the question. The "heaven of heavens" = "all the spaces of heaven, however vast and infinite" (Gesen., cf. Psa. cxlviii. 4). The analogy of "holy of holies" would, however, suggest that not all the heavens, but the highest heavens are intended] cannot contain thee; how much less [יִשְׁמְרָן] Ewald, 354 c] this house that I have builded? [Two points are to be noticed here. (1) Solomon never denies for a moment that the temple was a real habitation of Jehovah, or that a real presence was manifested there. He only denies that the Deity is contained in earthly temples (2) He had no un-

worthy ideas—such as were prevalent in that age—of God as a local deity, limited to space. The words clearly prove his grasp of the omnipresence and infinity of God. With this passage compare Psa. cxxxix. 7—10; Isa. lxvi. 1 (quoted in Acts vii. 49), and Acts xvii. 24.]

Ver. 28.—Yet have thou respect unto the prayer of thy servant [=the prayer I now offer, which is that thou wilt hear all future prayers offered here, mine and my people's] and to his supplication, O Lord my God, to hearken unto the cry and to the prayer

[Three words are used here, תְּחַנֵּן, תְּפַלֵּן, and רִיב. The first (from תְּחַנֵּן, *precatus est*; see ver. 29) is apparently a general term for prayer; the second (from רִיב, *propitius fuit*) is properly a cry for mercy; hence an earnest prayer or supplication; while the third signifies a joyful cry; hence a mournful cry or prayer] which thy servant prayeth before thee to-day.

Ver. 29.—That thine eyes may be open [This anthropomorphism does not conflict with what was said under ver. 27] toward this house night and day [not so much to watch over it as to see the worship and prayer offered there], even toward the place of which thou hast said, My name shall be there [cf. Ezek. xlvi. 35, and vers. 18, 19, 20, &c. When had God said this? Never, perhaps, in so many words. Keil says the reference is to 2 Sam. vii. 13 *implicite* ("He shall build an house for my name"), while Rawlinson thinks the "reference is not to any single text, but to the many passages in Deuteronomy where God speaks of a place which He will choose to 'set his name' there (Deut. xii. 5, 11, 18, &c.; xiv. 23; xv. 20; xvi. 2, &c.)" But it is very probable that a revelation was made to David respecting the sanctuary, the terms of which are not preserved to us. This is almost implied by Psa. lxxviii. 68; cxxiii. 10; 1 Chron. xxii. 1—passages which prove that David claimed to have Divine sanction for placing the temple on "Mount Zion." Psa. cxxiii. is unmistakably Davideic, and embodies some features of the message of God (*e.g.*, the condition, ver. 12) not preserved in 2 Sam. vii.]: that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer which thy servant shall make toward [Margin, *in*, but Heb. לָךְ supports the A. V. rendering. Now that God had revealed His pre-ence in the temple, the Jew, wherever he might be, would, and as a matter of fact did, pray towards it (Dan. vi. 10; Psa. v. 7; Jonah ii. 4), just as the Mohammedan has his *Kibleh* in Mecca] this place.

Ver. 30.—And hearken thou to the sup-

plication of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place : and hear thou in heaven [Heb. unto

heaven, מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם, a pregnant construction = hear the prayer that ascends unto heaven. The chronicler here, as elsewhere, simplifies the meaning by reading "from heaven," מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם] thy dwelling place [Here, and in vers. 39, 43, and 49, heaven is described as the true dwelling place of Deity. Confidently as Solomon believes that he has built a habitation for the Lord, he never dreams that the "Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands" (Acts vii. 48; xvii. 4) : and when thou hearest, forgive. [There is possibly a play of words here—מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם, מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם].

With the next verse the special or particular supplications begin. Like those of the Lord's prayer, they are seven in number, and no doubt for the same reason, viz., because seven was the number of covenant, the number which expressed the relationship between the Lord and His people ("die Signatur der Verbindung Gottes und der Welt"—Bähr, Symbolik, i. 187 sqq.) In fact, to the Jew the number "seven" was something like the sign of the cross to a large portion of Catholic Christendom, for it spoke to him of God's covenant of mercy and peace.

And the first of the seven concerns oaths. The king implores the covenant-keeping God to watch over the covenants of words made in the now consecrated sanctuary, and to protect their sanctity by punishing the false swearer. There were cases in which the Mosaic law provided that an oath should be administered to suspected persons (Exod. xxii. 11; Levit. v. 1, 4, &c.) And there were other cases in which men of their own accord, for "an end of all strife," would make oath. Now every oath, whatever its form (Matt. xxiii. 16—22), is in reality an affirmation "by the God of truth" (Isa. lxxv. 16); it is an appeal to the knowledge and power and justice of the Most High (Levit. xix. 12; Deut. vi. 13; x. 20; Isa. xlvi. 1; Jer. xii. 16; xlv. 26). A false oath, consequently, dishonoured the Divine name, and polluted the sanctuary dedicated to that name, and if it went unpunished, contradicted the principles and provisions of the dispensation of temporal punishments,

and so encouraged falsehood and impiety. God is here entreated, consequently, to take cognizance of the oaths sworn before His altar (ver. 31), and to be a swift witness against the false swearers (Mal. iii. 5). It is, perhaps, because of the direct dishonour which perjury offers to the Divine name that, as Bähr suggests, this prayer stands first among the seven, thus corresponding to the "Hallowed be Thy name" in the Lord's prayer, and to the third among the ten commandments.

Ver. 31.—If any man trespass [The force of the Hebrew (which begins somewhat abruptly) מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם (LXX. ὅσα ἂν ἀμάρτυ) is probably, *As for that which, or in all cases in which, i.e., when* (as Ewald, 333 a). The chronicler, as usual, simplifies by reading מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם] against his neighbour, and an oath be laid [Heb. and he (the neighbour) lay an oath, i.e., prescribe a form of adjuration, such as that in Deut. xxi. 7] upon him to cause him to swear, and the oath come [This translation cannot be maintained. For in the Heb. there is no def. art., as there

would be if מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם were noun and nominative; and, moreover, in that case the verb, to agree with the feminine noun, would be מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם. And as no other meaning can be extracted from the words as they stand, we are driven to suspect a slight corruption of the text, either (1) the omission of ו between the words, which in that case would have stood מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהוֹאֵל, and would mean, "and he (the accused) come and swear"—a conjecture which is supported by the LXX., καὶ ἔσθῃ καὶ ἔξαγορεύσῃ, or (2) the omission of the preposition ב, which would yield מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם בְּהוֹאֵל = and he (the accused) enters into the oath, an expression found in Neh. x. 29 and Ezek. xvii. 13] before thine altar in this house. [Despite the last words, the altar of sacrifice before the house is probably meant. This was the altar of the Jewish layman, and, moreover, it was one visible sign of the covenant. Psa. l. 5; Exod. xxiv. 6—8; cf. xx. 24. The altar which afforded shelter to the manslayer, in the same way lent sanctity to the oath. The practice of swearing by the altar (Matt. xxiii. 18) is of later date.

Ver. 32.—Then hear thou in heaven [Heb. and thou, thou wilt hear the heavens. The same expression, הִשְׁמַע הַשָּׁמַיִם, is found in vers. 34, 36, 39. See Ewald, 300 a. Keil sees in it the adverbial use of the accusative. Most of the versions read "from heaven," as does the Chronicles and one M.S., and do [i.e., act] and judge thy

servants, condemning [Heb. *to make (i.e., prove) wicked*] the wicked, to bring [Heb. *give, same word as below*] his way [*i.e., works, fruits*] upon his head [cf. Ezek. ix. 10; xi. 21; same expression] and justifying [Heb. *to make righteous*. Cf. *δικαιοῦν* in N. T. and *justum facere*] the righteous [cognate words are used in both cases], to give him according to his righteousness.

The second special petition contemplates the case, which was morally certain to occur, of Hebrews taken captive in war and carried to a foreign land. To be separated from the commonwealth, the rites and the blessings of Israel, was one of the greatest calamities which could befall a Jew (Deut. iv. 27, 28; Levit. xxvi. 33; Psa. cxxxvii.), and as such Solomon gives it a prominent place in his prayer. The connexion, however, which some have imagined to exist between this prayer and the preceding, viz., that that referred to internal, this to external dangers, is too artificial to have found a place in Solomon's thoughts.

Ver. 33.—When thy people Israel be smitten down before the enemy [cf. Levit. xxvi. 7, 17; Deut. xxviii. 25. There is a constant reference to these two chapters throughout this prayer, or, if no direct reference to them, there are unmistakeable reminiscences of them], because they have sinned against thee, and shall turn again to thee, and confess [or *praise*. Psa. liv. 8 Heb.; cvi. 47; cxxii. 4] thy name, and pray, and make supplication unto thee in this house. [The marg. *towards* is a mistaken attempt at avoiding the difficulty which lies on the surface of the text, viz., that persons in a foreign land could not pray in the temple. But the king obviously is speaking here, not of those taken captive, but of the nation at large ("thy people Israel") by its representatives (cf. Joel ii. ii. 17), supplicating after its defeat. The idea of captives does not come in until the next verse. Under the term house the courts are obviously included (Acts ii. 46; Luke xviii. 10). Into the edifice the priests alone were admitted.]

Ver. 34.—Then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy people Israel, and bring them [*i.e., the captives of Israel, those carried off by the enemy*]. There is no thought here of the captivity of the nation—that is referred to in vers. 46—50—as the prayers to be offered in the temple prove. This petition is in exact accordance with the promises and threatenings of the law, for the former of which see Levit. xxvi. 40—44; Deut. xxx. 1—5; for the latter,

Levit. xxvi. 33; Deut. iv. 27; xxviii. 64 sqq.] again unto the land which thou gavest unto thy fathers.

The third petition concerns the plague of drought. Just as rain, in the thirsty and sunburnt East, has ever been accounted one of the best gifts of God (Levit. xxvi. 4; Deut. xi. 11; Job v. 10, and *passim*; Psa. lxxviii. 9; cxlvii. 8; Acts xiv. 17), so was drought denounced as one of His severest scourges (Levit. xxvi. 19; Deut. xi. 17; xxviii. 23, 24, &c.) This petition finds an illustration in the public supplications which are still offered in the East, and by men of all creeds, for rain.

Ver. 35.—When heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against thee; if they pray toward this place [toward, because the inhabitants of the land everywhere would direct their prayers toward the holy oracle in Jerusalem (Psa. xxviii. 2)], and confess [*praise*] thy name, and turn from their sin, when [or *because*, 'פ] thou afflictest them. [LXX. *ὄραν ταπεινώσης αὐτοῦς*—Humbling should be the result of affliction.]

Ver. 36.—Then hear thou in heaven [see on ver. 32], and forgive the sin of thy servants, and of thy people Israel, that thou teach them [rather, *because thou art teaching them, &c.* The thought is, "Forgive, because they have learned the lesson Thy discipline of drought was meant to teach;" because the chastisement has fulfilled its purpose] the good way [1 Sam. xii. 23] wherein they should walk, and give rain upon thy land, which thou hast given to thy people for an inheritance.

The fourth petition refers to the various plagues mentioned in the law (Levit. xxvi.; Deut. xxviii.), as the punishment of apostasy or infidelity.

Ver. 37.—If there be in the land famine [Heb. *Famine should there be, &c.* The word is emphatic by position. Famine is denounced, Levit. xxvi. 20, 26; Deut. xxviii. 33], if there be pestilence [Levit. xxvi. 25; Jer. xiv. 12; xxiv. 10; Amos iv. 10; Ezek. vi. 12, &c.], blasting [same word Gen. xli. 6; Amos iv. 9; Deut. xxviii. 22], mildew [lit. *pale ness, χλωρότης*, Deut. i. c.], locust, or if there be

caterpillar [It is uncertain whether *חַסִּיל*, lit., *devourer*, here rendered "caterpillar," is not an adjective and an appellation of the locust = *devouring locust*. Deut. xxviii.

38 *יִחַסְלֵנוּ הַחֲרָבָה* "the locust shall consume it") certainly favours this view.

But the Chron. and the Verss. distinguish it here (by the introduction of "and" between the two words) as a separate plague. It is also similarly distinguished, Joel i. 4; Psa. lxxviii. 46. Gesen. considers it to be a species of locust; if their enemy besiege them in the land of their cities [Heb. *his gates*, but "the land of his gates" hardly yields sense. It is noteworthy that the LXX. (with most of the Verss.) reads *ἐν μὲν τῶν πόλεων αὐτοῦ*. Thenius, consequently, to bring the Hebrew text into harmony, would substitute עִירֵי בְּאֶרֶת עִירֵי בְּאֶרֶת. Another suggested emendation is בְּעִירֵי, בְּאֶרֶת, "in the land, even in their gates." But it is doubtful whether any alteration is really required. "The land of their gates" (cf. "land of their captivity," 2 Chron. vi. 37; Jer. xxx. 10, &c.) may perhaps be interpreted the land where their gates (i.e., fortified cities) are. The marg. "Jurisdiction"—the gate being the place of judgment (Ruth iv. 11; Prov. xxii. 22; 2 Sam. xv. 2)—is altogether out of the question; whatsoever plague, whatsoever [Heb. every plague, &c.] sickness there be.

Ver. 38.—What prayer and supplication soever [There is here a studied reference to the preceding words. Lit., every prayer, &c. We might render in ver. 37, "Whatsoever the plague," &c., and here, "Whatsoever the prayer," &c.] be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart [Here again there is an unmistakable reference to the "plague" (same word) of ver. 37. The plague of the heart is the inner smart of the conscience corresponding with and perhaps more painful than the smiting of the person. The meaning obviously is that the prayers will vary according to the various mental and physical sufferings of men], and spread forth his hands [see on ver. 22] toward this house.

Ver. 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;) [Jer. xvii. 10. Cf. ὁ καρδιωγράφος θεός (Acts xv. 8; also *ib.* i. 24).

Ver. 40.—That they may fear thee all the days that they live in the land which thou gavest unto their fathers. [Solomon anticipates that a godly fear will be the result of forgiveness and restoration. We find the same thought in Psa. cxxx. 4. The mercy and goodness of God should lead to repentance, but unhappily it not unseldom fails to do so.]

The fifth petition contemplates the prayers which foreigners, attracted by the fame of

Jerusalem, of its religion and sanctuary could offer towards the house. The Gentiles who should visit Jerusalem would assuredly, with their polytheistic ideas and their belief in local or tribal deities, invoke the aid and blessing of the mighty God of Jacob. This mention of aliens from the commonwealth of Israel in the prayer of dedication, especially when viewed in the light of the exclusiveness and bigotry which characterized the Jews of later days, is especially to be noticed. As Rawlinson (*in loco*) observes, "Nothing is more remarkable in the Mosaic law than its liberality with regard to strangers." He then quotes Exod. xxii. 21; Levit. xxv. 35; Deut. x. 19; xxxi. 12; Num. xv. 14—16; and adds: "It is quite in the spirit of these enactments that Solomon, having first prayed God on behalf of his fellow countrymen, should next go on to intercede for the strangers," &c. The intercourse of the Hebrews at this period with foreign nations, and the influence they exercised on the Jewish thought and manners (see Stanley, "Jewish Ch." ii. Lect. xxvi.), are also to be remembered. These new relations with the stranger would no doubt have widened Solomon's views.

Ver. 41.—Moreover concerning a stranger, that is not of thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country for thy name's sake; [Solomon takes it for granted that such will come, and not without good reason, for the house was "exceeding magnificent" and destined to be "of fame and glory throughout all countries" (1 Chron. xxii. 5). And we can hardly doubt that in the visit of the Queen of Sheba we are to see one fulfilment of this anticipation. (Note the expression of ch. x. 1 "concerning the name of the Lord.") One who blessed God, as she did (ver. 9), would certainly pray towards the house. In the time of the second temple there were several instances of strangers (e.g., Alexander the Great, Ptolemy Philadelphus, and Seleucus; see Keil *in loc.*) worshipping the God of Jacob in Jerusalem.

Ver. 42.—(For they shall hear of thy great name [Cf. Josh. vii. 9; Psa. lxxvi. 1; xcix. 3], and of thy strong hand [cf. Exod. vi. 6; xiii. 9; Deut. ix. 26, 29; cf. vii. 19. They had heard at a much earlier date (Exod. xv. 14; xviii. 1; Josh. v. 1). The reference is not so much to the marvels of the Exodus—that was long past—as to the wondrous works which Solomon assumes will hereafter be wrought], and of thy

stretched out arm;) when he shall come and pray toward this house.

Ver. 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 [It is interesting to notice this foreshadowing of the inclusion of the Gentiles in the one fold. The same thought is found in some of the Psalms and in Isaiah, as St. Paul witnesses (Rom. xv. 9 sqq.) Cf. *Psa.* xxii. 27; lxxii. 11; lxxxvi. 9; xcviii. 3; cii. 15; cxvii. 1; *Isa.* xlix. 6; lii. 10] 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. [Heb. *that thy name is called* (or, *has been called*, נִקְרָא). LXX. ἐπικέκληται] upon this house, i.e., that God has taken this house for His habitation; that He dwells there, works, hears, answers there. Same expression, *Jer.* vii. 10, 11, 14; xxv. 29; *Deut.* xxviii. 10; *Isa.* iv. 1. In *Num.* vi. 27 we have, "they shall put my name upon the children of Israel." In *Deut.* xii. 5, and *xvi.* 6 (cf. *1 Kings* xi. 36), we read of the place God has "chosen to put his name there."

So far the royal suppliant has spoken of prayers offered in or at the temple. He now mentions two cases where supplications will be offered by penitents far distant from the holy city or even from the Holy Land. And first, he speaks of the armies of Israel on a campaign.

Ver. 44.—If thy people go out to battle against their enemy, whithersoever [Heb. *in the way which*] thou shalt send them [These words clearly imply that the war, whether defensive or offensive (i.e., for the chastisement of other nations), is one which had God's sanction, and indeed was waged by His appointment], and shall pray unto the Lord toward [Heb. *in the way of*]. Same expression as above. The repetition is significant. "They have gone in God's way. They may therefore look the way of God's house for help." Executing God's commission, they might justly expect His blessing] the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house that I have built for thy name.

Ver. 45.—Then hear thou in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause. [Heb. *do their judgments*, i.e., secure them justice, defend the right. Same words, *Deut.* x. 18; cf. *Psa.* ix. 5, Heb.]

The last petition—the second of those which speak of prayers addressed towards the temple, or the Holy Presence which dwelt there, from a foreign land—contemplates as possible the captivity of the

Hebrew nation. It has hence been too readily inferred that this portion of the prayer, at least, if not the preceding petition also, has been interpolated by a post-captivity writer. But there is really no solid reason for doubting its genuineness. Not only is it the seventh petition (see on ver. 31), but the captivity of Israel had been denounced as the punishment of persistent disobedience long before by Moses, and in the chapters to which such constant reference is made (*Levit.* xxvi. 33, 44; *Deut.* xxviii. 25, 36, 64; cf. *iv.* 27)—a fact which is in itself an indirect proof of genuineness, as showing that this petition is of a piece with the rest of the prayer. And when to this we add that the carrying of a conquered and refractory race into captivity was an established custom of the East, we shall be inclined to agree with Bähr, that "it would have been more remarkable if Solomon had *not* mentioned it."

Ver. 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 [Heb. *give them before an enemy*], so that they carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy, far or near;

Ver. 47.—Yet if they shall bethink themselves [Heb. as marg., *bring back to their heart*]. Same phrase, *Deut.* iv. 39; xxx. 1. The latter passage, it should be noticed, treats of the captivity, so that Solomon, consciously or unconsciously, employs some of the very words used by Moses in contemplating this contingency. These repeated coincidences lead to the belief that the prayer was based upon and compiled from the Pentateuch] 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. [This verse is full of *paronomasia*, טָשָׁוּ, הִשְׁבִּינוּ, נִשְׁבָּנוּ, &c. Words almost identical with this confession were used (*Dan.* ix. 5; *Psa.* cvi. 6) by the Jews in their captivity at Babylon, from which it has been concluded that this part of the prayer must belong to the time of the captivity. But surely it is, to say the least, just as likely that the Jews, when the captivity of which Solomon spoke befel them, borrowed the phrase in which their great king by anticipation expressed their penitence. Seeing in the captivity a fulfilment of his prediction, they would naturally see

in this formula, which no doubt had been preserved in the writings of the prophets, a confession specially appropriate to their case, and indeed provided for their use.

Ver. 48.—And so return unto thee with all their heart [almost the words of Deut. xxx. ver. 2, as those in ver. 47 are of ver. 1], and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies, which led them away captive [observe the *paronomasia*—*לך* is here used in two senses], and pray unto thee toward [Heb. *the way of*] their land [see Dan. vi. 10] which thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name. [There is apparently a climax here, "land," "city," "house."]

Ver. 49.—Then hear thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven thy dwelling place, and maintain their cause. [Heb. *do their judgments*, as in ver. 45.]

Ver. 50.—And forgive thy people that have sinned against thee, and all their transgressions wherein they have transgressed against thee, and give them compassion [Heb. *to compassion* or *bowels* *רחמים* = *ῥά σπλαγγνα*, 2 Cor. vi. 12; Phil. i. 8; ii. 1, &c.] before them who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them. [For the fulfilment of this prayer, see Ezra i. 3, 7; vi. 13; Neh. ii. 6. Compare Psa. cvi. 46.]

In the three following verses we have a sort of general conclusion to the dedication prayer. It is hardly correct to say that these last words apply to all the preceding petitions—the plea "they are thy people" manifestly cannot apply in the case of vers. 41—43. On the other hand, as little are they to be limited to the persons last mentioned in vers. 46—50, though it is highly probable they were suggested by the thought of the captives. They are manifestly in close connection with the preceding verses.

Ver. 51.—For they be thy people [a citation or reminiscence of Deut. iv. 10], and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest forth out of Egypt [cf. vers. 21, 53]. There is a constant recurrence throughout the Old Testament to this great deliverance, and with good reason, for it was the real birthday of the nation, and was also a pledge of future help and favour. God who had "wrought such great things for them in Egypt" could not well forsake them. Solomon's constant plea is that they are the elect and covenant race [from the midst of the furnace of iron [i.e., a furnace for iron, heated and fierce as for smelting. Same phrase, Deut. iv. 20].

Ver. 52.—That thine eyes may be open [cf. ver. 29] unto the supplication of thy servant, and unto the supplication of thy people Israel [cf. vers. 28, 30], to hearken unto them in all that they call for unto thee.

Ver. 53.—For thou didst separate them from [Levit. xx. 24, 26; cf. Exod. xix. 5, 6] among all the people of the earth, to be thine inheritance [same expression, Deut. iv. 20; ix. 26, 29. This is no idle repetition of ver. 51. The idea of that verse is deliverance, of this election. Cf. Num. xvi. 9; viii. 14], as thou spakest by the hand [see note on ch. ii. 25] of Moses thy servant [Exod. xix. 5, 6; Deut. ix. 26, 29; xiv. 2], when thou broughtest our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord God.

In Chron. (ch. vi. 41, 42) the prayer ends somewhat differently. "Now therefore arise, O Lord God," &c.—words which are found in substance in Psa. cxxxii. 8—10. These two verses look like an addition, and were probably inserted by the chronicler to form a connecting link with ch. vii. 1—3 (Bähr). The LXX. has an extremely curious addition, said to be taken from the "Book of the Song." Stanley sees in its very abruptness and obscurity an evidence of its genuineness ("Jewish Ch." ii. 218).

### SECTION III.—*The Concluding Blessing.*

The service of dedication concludes, as it commenced, with a benediction (ver. 14).

Ver. 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 [see note on ver. 22] the altar of the Lord, from kneeling on his knees [the first mention of this posture in the sacred history (Stanley). The Jews usually stood in prayer (Luke xviii. 11, 13)] with [Heb. *and*] his hands spread up to heaven.

Ver. 55.—And he stood [this does not necessarily imply that he drew nearer to the congregation, as Kell], and blessed [cf. 2 Sam. vi. 18, and see note on ver. 14. The words of blessing, which are presently given (vers. 56—61), prove that he did not assume priestly functions and put any blessing upon the people, Num. vi. 27] all the congregation of Israel with a loud [Heb. *great*] voice, saying,

Ver. 56.—Blessed be the Lord, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised [a distinct reference to Deut. xii. 9, 10 (cf. iii. 20), where we read that when the Lord should have given rest to Israel, then a place for sacrifice, &c..

should be appointed (ver. 11). That place is now dedicated, and the king sees in this circumstance a proof that the rest is now at last fully attained. The permanent sanctuary is a pledge of settlement in the land. The rest hitherto enjoyed (Josh. xxi. 44) had been but partial. Only under Solomon were the Philistines brought into complete subjection (1 Kings ix. 16), and hitherto the ark had dwelt in curtains; there hath not failed [Heb. *fallen*; cf. 1 Sam. iii. 19] one word [a clear reference to Josh. xxi. 45, as the preceding words are to ver. 44] of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand [cf. ver. 53] of Moses his servant [viz., in Levit. xxvi. 3—13, and in Deut. xxviii. 1—14, *i.e.*, in the chapters which are the sources of this prayer, &c.

Ver. 57.—The Lord our God be with us, as he was with our fathers: let him not leave us, nor forsake us. [Solomon insensibly glides again into prayer; here for the presence of God, in ver. 59 for His help. There is probably a reference to Deut. xxxi. 6, 8; Josh. i. 5, where, however, "forsake" is represented by a different word.

Ver. 58.—That he may incline our hearts unto him [Psa. cxix. 26; cxli. 4], to walk in all his ways [ver. 25; ch. ii. 4. The condition on which God's blessing was insured was at this time printed on Solomon's mind], and to keep his commandments, and his statutes, and his judgments [see note on ch. ii. 3, to which ver. there is not improbably a reference], which he commanded our fathers.

Ver. 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 [Heb. *to do the judgment of*] his servant, and the cause of his people Israel at all times, as the matter shall require [Heb. *the thing of a day in his day*. Same phrase Exod. v. 13; xvi. 4]:

Ver. 60.—That all the people of the earth may know that the Lord is God, and that there is none else. [See ver. 22. We have here a recurrence to the thought of ver. 43, which was evidently prominent in Solomon's mind. He hopes the house now dedicated will be fraught with blessing for the world, and that the Gentiles will come to its light. Cf. Isa. ii. 2, 3.]

Ver. 61.—Let your heart therefore be perfect with the Lord our God [An instructive commentary on these words is found in ch. xi. 4, where it is said of this Solomon, "His heart was not perfect," &c.—same words. Similarly, *ib.* vers. 3, 9 are a comment on the prayer of ver. 58. Having preached to others, he himself became a

castaway], to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this day [That day the nation proved its piety by the dedication of the house.

At the close of this prayer (omitted in Chron.), according to 2 Chron. vii. 1, "fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the house," but Bähr rejects these words as an interpolation. He maintains, indeed, that the chronicler contradicts himself, for we can hardly think that the glory which we are told (ch. v. 14) had already filled the house, left it and then returned. It is certainly suspicious, and a much stronger argument against the words in question, that no mention of the fire is made by our author, for, brief as this history is, it is difficult to believe that so signal an interposition could have remained unnoticed, if it really occurred.

#### SECTION IV.—The Festal Sacrifices.

The ceremonial of dedication was followed, as would naturally be the case, by sacrifices on a scale of unusual grandeur. Apart from their religious use and significance, the sacrifices testified to the devotion of the giver, who on this of all days must not appear before the Lord empty, and they also afforded materials for the great and prolonged feast by which this auspicious event in the history of Israel must be commemorated.

Ver. 62.—And the king, and all Israel with him [Another indication (see on ver. 2) that practically the whole Israelitish nation (*i.e.*, its males) assembled to witness this great function (ver. 65. But see on ch. xvi. 17). The words also prove that the sacrifices mentioned presently were offered by the people as well as by the king], offered sacrifice before the Lord. [See note on ch. ix. 25.]

Ver. 63.—And Solomon offered a sacrifice [Solomon is mentioned as chief donor, and as the executive. But others shared in the gift] of peace offerings [Levit. vii. 11 sqq. This was especially the sacrifice of praise—it is called "the sacrifice of thanksgiving of his peace offerings," *ib.* vers. 13, 15. See Bähr, *Symb.* ii. 368 sqq. In the peace offering, the fat was burnt on the altar, but the flesh was eaten (ver. 15; cf. Deut. xii. 7), so that this form of offering was, in every way, adapted to a festival. The idea that "ox after ox, to the number of 22,000, and sheep after sheep, to the number of 120,000, were consumed," *sc.* by fire (Stanley), is expressly excluded], which he offered unto the Lord.

two and twenty thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep. [It is very possible that these numbers have been altered in course of transcription, as is the case with numbers elsewhere, but there is no ground for suspecting exaggeration or mistake. For, in the first place, the Chronicles and all the Versions agree with the text, and, secondly, the numbers, compared with what we know of the sacrifices offered on other occasions, are not unduly large, nor were they such that (as has been alleged) it would be impossible to offer them within the time specified. If, at an ordinary Passover, a quarter of a million of lambs could be sacrificed within the space of two or three hours (Jos., *Bell. Jud.* vi. 9. 3), there can obviously have been "no difficulty in sacrificing 3000 oxen and 18,000 sheep on each of the seven days of the festival" (Keil). (But were not the sacrifices spread over fourteen days? ver. 65.) And it is to be remembered (1) that "profusion was a usual feature of the sacrifices of antiquity. . . . Sacrifices of a thousand oxen (χάδύμβασι) were not infrequent. According to an Arabian historian (Kotobeddyn), the Caliph Moktader sacrificed during his pilgrimage to Mecca . . . 40,000 camels and cows and 50,000 sheep. Tavernier speaks of 100,000 victims as offered by the King of Tonquin" (Rawlinson, Stanley); and (2) that the context insists on the extraordinary number of victims. They were so numerous, we are told, that the brazen altar was quite inadequate to receive them (ver. 64). It has been already pointed out (note on ver. 62) that the people joined the king in the sacrifices. Indeed it is against not only ver. 62, but vers. 63, 65, to suppose that all the victims were offered by Solomon alone (Ewald, Stanley). If these numbers, therefore, include those offered by the people, we can the more readily understand them. For, by the lowest computation, there could hardly be less than 100,000 heads of houses present at the feast (Bähr, Keil), and if the numbers of David's census (2 Sam. xxiv. 9) may be trusted, there may very well have been four or five times that number, and on such an occasion as that, an occasion altogether without precedent, every Israelite would doubtless offer his sacrifice of thanksgiving—the more so as a large number of victims would be required for the purposes of the subsequent feast. And as to the impossibility of the priests offering so prodigious a number within the specified time (Thenius, *al.*), we have only to remember (1) that if there were 38,000 Levites (men over thirty years of age) in the time of David (1 Chron. xxiii. 3), or anything like that number, there *must* have

been at the very least at this period **two or three thousand priests** (Keil), and we can hardly think that at the dedication of so glorious a temple, in which they were so profoundly interested, many of them would be absent from Jerusalem. But if there were only *one* thousand present, that number would have been amply sufficient to perform all the priestly functions. For it was no necessary part of the priests' office either to slay the victim, or to prepare it for sacrifice—that any Israelite might do (Levit. i. 5, 6, 11; iii. 2, 8, &c.); the duty of the priest was strictly limited to "sprinkling the blood round about upon the altar" (Levit. iii. 2, 8; cf. i. 5), and burning the fat, the kidneys, &c., upon the altar (*ib.* iii. 5). It is clear, consequently, that there is no difficulty whatsoever as to the manual acts required of the priests. It only remains to notice one other objection, viz., that the people could not possibly have eaten all the flesh of these peace offerings. But here again the answer is conclusive, viz. (1) that it was not necessary that all should be eaten, for the law expressly provided that if any of the flesh remained over until the third day, it should be burnt with fire (Levit. vii. 15; xix. 6), and (2) no one can say what the number of people may not have been (see below on ver. 65), and (3) the sacrifices were spread over fourteen days.] So the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the house of the Lord.

Ver. 64.—The same day did the king hallow the middle of the court [*i.e.*, the entire area of the court of the priests (ch. vi. 36). Ewald (287 *g*) translates "the inner court." The whole space may have been regarded as "one huge altar" (Rawlinson), or temporary altars may have been erected all over the area. As already observed, this fact alone points to an enormous number of victims) that was before the house of the Lord: for there he offered burnt offerings [Heb. *the burnt offerings*, *i.e.*, either the usual daily burnt offerings (Num. xxviii. 3), or more probably, those appropriate to such a special function (Num. xxix. 13 sqq.; cf. 1 Kings iii. 4)], and meat offerings [Heb. *the meat offering*. Both this and the preceding word (הַלֵּבָנִים) are singular (generic) in the original], and the fat of the peace offerings: because the brazen altar that was before the Lord [*i.e.*, house of the Lord] was too little to receive the burnt offerings, and meat offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings [and yet it was 20 cubits (30 feet) square, and so would offer a surface of 100 (Keil 144 square yards)].

Ver. 65.—And at that time Solomon held a feast [the necessary sequel to such a

number of peace offerings (cf. ch. iii. 15). All the flesh that could be, must be eaten (Levit. xix. 5, 6)], and all Israel with him, a great congregation [see note on ver. 64. "All Israel" would hardly be an exaggeration], from the entering in of Hamath [the northern boundary of Palestine (Num. xxxiv. 8; cf. xiii. 31; Josh. xiii. 5; Judg. iii. 8; Ezek. xlvii. 16; Stanley, S. and P. p. 407; Dict. Bib. i. p. 644; Porter, pp. 620, 621) unto the river [Heb. נַחַל, *i.e.*, torrent bed, watercourse, *wady* (river is נָהָר)]. See Stanley, S. and P. pp. 14, 505, 506] of Egypt [*i.e.*, the southern limit of the Holy Land. See Num. xxxiv. 5; Josh. xv. 4, 47; 2 Kings xxiv. 7; Gen. xv. 18, where the word is נַחַךְ refers to the Nile. The Wady el Arish must be intended (Dict. Bib. vol. iii. p. 1046, 1047, and Gesen., Thesaurus, vol. ii. p. 872, Porter, p. 267)], before the Lord our God, seven days and seven days, even fourteen days [The two periods are thus distinguished, because they were properly distinct; the first being the feast of dedication, the second the feast of tabernacles. This is more clearly explained in 2 Chron. vii. 9, 10.]

Ver. 66.—On the eighth day he sent the

people away [*i.e.*, on the eighth day of the second feast, the "three and twentieth day of the month" (*ib.*, ver. 10)]. The first impression is that the eighth day of the period of fourteen days is meant, but the context, to say nothing of the Chron., contradicts this. The feast of dedication began on the eighth day of the month Ethanim (ver. 2), and lasted until the fourteenth. The feast of tabernacles began on the fifteenth and lasted till the twenty-first. On the evening of the twenty-second, the "day of restraint" (Levit. xxiii. 36 marg.), he dismissed the people, who would depart to their homes next morning: and they blessed [*i.e.*, felicitated, saluted (on taking leave). Cf. Prov. xxvii. 14; 2 Kings iv. 29; 1 Sam. xxv. 6, 14. Marg. *thanked*. See note on ver. 14] the king, and went unto their tents [*i.e.*, homes—an archaic expression, dating from the times of the desert wanderings. Josh. xxii. 4; Judg. vii. 8; 2 Sam. xx. 1; 1 Kings xii. 16] joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the Lord had done for David his servant [the real founder of the temple. Solomon had but carried out his ideas and had entered into his labours], and for Israel his people.

### HOMILETICS.

Vers. 8—11.—*The Dedication of the Temple and its Teaching.* The eighth day of the seventh month of the year 1004 B.C., or, according to some, B.C. 1000, was one of the brightest days of Jewish history—

"a day in golden letters to be set  
Among the high tides of the calendar;"

for on that day the holy and beautiful house, which had been seven and a half years in building, for which preparations had been made for a much longer period (1 Chron. xxii. 5), and on which a force of some one hundred and sixty thousand workmen had been in different ways employed; on that day of days this house of houses was solemnly dedicated to the service of Almighty God. Let us carry our thoughts back to that day; let us join the procession; let us try to realize the scene, for we may learn a lesson thence, first, as to the consecration of our churches, and secondly, as to the dedication of our souls and bodies to God.

It is an enormous concourse that is gathered in and about the holy city. From "the entering in of Hamath to the river of Egypt" (ver. 65) every town and hamlet had sent up its tale of men. No Israelite who *could* be present—and in the seventh month the labours of the field were well-nigh over—would be absent. We must not think of the heads of the tribes alone; it is a nation keeps festival to-day. And such a nation, with such a history! And its glory culminates to-day in the dedication of its temple. What child of Israel, then, but would be there?

With early morning all Jerusalem, and its neighbouring hills and valleys (Psa. cxxv. 2), was instinct with life. The Easterns always rise early, and that day was a high day. It is still early when the great procession is marshalled. At its head is "Solomon in all his glory." The dignitaries of the State, of the Church (ch. iv. 1—19); all are there. Their rendezvous is the Mount Zion; their object to escort the ark of God, with all the honour they can render it, on its last journey, to its last resting-place. And so the white-robed priests (2 Chron. v. 12) take up the

consecrated structure and bear it tenderly, yet proudly, to its home. To-day the Levites may not carry it. As at the Jordan (Josh. iv. 10), as at Jericho (Josh. vi. 4), as in Mount Ebal (Josh. viii. 33), so on its last journey it must be borne on the shoulders of priests. The procession—we cannot follow its course, for it is probable that, for the sake of effect, it would make a considerable *détour*, perhaps a circuit of the city; nor can we speak of its psalms—and we may be sure if psalms (Pss. xv., xxiv.; 1 Chron. xvii. 7—36) were chanted at the removal of the ark, they would not be wanting at the dedication of the temple—or its sacrifices (ver. 5)—the procession (cf. 1 Kings i. 38) at last reaches the temple precinct; it passes through the gate; here the crowd is checked, but the priests and princes pass on; they reach the inner court; here the princes stop, but the priests pass on. The whole temple platform is now choked with worshippers, while thousands who cannot gain admittance witness the august ceremonial from without, many, no doubt, having found a coign of vantage on the Mount of Olives. The priests, with their precious burden, pass through the porch, pass through the holy place, pass through the veil into the thick darkness of the oracle. There they lay down the ark, the outward and visible sign of the covenant, under the overshadowing wings of the colossal cherubim. They leave it wrapped in darkness; they leave it to begin at once their ministrations before the new shrine. At this point of the ceremonial it had been arranged that priests and Levites, singers, trumpeters, and harpists should burst into a song of praise (2 Chron. v. 12, 18). But ere they can fully accomplish their purpose, the dedication has become a true *consecration*, for the awful cloud, the token of the Divine presence, the cloud which veiled “the glory of the Lord” has filled the house, and the priests cannot stand to minister. As at the dedication of the tabernacle (Exod. xl. 34) so now, the incommunicable Godhead has “come in a thick cloud” (Exod. xix. 3), and has driven them, as it drove Moses, from the sanctuary. The king, who sees the portent from without, recognizes at once that his and his father’s hope is realized; that his and his people’s offering is accepted; that his and their projects and labours are now crowned; and, overcome with joy, he cries, “I have surely built thee a house to dwell in, a settled place,” &c.

“Majestic silence! then the harp awoke,  
The cymbal clanged, the deep-voiced trumpet spoke,  
And Salem spread her suppliant hands abroad,  
Viewed the descending flame, and blessed the present God.”

Such, in brief, was the dedication of this house. It is true prayers and sacrifices followed, but of these we cannot now speak particularly. The essential parts of the consecration were (1) the solemn and formal setting apart of the edifice by the king and the representatives of the people, to be the house of God, and (2) the formal entry—to use the language of men—by the Godhead, concealed under the thick cloud, upon His new shrine.

So that in this service, as in all true services, there were two parts, man’s and God’s. It was man’s part to offer the house with appropriate ceremonial to the Most High; it was God’s part to accept it with appropriate signs. Now both of these are commonly and correctly called *consecration*. It will be for our convenience, however, if we now call the first of these dedication and restrict the term consecration to the second. And, using the words in these senses, let us see in this imposing ceremonial a lesson, first, as to our *churches*. As to which, we learn:

I. THAT CHURCHES SHOULD BE FORMALLY DEDICATED TO GOD. For if a formal service of dedication was fitting in the case of the temple, how can it be inappropriate in the case of the church? Is the latter less worthy of care and reverent regard than the former? Is it built for objects of less importance, or objects less Divine? Is it less dear to God, or less truly “God’s house,” because man is admitted to a place therein? Or may men build houses for God and retain the ownership for themselves? “Can we judge it a thing seemly for any man to go about the building of an house to the God of heaven with no other appearances than if his end were to rear up a kitchen or parlour for his own use? Or, when a work of such a nature is

finished, remaineth there nothing but presently to use it and so an end?" (Hooker.) Alas, that churches and chapels should ever have been offered—sometimes by public auction—to the pewholders, or dedicated by brass plates, &c., to the service of opulent parishioners. Too often have they become congeries of petty freeholds, temples of exclusiveness, God's house in nothing but name. But this could not have been if the true idea of *dedication* had not been obscured or lost.

II. HOW CHURCHES SHOULD BE DEDICATED TO GOD. This history tells us that it should be with all possible solemnity and stateliness. There may surely be a *procession*. If this was right for the Jew, it cannot be wrong for us. There may be *processional hymns*—the psalm which was acceptable in their lips cannot be unbecoming in ours; and the dignitaries of the State may join the ranks, even "*kings of the earth*" may "bring their glory and honour into it" (Rev. xxi. 24); in fact, it cannot be too stately, provided it be done not for self-glorification but for the glory of God. For is not God the same now as then; is He not still a great king? And is not man the same? Does he not still owe the profoundest homage he can render to his Maker? And if it be heartfelt, why may it not be public? The history teaches that an august ritual befits the dedication of a church, and that, *inter alia*, there should be *sacrifices* (vers. 5, 62; cf. 2 Sam. xxiv. 24—we should not come before the Lord empty), *music* (2 Chron. v. 12, 13—the language of heaven, the one tongue that escaped confusion at the building of Babel), and that the book of the covenant should be borne (as it is in Germany, and as the ark was) in procession to its place. "These things the wisdom of Solomon did not account superfluous" (Hooker).

It is to be remembered here that our Lord by His presence sanctioned the observance of a feast of dedication (John x. 22).

III. THAT CHURCHES MUST BE CONSECRATED BY GOD. The bishop, or other officer, can only consecrate in the sense of dedicating—of setting apart from profane uses. And this is what the "consecration" of churches and churchyards really means—no more and no less (see Hooker, Eccles. Pol. v. 12. 6). If either is to be "*hallowed*" (ch. ix. 2), it must be by the Divine presence. The Moslems say that wherever their great Caliph Omar prayed is consecrated ground. We hold that holy ground (Exod. iii. 5) must derive its sanctity from the All-Holy. The God who filled the temple must also hallow the church.

IV. THAT CHURCHES SINCERELY DEDICATED TO GOD WILL BE CONSECRATED BY GOD. Was the Ineffable Presence granted to the temple? Then why not to the church also? God has no favourites, nor is His arm shortened. The Presence will not be *revealed*, but it will be *there*; none the less real, all the more real, because it is spiritual. It would be strange if, in the dispensation of the Spirit, we disbelieved in the presence of Him who fills heaven and earth, who is "in the midst of the seven candlesticks" (Rev. i. 13), and who has promised His presence to companies of "two or three" sincere souls (Matt. xviii. 20, *Ubi tres, ibi ecclesia*). Our churches indeed are "*sanctified*" by the word of God and prayer" (1 Tim. iv. 5), and if there is no cloud, yet we may "behold the glory of the Lord" (2 Cor. iii. 18); but they receive their full and perfect consecration in the *κοινωνία* of Christ's body and blood (1 Cor. x. 16). Men forget that if there is not a Real Presence then there must be a real *absence*. Some will allow God to be present everywhere—*except* in His church and sacraments.

As to the *Christian life*, this dedication of the temple reminds us—

I. THAT OUR BODIES ARE TEMPLES OF THE HOLY GHOST (1 Cor. vi. 19; iii. 16, 17; 2 Cor. vi. 16). "God has built" the "temple of the body" (John ii. 21) to be His shrine (Rom. viii. 9, 11; 2 Cor. vi. 16; Eph. iii. 17).

II. THAT WE SHOULD DEDICATE THEM TO GOD (Rom. vi. 13, 19; xii. 1; 1 Cor. vi. 13—29; Matt. xxii. 21). This is done in baptism, may be done in confirmation, and must be done in conversion (the *turning* to God).

III. THAT IF WE DEDICATE THEM, GOD WILL CONSECRATE THEM. If we "open the door" (Rev. iii. 20; John xiv. 23) He will enter in and dwell there. We have but to give the heart—the innermost recess of the house, the *adytum*—to Him, and He will possess and glorify the whole body (Luke xi. 34, 36).

Chap. vi. ver. 7, and chap. viii. ver. 12.—*The Silence and the Darkness.* In the first of these passages we are told that the house, built for the habitation of the Most High, was reared in profound silence; in the second, that the Most High Himself dwelleth in the thick darkness.

Now observe, first, that darkness stands in the same relation to sight that silence does to hearing. In the one, nothing is *seen*; in the other, nothing is *heard*. And, secondly, that the cloud and the house were alike the shrine and the dwelling-place of Deity: the cloud the inner, the temple the outer abode. We learn, therefore, that the God who appears in the cloud (Levit. xvi. 2), and dwells in the thick gloom of the oracle, is One who shrouds Himself in silence and darkness. Hence, let us learn—

I. THAT HE IS A GOD THAT HIDETH HIMSELF (Isa. xlv. 15). "No man hath seen God at any time" (John i. 18; Matt. xi. 27; Deut. iv. 12). "Thick darkness is under his feet" (Psa. xviii. 9, Heb.). "Darkness is his secret place; dark waters and thick clouds his pavilion" (ch. viii. 11; cf. Psa. xvii. 2). And He hides Himself, not as Eastern kings have done (comp. Esther i. 14, and Herod. iii. 84), to enhance their renown and dignity, and to increase the awe and reverence of their subjects—*omne ignotum pro magnifico*—but because we cannot see His face and live (Exod. xxxiii. 20). "Whom no man hath seen or can see" (1 Tim. vi. 16). "Dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto" (*ib.*) Cf. Acts xxii. 11.

II. THAT WE CANNOT BY SEARCHING FIND OUT GOD (Job xi. 7). In one sense those are not so far wrong who speak of Him as "the Unknowable." The *Quicunque vult* describes Him as "Incomprehensible" (Latin, *immensus*, *i. e.*, immeasurable). Man cannot understand the mysteries of his own existence, how much less the being of the Godhead. If we could understand God, we should be intellectually equal with God (Gen. iii. 22). It is no argument against the doctrine of the Trinity, or the eternal generation of the Son, or the procession of the Holy Ghost, that each is a mystery. How could it be otherwise? We have "nothing to draw with, and the well is deep."

III. THAT HIS WAYS ARE WRAPPED IN DARKNESS. See Rom. ii. 83; Deut. xxix. 29; Eccles. xi. 5. His judgments are an abyss of which we cannot see the bottom (Psa. xxxvi. 6). His footsteps are not known (Psa. lxxvii. 19). As He dwells in the thick cloud, so are His judgments far above out of sight (Psa. x. 5). "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing" (Prov. xxv. 2). Hence it is that His dealings are often so mysterious and painful, because what He does we know not now (John xiii. 7). The disciples "feared when they entered into the cloud" (Luke ix. 34). "Now we know in part." We only see, it has been said, as it were, the underside of the carpet, and so life is a confused and meaningless mixture. It is not God's will that we should see the plan and pattern yet. (Cf. Col. i. 26; Ephes. iii. 9.)

IV. THAT HIS WORKS ARE WROUGHT IN SILENCE. He is Himself a God that keepeth silence; Psalm l. 3, 21 recognizes this. If silence be golden, the Eternal has observed this golden rule. Men blaspheme Him, defy Him, challenge Him to smite them dead—as a well-known atheist is said to have done—&c., and He keeps silence. Amid "earth's many voices," amid its everlasting Babel, His voice is never heard. Similarly, He *works* in the silence. At the creation, "He spake and it was done." "God said, Let there be light, and there was light." Creation moves in silence. We speak of "the music of the spheres; but it is but a beautiful conceit. On the contrary, "there is no speech, no language; their voice is not heard" (Psa. xix. 3, Heb.) Much truer is that exquisite conception—

"And nightly to the listening earth  
Repeats the story of her birth."

The fact is that,

"In solemn silence, all  
Move round this dark terrestrial ball."

And in silence, too, is this planet sustained and ordered. How

“silently the springtime  
Her crown of verdure weaves,  
And all the trees on all the hills  
Open their thousand leaves.”

Or as another, not less beautifully, puts it—

“Soundless as chariots on the snow  
The saplings of the forest grow  
To trees of mighty girth :  
Each nightly star in silence burns,  
And every day in silence turns  
The axle of the earth.

“The silent frost, with mighty hand,  
Fetters the rivers and the land  
With universal chain ;  
And, smitten by the silent sun,  
The chain is loosed, the rivers run,  
The lands are free again.”

But for the discordant din of men, and but for the voices of beasts and birds, this earth would be a temple of silence. And it is in the silence that God reveals Himself. Not in the great and strong wind, not in the earthquake, not in the fire, but in the still small voice (1 Kings xix. 12, 13). “Let us be silent,” says one, “that we may hear the whispers of the gods.” In the silence, too, His Church has grown. His kingdom “cometh not with observation” (Luke xvii. 20). As silently as the seed grows, day and night, in the soil ; as silently as the leaven works in the meal. And in the silence our Holy Lord will come again—as a thief in the night, as a snare, as the lightning.

V. THAT ALL THE EARTH SHOULD KEEP SILENCE BEFORE HIM (Hab. ii. 20). It is not meant to preach here “the eternal duty of silence,” nor that all worship should be “of the silent sort ;” but that, in realizing the awful presence of God, men should be hushed into the profoundest awe. When we do “take upon ourselves to speak unto our Lord,” we should remember that “we are but dust and ashes” (Gen. xviii. 27). Our finger on our lips, our lips in the dust. It was this feeling, in part, led Solomon to build the temple in silence. And the feeling which found this expression in act he has elsewhere translated in words (see Eccles. v. 1, 2). It was with a similar feeling that our Lord acted (Mark xi. 16). And it is significant that we read of “silence in heaven” (Rev. viii. 1).

VI. THAT GOD'S WORK MUST BE DONE IN SILENCE. “All real work is quiet work. It must be unobtrusive if it is to be fruitful. “The temple was *thrown down* with axes and hammers, and they that did it roared in the midst of the congregation (Psa. lxxiv. 4, 6), but it was built up in silence” (M. Henry). A temple of the Lord, a temple of “living stones,” is now being built. “O God, that the axes of schism or the hammers of furious contention should be heard within Thy sanctuary” (Hall). It is because of our unseemly cries and wranglings, because of the clash of controversy and the shouts of heated partizans, that this temple has made such poor progress. Not until we have been first hushed into *silence* can the headstone be brought forth with *shouting* (Zech. iv. 7).

Ver. 2 ; cf. vi. 16.—*The Holy of Holies and the Heaven of Heavens*. Elsewhere (pp. 99, 112) we have spoken of the correspondence of the Jewish temple with the Christian Church. But let us now trace a truer and higher resemblance. For the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us that the “holy places made with hands” are “the figures (*ἀντίτυπα*, i. e., *copies*) of the true” (Heb. ix. 24). The temple of Solomon, therefore, must correspond to things in the heavens. It does this, first, in its structure ; secondly, in its furniture ; thirdly, in its services.

I. IN ITS STRUCTURE. The temple, we have seen, was a reproduction, on an enlarged scale, and in a more permanent form, of the tabernacle. And the tabernacle was fashioned after a heavenly pattern (Exod. xxv. 40; xxvi. 30; xxvii. 8; Heb. viii. 5). Thrice was Moses admonished to make it "according to the fashion which was showed him in the mount." It has been well said that earth is

"But the shadow of heaven, and things therein  
Are to each other like."

But this is true in a special sense of the earthly and heavenly temples. Their resemblance is recognized in the very language used of the temple. "Heaven thy dwelling-place" is constantly found in close connexion with "this house" (ch. viii. 30, 34, 39, 43). The same word—*Zebul*—used of the temple in ch. viii. 13 is used of heaven in Isa. lxiii. 15. Compare also ver. 13, "a settled place for thee to dwell in," &c., with vers. 30, 39, 43, &c. (Heb.) The same word—*Haycal*—again, used of the temple in ch. vi. 5, 33; vii. 50; 2 Kings xxiv. 13, is elsewhere used of heaven (Psa. xi. 4; xviii. 7; xxix. 9, &c.) But can we trace the resemblance? Can we suggest any points of contact? Let us try, premising, first, that a "general analogy is all that we can look for" (Alford on Rev. viii. 3).

1. *The temple was tripartite* (see ch. vi. Introduction). It was composed of porch, holy place, and oracle (the side chambers were hardly integral parts of the structure; see note on ch. vi. 6). Now it is remarkable that though the Jewish fathers spoke of "seven heavens"—some held that there were two—Holy Scripture speaks of *three*, and three only. When St. Paul would describe the very dwelling-place of Deity, he calls it "the *third* heaven" (2 Cor. xii. 2). What are the three heavens—whether atmospheric (*nubiferum*), sidereal (*astriferum*), and angelic (*angeliferum*), or what—it does not concern us to say; it is enough for our purpose that there are three. And three, it must be remembered, is the number and signature of God.

2. *All the temple was God's dwelling-place*. It is a mistake to suppose that the oracle was the abode of God, the holy place the abode of the people. In the temple the people had no place. It was the "house of the great God" (Ezra v. 8); a palace for God, and not for man (1 Chron. xxix. 1). "As the whole house, so also each compartment . . . is called 'the dwelling-place'" (Bähr). Again, the holy place, as well as the entire sanctuary, is called the palace (ch. vi. 5 with 2 Kings xxiv. 13). The primary design of the temple, as of the tabernacle, was to afford a habitation for the ark and for Him whose covenant it contained.

3. *But the inner temple was God's shrine*. In the holy of holies, He was revealed. He dwelt "between the cherubim" (Exod. xxv. 22; 1 Sam. iv. 4; 2 Kings xix. 15, &c.) The word *Shechinah*, which is used to denote the Presence, is derived from *shachan*, "he dwelt." So it is in heaven. Heaven is God's throne (Isa. lxi. 1; Acts vii. 49); but there is a "heaven of heavens," where He is revealed. True "the heaven and heaven of heavens" cannot contain Him, any more than the holy and the holy of holies, but in each He has His special habitation. Here again temple and temple not built with hands are alike.

4. *The temple blazed with gold and gems*. It was "exceeding magnificent" as the palace of the Godhead. Everything was appropriate to a great king. "Pure gold," "gold of Uphaz," cedar, olive wood, all was "for glory and beauty" (Exod. xxviii. 2). Compare the description of heaven in Rev. xxi. 9 sqq. Like a jasper stone (ver. 11); pure gold (vers. 18, 21); precious stones (vers. 19, 20); twelve pearls (ver. 21).

II. IN ITS FURNITURE. Observe: the furniture and appointments *outside* the house, in the court of the priests—brazen altar, molten sea, lavers, &c.—have no counterparts in heaven. They are "of the earth, earthy." In the holy place were the altar of incense, the table of shewbread, the ten candlesticks, &c. (ch. vii. 48—50). In the most holy place were the mercy-seat, the cherubim of glory, the ark, the golden censer, &c. And heaven has its golden altar (Rev. vi. 9; viii. 6; ix. 13), its incense (Rev. viii. 3, 4), its seven lamps (Rev. iv. 5; cf. Exod. xxvii. 23. Zech. iv. 2). And for the table of shewbread, see Rev. xxii. 2. Or if it be said

that the "table of the face" has no counterpart in heaven, we may reply that it is not needed, because His servants "see his face" and feast upon His presence (Rev. xxiv. 4). Similarly heaven has its mercy-seat—the Fount of Mercy dwells there—its cherubim and seraphim (Isa. vi. 2; Rev. iv. 7; cf. Ezek. i. 10), and its golden censer (Rev. viii. 3, 5). It has no ark—the covenant is writ in the heart of the Eternal, as He now writes it on the hearts of men (Heb. viii. 10). But it has its throne (Rev. iv. 2 *et passim*), and the ark was the throne of God (cf. Isa. vi. 2).

III. IN ITS SERVICES. Here we must distinguish between (1) the service of the holy place, and (2) the service of the Holiest of all. As to the former, it must here suffice to say that it centred round the altar of incense. Morning and evening, year in, year out, incense was burnt upon the golden altar. And we have already seen that incense is offered in heaven. As to its meaning, lessons, &c., we have spoken elsewhere (pp. 199, 200). Let us turn, therefore, to the worship of the most holy place. And here we observe—

1. *The cherubim of glory overshadowed the mercy-seat* (Heb. ix. 5). They were, as it were, choirs on either side of the place of the Presence. Now the cherubim were symbolical representations of all created existences (see note on ch. vi. 29) from the highest to the lowest. But especially did they shadow forth the highest forms of intelligence, the celestial beings who surround the Lord of glory; they were earthly counterparts of the heavenly seraphim (Isa. vi. 2), and so they portrayed, as far as was possible, the worship of the heavenly hosts. It is true they were silent—they could not be otherwise—but still they conveyed the idea of ceaseless contemplation, of the most profound and reverent homage, of awestruck adoration. Indeed, we only understand what they symbolized by comparing the shadow with the substance. For we find that heaven has its cherubim. The "four beasts (*ζῶα*) round about the throne, full of eyes before and behind" (Rev. iv. 6—8), are clearly the "very substance" of those things of which Isaiah's and Ezekiel's winged creatures (Isa. vi. 2; Ezek. i. 10; x. 14) were the likeness, and of which Solomon's cherubim were the copies. The silent, stately cherubim consequently were adumbrations of the mysterious hierarchy who ceaselessly praise the Uncreated Light and lead the worship of the skies (Rev. iv. 8—11; v. 8, 9, 14), "raising their *Trisagion* ever and aye."

2. *The high priest entered the most holy place once a year.* The ceremonial of the day of atonement (Levit. xvi.) foreshadowed, as we are expressly told in Heb. ix., the entry of our great High Priest into heaven itself. The Jewish high priest, robed in spotless white vestments, passed through the veil of blue and purple and scarlet (Exod. xxvi. 31) into the holy oracle, with the blood of calves and goats, &c. Even so our unspotted Lord, "the High Priest of our profession" (Heb. ii. 1), passed through (not *into*, *διεληλυθόρα*) the blue heavens (Heb. iv. 14) into the presence of the Eternal, with His own blood (ch. ix. 12). And as the high priest presented the tokens of death—as he sprinkled the blood (which is the life of the flesh) seven times before the mercy-seat eastward (Levit. xvi. 15), and so in figure pleaded the meritorious death of Him who should come to put away sin, so does our great High Priest present his pierced and wounded form—He stands before the throne as a "Lamb as it had been slain" (Rev. v. 6)—and pleads His passion, the death of One who *has* come, for the salvation and life of the world. It may be that, like the high priest, He utters no articulate words; it may be that, like him, He simply *appears* as the representative of man to *show* the tokens and pledges of atonement; or it may be that as the incense was burned when the blood was sprinkled, so His powerful intercession, of which the incense was a type, is joined to the silent pleading of His wounds. But whichever way it is, it is clear that the ritual of the holy of holies has its blessed counterpart in the ritual of the heaven of heavens.

Vers. 23—53.—*The Prayer of Dedication.* In how many and varied ways is Solomon a type of the Divine Solomon, the true Son of David (see pp. 63, 77, &c.) Even in this respect they are alike—that each has "taught us how to pray" (Luke xi. 1 sqq.)

For we may be sure that the Prayer of Dedication is for our instruction and imitation, otherwise it would hardly have been recorded, and recorded at such length, in Scripture. "After this manner therefore pray ye" (Matt. vi. 9).

I. LAYMEN MAY OFFER PUBLIC PRAYER. This is no monopoly of priests. The Hebrew king might not sacrifice or burn incense (2 Chron. xxvi. 18), but he might lead the prayers both of priests and people, and that on the greatest day in the history of Israel. Even so, though "we give not to our princes the ministering either of God's word or of the sacraments" (Art. xxxvii.), still we do not deny them any "prerogative which we see to have been given always to all godly princes in Holy Scripture" (*ib.*), and least of all the prerogative of prayer exercised by David, Solomon, Asa (2 Chron. xiv. 11), Jehoshaphat (*ib.*, xx. 5—12), and Hezekiah (*ib.*, xxx. 18—20). It was Constantine, a layman, presided at the Council of Nice.

II. KINGS SHOULD BE PROUD TO TAKE PART IN RELIGIOUS FUNCTIONS. Whatever divinity doth hedge them about, they are not greater or wiser than Solomon, and the proudest moment of *his* life was when he led the ark to its resting-place; the happiest, when he "blessed all the congregation of Israel" (ver. 14). Never is king so great as when he takes his proper place before God. Alas! that religion should have ever been brought into such contempt that kings should be ashamed or afraid to be the "nursing fathers" of the Church (Isa. xlix. 23). Solomon's prayer is "a testimony that a wisdom which can no longer pray is folly" (Bähr).

III. PRAYER SHOULD BE PRECEDED BY PRAISE. It was not until Solomon had "blessed God" (ver. 15) that he prayed to God (vers. 23—53). "*Praemissa laude, invocatio sequi solet.*" This was the rule of the early Church (see Psa. lxy. 1, 2 for the scriptural order; cf. Phil. i. 3, 4; iv. 6, and see Howson's Hulsean Lectures, No. iv., for the combination of thanksgiving and prayer in St. Paul's Epistles). And Solomon not only began but ended with blessing (ver. 56).

IV. TRUE PRAYER IS ASKING GOD FOR WHAT WE NEED. Not rhetorical display, not *sesquipedalia verba*, not a mere string of texts and hymns, but the simplest, humblest cry of the heart. Which of us has not heard prayers like the Pharisee's—without one word of prayer (*i.e.*, petition) in them? And how many prayers are made painful by their pretentiousness. Perhaps a child has been ordained our pattern (Matt. xviii. 2—4), that from it we should learn to pray. "In prayer it is better to have a heart without words than words without a heart" (Bunyan).

V. PRAYER SHOULD BE OFFERED FOR ALL SORTS AND CONDITIONS OF MEN. Not for self only. It is not "*my* Father," but "*our* Father." Perhaps *selfishness* is nowhere more conspicuous or more hateful than in our prayers. We are members one of another. It is in the Pharisee's prayer that we find so much "I." Notice how varied were Solomon's petitions, and cf. 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2, 8. Teanyson says—

"For what are men better than sheep or goats  
That nourish a blind life within the brain,  
If, knowing God, they lift not hands in prayer  
Both for themselves and *those who call them friend!*"

And he does not stop there, but adds that thus

"the *whole round world*  
Is bound by golden chains around the feet of God."

This prayer of dedication was a veritable *Litany* (vers. 31, 33, 37, 41, 44, &c.)

VI. PRAYER SHOULD BE SCRIPTURAL, *i.e.*, conceived in the spirit and expressed in the words of Scripture. This prayer was pre-eminently so (see notes on vers. 22 sqq.) What St. Cyprian says of the Lord's prayer, "*Quanto efficacius impetramus quod petimus in Christi nomine, si petamus ipsius oratione,*" may suggest to us that that prayer is most likely to move God's hand which is based on God's Word. Supplication should be shaped by revelation.

VII. PRAYERS MAY BE LITURGICAL. The Scripture references, its artificial structure, and indeed its very preservation, prove that this prayer was a pre-

composed form. A form need not involve formalism. All Christians use forms of *praise*; why not forms of *prayer*? (See Hooker, V. xxvi. 2. 3.)

VIII. OUTWARD FORMS ARE NOT TO BE DESPISED. Solomon "kneeled upon his knees, with his hands stretched out towards heaven" (cf. Dan. vi. 10; Acts vii. 60; ix. 40; xx. 36; xxi. 5; Ephes. iii. 14, and, above all, Luke xxii. 41 and xxiv. 50. Also Psa. xxviii. 2; lxiii. 4; cxxxiv. 2). Ritualism is a question of degree, for we all use *some* rites. So long as we have bodies, we can never have a *purely* spiritual religion, but must "glorify God in our *bodies* and spirits" (1 Cor. vi. 20). That forms have their foundation in human nature, and may be impressive and edifying, is proved by the fact that "no nation under heaven either doth or ever did suffer public actions which are of weight to pass without *some* visible solemnity" (Hooker, IV. i. 8), and for this reason, that

"Sounds which address the ear are lost and die  
In one short hour; while that which strikes the eye  
Lives long upon the mind: the faithful sight  
Graves on the memory with a beam of light."

It is only when forms usurp the place, or mar the reality, of spiritual worship (John iv. 24) that they are really reprehensible.

Vers. 62—66.—*The Feast on the Sacrifices.* In this prodigious number of sacrifices—in round numbers 150,000 victims—3,000 oxen and 18,000 sheep for every day of the festival (Keil); five oxen and twenty-five sheep for every minute of each day (Thenius)—in this wholesale slaughter, which converted the court of the priests into one great shambles, and almost choked the sewers of the temple with blood, one feature is liable to be overlooked (note on ver. 64), namely, that all these sacrifices were "*peace offerings*," with the exception, of course, of the usual burnt offerings. In all these—and king and princes and people alike brought their thousands—all was first given to God, but the bulk was given back by God to the sacrificers. With the exception of the fat, &c., burnt on the altar, and the blood (which was the life), poured out at its base, and the customary portion of the priests (Levit. vii. 14, 21; 1 Cor. ix. 13), all the rest was carried home by the offerer to provide a *feast* for him and his family. The peace offering was thus a social festival (*die feierliche und förmliche Mahlzeit* (Bähr, see his *Symbolik*, ii. 368 sqq.) And the same remark applies to the still greater number—a quarter of a million—of paschal lambs offered year by year in later times. The blood was sprinkled as a memorial before God, but the lamb was roasted entire to provide a supper for the household (Deut. xvi. 1—7). In all these sacrifices God graciously entertained those who offered them with their own oblations—which He had first given them—at His own table. And herein we have an illustration of God's gracious way of dealing with our gifts and offerings. He accepts them at our hands, but gives them back for our use and enjoyment. We present our sacrifice, and He spreads a banquet for our souls. It is a curious circumstance, and one that shows how entirely this principle has been overlooked, that "sacrifice," which properly means "something made sacred," "consecrated," has come to be a synonym for "loss," "privation." But this a true sacrifice can never be. There is no such thing as giving at a loss to the Lord of all. He insists on paying us back a hundred fold. All our offerings are in this sense peace offerings. He sends us away laden with our own gifts, "joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness of the Lord" (ver. 66). Let us now see how this holds good.

I. OF THE SACRIFICE OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST. This is the one veritable sacrifice of the world. Of all others it may be said, "Of thine own have we given thee." He alone "offered himself" (Heb. ix. 14). "With his own blood" (ver. 12). Behold how this oblation comes back to us charged with blessing. "Once offered to bear the sins of many" (ver. 28); "Having obtained eternal redemption for us" (ver. 12). "By the obedience of one many are made righteous" (Rom. v. 19). Compare Heb. ii. 9, 10; xii. 2; Phil. ii. 6—11; and especially John x. 11, 17, and vi. 51.

II. OF THE SACRIFICE OF OUR BODIES (Rom. xii. 1). If in separating the body from common uses and yielding our bodies instruments of righteousness to God (Rom. vi. 13), we seem to suffer inconvenience, privation, &c., it is not really so. This sacrifice brings "joy and gladness of heart." Not unselfdom are we conscious of the present gain. "Virtue is its own reward." The "testimony of the conscience" is no slight recompense. How great, for example, is the guerdon of purity!

"So dear to Heaven is saintly chastity  
That when a soul is found sincerely so  
A thousand liveried angels lacquey her,  
Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt,  
And in clear dream and solemn vision  
Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear," &c.

There is a story told of George Herbert which shows how little sacrifices become great feasts. On his way to a musical gathering, he stopped by the way to help a poor waggoner out of the ruts. Arriving late and bespattered with mud, he was commiserated for the loss and inconvenience he had sustained. But he would not allow that it was loss. "The remembrance," he said, "will bring music into the heart at midnight."

III. OF THE SACRIFICE OF OUR ALMS. True, they *are* loss when given to serve self, or for the praise of men. "Verily I say unto you, they have (*i.e.*, exhausted, ἀπέχουσαν) their reward" (Matt. vi. 2). Such givers get what they bargained for; they receive "their good things" (Luke xvi. 25). But then there was no oblation to God. A Scottish laird having put a crown piece by mistake into the plate, asked for it back again. On being told that he might put what he chose in, but take nothing out, he said, "Well, well, I suppose I'll get credit for it in heaven." "Na, na," was the just reply, "ye'll only get credit for the penny." But if the alms be true offerings to God, then they have both a present and an eternal reward. Present, in hearing the widow's heart sing for joy, and in the blessing of him that was ready to perish" (Job xxix. 13); eternal, in that "God is not unrighteous to forget." &c. (Heb. vi. 10), and that a "cup of cold water only" shall in no wise lose its reward (Matt. x. 42). Such gifts are the truest and safest investments (Prov. xix. 17).

"We lose what on ourselves we spend,  
We have as treasure without end  
Whatever, Lord, to Thee we lend."

There is on record an admirable prayer of Thomas Sutton, the pious founder of the Charterhouse, "O Lord, Thou hast given me a large estate, give me a large heart." We cannot lose what we give away.

IV. OF THE SACRIFICE OF OUR OBLATIONS. We use "oblations" here in the liturgical sense of the word, *i.e.*, of the oblations of bread and wine in the Holy Communion. For these were anciently, and should be still, solemnly offered to God, as our thank-offerings, as a sort of first-fruits of His creatures. And now consider how they are given back to us. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion (κοινωνία, the joint participation in) of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (1 Cor. x. 16.) We have presented to the Divine Majesty bread and wine, and He gives us in return the body and blood of our Lord (*ib.*, xi. 24, 25).

V. OF THE SACRIFICE OF WORLDLY PROSPECTS, &c. Men often speak of the sacrifices they have had to make for the sake of their religion. And time was when great sacrifices were demanded; these are sometimes demanded still. But they involve no loss, no real and abiding injury. On the contrary, they are actually, and in the long run, a gain. "There is no man that hath left houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark x. 29, 30). On which

Bengel beautifully remarks that nature gives us each but one father and one mother, but the Church gives us many. (Cf. Rom. xvi. 13.) "What shall I do," said Amaziah, "for the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel?" "And the man of God answered, The Lord is able to give thee much more than this" (2 Chron. xxv. 9). Who had made more sacrifices than St. Paul? And yet who was it wrote of "having nothing, yet possessing all things?" (2 Cor. vi. 10). The man who had such loved and loving friends as Rom. xvi. proves him to have had, cannot be called poor. Well might he write, "I have all and abound" (Phil. iv. 18). The sacrifices he had made procured him a continual feast. It is the same with all our sacrifices. The Great King cannot receive gifts, but he must return them "according to his royal bounty" (1 Kings x. 13). The Greatest Giver in the world will never be outdone in generosity by king Solomon. (A beautiful illustration of the leading thought of this homily will be found in one of Mrs. Gatty's "Parables from Nature," called "The Circle of Blessing," 2nd series, 6th ed., pp. 5 sqq.)

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

**Ver. 6.—The Ark of the Covenant.** The ark was the heart of the temple. For it the shrine was erected. It was regarded as the throne of Jehovah. Hence the reverence with which it was approached. In itself the ark was not very remarkable. It was a chest  $2\frac{1}{2}$  cubits long, and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cubits deep and broad, made of wood covered with gold; the lid, called "the mercy-seat," being of pure gold, having the cherubim at its ends. For its construction see Exod. xxv., where it is placed first as the most important of all the furniture of the tabernacle. Describe its connection with the people's entrance to Canaan, leading them through the Jordan, and heading the procession round Jericho. A superstitious sanctity was attached to it later. The outward symbol was supposed to have the efficacy which belonged only to that which it symbolized. It was carried into battle (1 Sam. iv.) under this delusion, but the ark could not save a people from whom God had withdrawn. Their superstition was rebuked by the defeat of the army, and the capture by the Philistines of the ark itself. Show how often in Church history the sign has been substituted for the thing signified, to the injury of God's cause. Though the superstitious belief in the ark was always rebuked, its sanctity was vindicated: by its avenging progress through the cities of Philistia, and by the punishment of Uzzah. Moreover, a blessing came with it to those who received it aright, e.g., to the house of Obed-Edom. The ark had been brought up to Jerusalem by David amid national rejoicing and placed in a tent prepared for it; now it found its abiding place in Solomon's temple. Throwing on the ark the light of the Epistle to the Hebrews, let us remind ourselves of certain religious truths to which it bore silent witness. These will be suggested by the contents of the ark, by its covering, by the mode of approaching it, and by its uses in worship.

**I. THE ARK SUGGESTED THAT THE COVENANT RESTED ON LAW.** The safe custody of the material tables of stone implied the moral observance of the precepts inscribed on them. "There was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone," &c. (If we are to understand Heb. ix. 4 as asserting that Aaron's rod and the pot of manna were actually inside the ark, they had probably disappeared by Solomon's time.) The term "a covenant" is only used by way of accommodation, when applied to the relation between man and God. Such a "covenant" is merely a promise, which God makes dependent on the fulfilment of certain conditions; e.g., the promise after the flood is called a "covenant." So the covenant of Sinai was a promise on God's part, conditioned by the observance of the ten commandments on man's part. This was proclaimed by the presence of the tables of the law in the ark of the covenant. Show from Scripture and experience that bliss is conditioned by obedience. There is nothing lawless either in morals or in nature.

**II. THE ARK PROCLAIMED THAT MERCY CAME BETWEEN MAN AND THE BROKEN LAW.** "The mercy-seat" covered "the tables." The value of mercy was typified by the

pure gold of the capporeth. Exhibit the necessity of mercy to men who are prone to evil and forgetful of good. Illustrate it from God's dealings with Israel, and Christ's goodness to His disciples. The publican struck the keynote of true prayer when he exclaimed, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" Compare Psalm li. Show how the sense of our want of mercy grows with our sensibility to the sinfulness of sin. Paul the apostle an example of this: "of sinners I am the chief."

III. THE ARK DECLARED THAT AN ATONEMENT MADE MERCY POSSIBLE. Describe the day of atonement; the sacrifice offered; the high priest entering the holy of holies with the blood which he sprinkled on the mercy-seat. Even he could only draw near to the mercy-seat after the sacrifice (compare Heb. ix.) "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission." Apply this to the sacrifice of "the Lamb of God," who was "wounded for our transgressions," whose "blood cleanseth from all sin." Describe him as the High Priest in the Holiest of all, having opened the way for all sinners to the abounding mercy of God.

IV. THE ARK ENCOURAGED MEN TO DRAW NEAR TO GOD. The law (represented by the tables) was broken; but the mercy of God (represented by the capporeth) was revealed; and the atonement (represented by the sprinkled blood) was provided; so that God fulfilled His promise about the mercy-seat. "There will I commune with thee."

Apply the teaching of this subject to those conscious of guilt, burdened by sorrow, &c. "Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."—A. R.

Vers. 10, 11.—*The Presence of the Lord in the House of the Lord.* The Shechinah, which is here referred to, was a most brilliant and glorious light, usually concealed by a cloud; a fit emblem, therefore, of Jehovah, the God of light and of glory, who is veiled from His creatures. As the visible symbol of the Divine presence, "the pillar of cloud and fire," had gone before Israel in the wilderness, proving their guide and defence. Suddenly and mysteriously it appeared in the new temple of Solomon, at the festival of dedication, giving Divine sanction to the work, and assuring all beholders that Jehovah had made that His dwelling-place. Not only was the holy of holies filled with the cloud, but the holy place also, indeed, the whole building was permeated by it, so that all the building was henceforth holy. The signs of the Divine presence are different now, but the reality of it may be consciously felt. "Where two or three are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." The New Testament counterpart of this manifestation is found in the upper room on the day of Pentecost, when "suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting" (Acts ii. 2). Compare these two manifestations: the splendour of the temple, with the poverty of the upper room; the narrowness of national rejoicing, with the breadth of world-wide preaching, &c. Let us seek the changeless inward truth underlying the changeful outward form which embodies it.

I. THE PREPARATION FOR THE DIVINE PRESENCE. Read the account of that which, on the part of the people, had preceded this display. 1. *Sacred memories were recalled.* The worn tent, the ark, the holy vessels, had just been brought in (ver. 4), and glorious yet tender associations were connected with each. The revival of old impressions made in youth, &c., makes the heart sensitive to the Spirit of God. Give examples. 2. *Divine law was enthroned.* "Nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone" (ver. 9). Disobedience to God's commands, forgetfulness of them, unfit us for seeing Him. It deteriorates character, debases the heart. "Who shall ascend unto the hill of the Lord? he that hath clean hands and a pure heart," &c. 3. *God's claims were recognized.* By the completion of the temple, by the multitudinous sacrifices (ver. 5). The willingness to give ourselves up to God prepares us to see Him as our God. Not the intellectual research, but the reverent submission discovers Him. "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." "He that doeth the will of my Father shall know of the doctrine." "We beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present yourselves a living sacrifice,"

&c. 4. *Earnest prayers were offered.* Solomon's prayer, which follows, was but the formal and public utterance of many secret prayers on the part of himself and others. See how often he spoke to God about this building, and how often God spoke to him. He and his people prayed above all things that the special glory of the tabernacle might be granted to the temple. Now the prayers were answered. "Ask and ye shall receive," &c. The apostles expected the Holy Spirit; but in order to receive the fulfilment of the Lord's promise, "they continued, with one accord, in prayer and supplication."

II. THE EFFECTS OF THE DIVINE PRESENCE. We do not refer to the special and immediate effects of the *cloud*, but to the moral and religious effect of the *presence* thus symbolized. 1. *It restored significance to old symbols.* The ark had lost much of its sanctity in the eyes of the people, as the conduct of Uzzah showed. This naturally arose from its frequent removals, its uncovering, its capture by the Philistines, and most of all from the absence of the Shechinah. Now the old veneration was restored to it, because its real significance was re-established. Apply this thought to churches, to their organizations, to their sacraments, &c. How often these are like the cloudless ark. They want the realized presence of God to make them vivid with life. 2. *It testified to God's acceptance of the new building.* Reverence and awe fell on all the worshippers. True "consecration" arises from the signs of the Divine presence given to the faithful. The conversion of a sinner, the uplifting of a fallen disciple, &c., these are the evidences we look for that worship and work, place and people, are accepted of God. 3. *It confirmed the faith of some, and inspired faith in others.* From childhood they had been told of the appearance of the glory of the Lord in olden days. Now, for the first time, they saw it, and doubt vanished before the light. A great turning to God on the part of the unrighteous, or some similar spiritual evidence of the Divine power amongst us, would do more than all controversy to destroy scepticism. 4. *It proclaimed God's readiness to hear prayer.* With what confidence Solomon could pray after this! The realization that God is near us is our highest encouragement to speak to Him. "Because he hath heard me in time past, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live."

If such be the glory and bliss of God's presence on earth, what will it be to stand before His throne in heaven?—A. R.

Vers. 10, 11.—*The Glory-cloud.*—Never did Solomon appear so much "in all his glory" as on this memorial day of the dedication of the temple. The solemnities of the service, the procession of the sacred ark from the city of David into its resting-place, the robed priests, the rapturous multitude, the unnumbered sacrifices, the music and the songs, must have formed altogether a marvellous spectacle. But of all the incidents of the day none could be compared with that of the sudden appearance of the Shechinah—the glory-cloud. This introduced a new supernatural element. The rest was human—man's handiwork, man's worship, man's glory; this was Divine—the miraculous sign of the present and approving God. It raises the scene above comparison with any similar scene in the history of any other nation. Other peoples have reared their gorgeous temples, and kings and priests have gone in solemn pomp and circumstance to consecrate them. But what shrine has ever been honoured like this? Altars to false gods innumerable have been reared, but where has been the fire from heaven to kindle their sacrifices? Idol temples dedicated—where the radiant cloud of the Divine presence? The priests were too much dazzled by the shining splendour to continue their ministrations. Solomon might well be filled with adoring wonder. "But will God indeed?" &c. (ver. 27). Many Scripture examples of the way in which miraculous revelations of the presence of God overawe the spirits of men: Jacob at Bethel, Moses before the burning bush, Elijah at the mouth of the cave, the disciples of Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration, &c. Solomon's, however, was not so much an emotion of fear, but of sacred reverence and glad surprise. The appearance of the cloud set the seal of Divine acceptance on the temple and its service, linking it with all the glorious associations of the past—the climax and

**crown** of a long series (900 years long, perhaps) of miraculous Divine manifestations. But look on it now as prophetic of a more glorious future, as imaging forth to the men of that age higher forms of Divine manifestation that in the fulness of time should come to pass.

**I. THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST.** When the eternal Son of the Father laid aside the "form of God," and took upon Him "the likeness of sinful flesh," He filled the temple of a human body with the Divine glory. God came to dwell in very deed "amongst men upon the earth." The Infinite Unseen submitted to the conditions of a finite visible personality. The Light insufferable, "which no man can approach unto," veiled itself in a cloud of mortal flesh. "We beheld his glory," &c. (John i. 14). When the second temple was being built, many of the people were troubled at the thought that it would be so inferior to the first. The old men who had "seen the first house" wept (Ezra iii. 12; Haggai ii. 3). But the prophets of the time were commissioned to comfort them with the assurance that, though the old symbolic grandeur was gone, the glory of the latter house should be greater than that of the former. It would contain no ark, no mercy seat, no Shechinal, no heaven-kindled fire, no Urim and Thummim, no prophetic spirit; "Ichabod" would be written on its walls. But a nobler Presence than had ever been seen on earth before would irradiate it in the coming time: "Behold I will send my messenger," &c. (Mal. iii. 1); "Yet once, it is a while, and I will shake the heavens," &c. (Haggai ii. 6, 7). Every time the Lord Jesus, "the brightness of the Father's glory," entered the temple—as a babe in His mother's arms, as a boy girding Himself for His "Father's business," as a man in the fulness of His Divine authority, purging it from defilement, expounding in it the law of acceptable worship, making it the centre of His beneficent healing ministry—He verified in some new form these prophetic words. The manifestations of the present Deity in the olden times "have no glory in this respect by reason of the glory that excelleth," even "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Do we ask, "Will God in very deed dwell?" &c., the answer comes back to us, "Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest," &c. (1 Tim. iii. 16), "Immanuel, God with us" (Matt. i. 23). That outshining radiance in the temple was dazzling, almost repellent, deepening the sense of distance, creating fear; this Divine apocalypse is infinitely attractive, gives unmistakable proof of sympathetic personal nearness, awakens grateful, trustful, and adoring love.

**II. THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT.** The manifestation of God in the person of His Son was preparatory to the richer grace—the actual impartation of Himself by His Spirit to the individual souls of men (see Eph. iv. 8 sqq.; 2 Cor. vi. 16). The dispensation of the Spirit is the ultimate fact. In this God communicates Himself in the highest form of revelation, and the most intimate fellowship of which man is capable. The "dwelling" of the Holy Ghost in every new-born soul, in every assembly of true spiritual worshippers, in the "one body" of the universal Church, is prefigured in the scene before us. The day of the dedication of the temple finds its antitype in the "day of Pentecost." Place these manifestations side by side. As you trace the lines of comparison between them, how glorious does the Christian fact appear! The one was material in its nature—a bright and beautiful vision for the eye, appealing indirectly through the senses to the soul; the other intensely spiritual—a blessed overpowering influence, seizing at once on the minds and hearts of the people, the flowing in of a Divine life. And though there was something for the eye and ear, its form was such as to suggest most strikingly that living word of truth and holy fire of love which the heart alone can know. The one was diffuse, general, indiscriminate—a bright, scattered cloud filling the place;—the other was distinct and personal. The Spirit of God deals not with companies of men, but with isolated souls. There was a separate tongue of flame on the head of each. Not the *place* merely, but the *men*, each according to his own individuality, was "filled with the Holy Ghost." The one manifestation concealed more than it revealed. It was the sign of God's presence, but it made the people feel that He is indeed a "God that hideth himself." They

could not really "behold his glory." They "saw through a glass"—a cloud—"darkly." The "dispensation of the Spirit," though it did not remove fleshly restrictions, brought in that blessed condition of things in which the soul has such a thrilling sense of Divine communion as scarcely to need any material help to the apprehension of it, and almost to forget the intervening veil. The one manifestation was local and exclusive, confined to the central shrine of Jewish worship, distinguishing the Jewish people from all the world besides; "to them belonged the glory." The grace of the Spirit is God's free gift to all mankind, "shed on us abundantly" (Joel ii. 28; Acts x. 45; Titus iii. 5). The Spirit is the exclusive possession of none of the churches, owns no human creed, or ritual, or ecclesiastical boundary rather than another, dwells with all who call upon the same redeeming Lord. The one manifestation was transitory, served a temporary purpose. The "glory" soon departed again, and returned to the heaven from whence it came. The other is an enduring reality. The Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, "abides with us for ever," the spring of an imperishable life, the pledge and prophecy of the unfading glory of God's unveiled presence.—W.

Vers. 17—19.—*The Unfulfilled Purposes of Life.* Men often take credit to themselves for the designs of others. An inventor is forgotten, having died in obscurity, while others make fortunes from that secret which he won by the sacrifices of ease, strength, and time. [Give other examples of the non-recognition by men of purposes and schemes which were unfulfilled by their originators.] Solomon showed himself to be truthful and magnanimous when, in the presence of his people, he ascribed to his father the inception of the building which now stood before them in its splendour. How much more ready is God, who knows the hearts of all men, to recognize and reward the unfulfilled longings of men to serve Him! Briefly indicate the reasons which made it unsuitable that David should personally do this special service (compare 2 Sam. vii. with 1 Chron. xxii. 8). He stood not alone in his disappointment, therefore the following thoughts which arise from considering it may help others to bear *the unfulfilled purposes of their lives.*

I. DAVID PROPOSED TO DO SOME GREAT THING FOR HIS GOD. We too often seek to effect great things for ourselves, or for our children, rather than for God. David wished to erect the temple. It was to be (1) an expression of his own gratitude for his election, protection, and exaltation. (2) A memorial to the people of the Divine goodness which had so wondrously constituted them as a nation. (3) A recognition that God was the centre of the nationality, as His temple was of the city. As to it all the tribes should repair, so to Him should all their hearts be turned. Suggest some of the tendencies which hinder men from indulging and accomplishing great purposes for God; *e.g.*, the love of money, self-indulgence, materialism, scepticism.

II. DAVID HAD IT IN HIS HEART TO DO MUCH FOR THE BENEFIT OF OTHERS. He lived for his people. He shrunk neither from the perils of war nor the anxieties of rule that they might become a strong and noble nation. He did not wish to build the temple for himself, but for them and their children. Had he been allowed to begin it (when alone he was able to do so) in extreme old age, he would probably never have seen its completion; but he was content that generations yet to come should have that as their place of worship. Rebuke the tendency of men to ignore their responsibility to posterity. Sometimes in national finance, in ecclesiastical arrangements, &c., the fact that the benefit would only lie in the future and not in the present, is enough to check effort and sacrifice. Who has not heard the question, "What has posterity done for us?" Show the fallacy of this reasoning, and its sinfulness, because of the selfishness and ingratitude it reveals. Indicate some of the blessings we enjoy as a nation, and as churches, from the labours and sacrifices of our predecessors who did not count even life dear to them.

III. DAVID WAS PREVENTED BY CIRCUMSTANCES FROM FULFILLING HIS PURPOSE. Wars, unsettlement, infirmities of age, &c., were some of these. They were beyond his control, but not beyond God's. Still the purpose was, as we have said, a right one. Give examples from modern life: *e.g.*, (1) The young man who longs to become a minister of God's truth, but is compelled to labour for the support of himself

and others. (2) The Christian whose heart goes out with yearning over the lost, who lies a helpless invalid in some solitary room. (3) The child-disciple, stirred with noble enthusiasm, with splendid promise of future power in the Lord's kingdom, taken away in youth from the home and the world which seemed so sorely to want him, &c.

IV. DAVID MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR OTHERS TO DO WHAT HE COULD NOT DO. See an account given of the treasures he accumulated for the house of the Lord, the musical service he prepared, the plans for the building, &c. How unlike those who say, "if I cannot do this no one else shall;" or, with less selfishness, "I cannot do it, let others take all the burden if they are to have all the honour." Show how we can help others in doing their work, and so indirectly serve our God. It may not be possible for you to go abroad amongst the heathen; but you can support those to whom it is possible. Perhaps you cannot, from want of time, or suitability, teach the children or visit the sick; but you can invite others to do this, or encourage and sustain them in it.

V. DAVID'S NOBLE PURPOSE WAS FULFILLED BY HIS SON. This was God's design and promise (ver. 19). (1) *Encouragement to parents.* We live again in our children. "Instead of the fathers shall be the children," &c. By training a child for God, we may carry out, through him, the wish we could not execute. Parents multiply thus the possibilities of their own lives. Special encouragement here for weak and overburdened mothers. They cannot do public work for Christ, but through their children they can, e.g., Eunice and Monica moved the world through Timothy and Augustine. (2) *Lesson to children.* What your parents used to do for God, you are to continue; what they could not do, you are to fulfil.

VI. DAVID'S UNACCOMPLISHED PURPOSE WAS RECOGNIZED AND RECOMPENSED BY THE LORD. "Thou didst well that it was in thine heart." God knows what is in us of good as well as of evil. He approves the motive even when the effort fails. He sees the issue of every right purpose in all its width and depth. When Mary anointed her Lord she did more than she imagined; for she was the high priest anointing the Priest and King of Israel. In the day of judgment the righteous will be amazed at the issues and the rewards of their humble services, and with astonishment will ask, "Lord, when saw we thee?" &c. "And the king shall answer, and say unto them, Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me."—A. R.

Vers. 28.—*The Prayer of Dedication.* Describe the scene at the dedication of the temple. Note the fact that it is a king who leads his people to God's footstool. Show the influence of earthly rulers, who not only affect surrounding nations by their policy, but degrade or exalt the moral life of their people by their personal character, and by the tone of their court. Our reasons for thankfulness in the present reign. Contrast the influence of Victoria with that of Charles II. or George IV. Apply the same principle to other kings of men, i.e., to rulers of thought in literature and science. How heavy the responsibility of those who use their kingliness to lead men from God into the dreariness of scepticism; how glorious the powers they may employ to exalt the Lord our God. Solomon is a proof that wisdom is better than knowledge. On this occasion he prayed as the representative and leader of others. A prayer so prominent in Scripture, so remarkable in circumstances, so acceptable to God, deserves consideration, that we may see its elements. It presents the following characteristics:

I. GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE PAST. "In everything give thanks" (1 Thess. v. 18). "By prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make your requests known" (Phil. iv. 6). "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord" (Psa. xcii. 1). "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits" (Psa. ciii. 2). Notice the causes of Solomon's thanksgiving: (1) *God's goodness to his father* (ver. 24). Home blessings so wholly unmerited, so richly beneficial. (2) *Divine deliverance from bondage* (ver. 51). Egypt a type of sorrow, slavery to evil habit, &c. (3) *Separation and consecration for God's purposes* (ver. 53). The honour of this. Its responsibilities. Its signs. (4) *Rest and quietude* (ver. 56).

"He hath given rest unto his people Israel." The blessedness of peace to a country, exemplified by the contrast between Solomon's and David's reigns. The freedom from harassing anxieties experienced by many is from God. The rest of heart, which may be ours amidst the distresses of life, is from Him. "Peace I leave with you" (John xiv. 27). "Heart quiet from the fear of evil" (Prov. i. 33). See also 2 Cor. iv. 8. For all such blessings we should give God thanks.

II. CONFIDENCE IN THE PROMISES. (See ver. 29 as example.) Show how the patriarchs ever reminded God of His promises. Illustrate also from the pleadings of Moses and the prophets. Prove from Christ's own words that the promises are renewed and enlarged for us, and that only on them can our expectancy of blessing be founded. The utility of prayer cannot be demonstrated by reason, but by revelation. In the spiritual realm we know Divine laws by Divine declaration, the truth of which is confirmed by the experience of those who, *fulfilling the required conditions*, test them. "Ask and it shall be given you" (Matt. vii. 7) is a promise. But appended to it is the requirement of faith. "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. xi. 6). "According to your faith, so be it unto you." See also James i. 5—7; Matt. xxi. 22, &c.

III. ENLARGEMENT OF HEART (ver. 41, "moreover concerning a stranger," &c.) The prayer is remarkable on the part of a Jewish king. Give evidences of the narrowness and selfishness of the nation. We might expect this feeling in all its intensity on such an occasion as the consecration of this temple. But Solomon's sympathies overflowed national prejudices. The tendency of prayer is to enlarge the heart. Christians pray together who never work together. They who are nearest to God's throne are nearest to each other. As we pray, our yearnings go further afield, and we think kindly of the erring, pitifully of the lost, forgivingly of the wrong-doers.

IV. LONGING FOR THE GLORY OF GOD. Solomon's chief wish in regard to the temple is expressed in verse 60, "that all the people of the earth may know that the Lord is God, and that there is none else." Our Lord's prayer is like Solomon's in this, that it ends in an ascription of "the kingdom, and the power, and the glory," to God. So with all true prayer. It ends in praise. See how David, in the Psalms, prayed himself out of sadness into joy; out of confession into thankfulness and praise. If we ask something for ourselves, or for others, it should be with the implied wish that it may be granted or withheld, as may be, for our welfare and God's glory. The yearning of each Christian should be that of the Lord Jesus, "Father, glorify thy name."—A. R.

Vers. 38, 39.—*The Praying King.* One of the most remarkable features of this scene of the dedication of the temple is the place occupied, the part performed, in it by Solomon himself. He is the central figure, the chief actor. Both priest and prophet give place to him. The dedicatory prayer is a spontaneous effusion of his own devout feeling, and it is he who pronounces afterwards the benediction on the people. He stands before us here as a true type of that greater "Son of David," who is our Prophet, Priest, and King. There is a great deal in the tone of this prayer that betokens a soul fully alive to the solemn and momentous meaning of what was taking place in Jerusalem that day. It is not, indeed, to the service of the ancient Jewish temple that we should look for the most perfect models of devotion. New Testament revelations multiply and strengthen immeasurably our motives to prayer, enlarge its scope, open to us new grounds of assurance in it. "One greater than Solomon" has taught us how to pray, and revealed to us the path to acceptance in the merit of His own mediation. But as the life of religion in the soul of man is essentially the same in all ages, so the principles involved in prayer as the expression of it are the same. Two such rudimentary principles appear in this passage, viz., the sense of need prompting the suppliant to look heavenwards, and the recognition of something out of himself as the ground of hope for acceptance.

I. THE SENSE OF NEED, &c. It is the "plague of the heart"—the burden resting heavy there, the haunting sense of want or sadness in the secret soul, coupled with some kind of faith in Divine power—that moves men to pray. All true

prayer is the utterance of these inward impressions. If much of our so-called praying were subjected to this test, it is to be feared that it would be found very hollow and unreal, mere "words," a mere formal homage to custom—no deep, earnest, irrepressible longing of the soul inspiring it. Solomon begins to enumerate different calamities that may impel the people to pray, and then, as if overpowered by the mere vague, distant imagination of these possibilities, he says, "Whatsoever plague, whatsoever sickness," &c. How soon are we lost in the attempt to realize the manifold troubles of human life. We can understand and sympathize with individual griefs, but who can comprehend at all adequately the general sum of human woe, and take the weight of it sympathetically upon himself? Every man, however, knows where the universal evil specially touches himself. "Every heart knows its own bitterness." And with God there is both an infinite acquaintance with the whole and a special sympathy with each. There are some griefs that you lock up in your own bosom as secrets that none else must look upon.

"Not e'en the dearest heart, and next our own,  
Knows half the reasons why we smile or sigh."

But there is no grief you can conceal from Him. He became in the person of His Son "the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," that we might feel how He follows us, or rather, goes before us, in every path of suffering. There is room in the great fatherly heart of God for us all, with all our burdens, and we can never measure the uplifting and sustaining power that comes to us by casting ourselves and them upon it—"In everything by prayer and supplication," &c. (Phil. iv. 6, 7); "Cast thy burden upon the Lord," &c. (Psa. lv. 22). But this expression, "the plague of his own heart," has a deeper meaning. It opens to us all the dark sad mystery of personal sinfulness, the moral disease that lurks within. There are times when the most careless, reckless spirit has glimpses of the unwelcome truth that this, after all, is the deepest cause of its disquietude. The multiform, mysterious evil of the world has its central root in the world's heart. Something of that "root of all bitterness" is in every human heart. Here lies the fatal mischief. It is not the tribulations of outward life, it is yourself you have most reason to mourn over. Not so much from them, but from something in yourself you have need to pray to be delivered. Christ always taught, by word and deed, the vital connection between the external calamities and the internal "plague." He took upon Him our sicknesses and sorrows, not only to show us how they may be nobly borne, but that He might bring His power as the Great Physician of souls to bear upon the seat of our deadly disease, and by the efficacy of His blood might heal and save us all. Go penitently in His name to the mercy-seat with the "plague of your heart," and you shall be redeemed from it.

II. THE RECOGNITION OF SOMETHING OUT OF ONE'S SELF AS THE GROUND OF HOPE. This essential element in true prayer is suggested by the words, "And shall stretch forth his hands towards this place." An interesting view is here given us of the relation of the temple to the individual religious life of the people. It was intended to be a witness to the unseen, a help to faith, an incentive to all holy thought and feeling. It stood through all the changes of time, the shifting lights and shadows of the world around it, as an impressive symbol of the "everlasting covenant." It enshrined the "sure mercies of David." Within its hallowed enclosure were gathered the sacred historic records and relics, and the types and shadows of "better things to come." It told both of what God had done and what He had promised—the monument of the glorious past, the prophecy of the brighter future. There was deep meaning, then, in the suppliant "stretching forth his hands towards that house," as expressive of the attitude of his soul towards that which it symbolized. When some lonely worshipper in a distant corner of the land, some patient sufferer, some soldier in his agony on the field of battle, some captive, like Daniel, in a strange country, directed his eyes towards the holy place, it was a sort of pathetic appeal to God's own faithfulness, a silent but eloquent plea that He would not forget His covenant, would fulfil the hopes that He Himself had

awakened, and not for their sakes alone, but for His own truth and mercy's sake, would hear and save. In all this the temple was a type of something nobler, diviner than itself. The temple was the shadow, the substance is in Christ. "In him are hid all the treasures," &c. The cross of Christ, in which all the promises are confirmed and sealed; the cross, which is both the altar of the Redeemer's sacrifice and the throne of His sovereignty, is the shrine of "truth and grace" to men. The glory alike of the past and of the future is centred, focussed there.

"All the light of sacred story  
Gathers round its head sublime,"

and from it there streams forth an ever-brightening radiance into the otherwise dark futurity. It stands the connecting link between heaven and earth, the meeting-place of God and man, the key to all human history, the basis of our immortal hope. Here, then, on this central object alike of Divine and human interest, must the eye of the suppliant be fixed. It is that pledge of Divine love and faithfulness, external to ourselves, embodied in the cross of Christ, that we must plead if we would find acceptance in our prayer. When God has thoroughly taught us what the "plague of our own heart" means, and has unveiled to us the blessed mystery of His mode of curing it, it will be the sustained habit of our life to stand as suppliants before Him "in the name of Jesus." Thus alone can we so link ourselves with the sanctities of a higher world as to make our common life Divine.—W.

**Ver. 33.**—The consecration of the temple was the grandest religious ceremony of the old covenant. It is important—

I. BECAUSE IT CENTRALIZES THE WORSHIP OF THE THEOCRACY.

II. BECAUSE IT SUPPLIES A TYPE OF THE SPIRITUAL TEMPLE which is to be reared in the Church and in every Christian soul. Solomon, as the king chosen of God, represents in this service of consecration the entire theocracy. The temple is essentially a house of prayer, as is manifest from the words of the consecration. "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 . . . hear thou in heaven." It is the sanctuary of the invisible God, and its gates stand open to the multitude, who come to worship and to offer sacrifice. Instead of a statue, such as was found in the idol temples, the priests of the true God place in their sanctuary the ark of the covenant, containing the law, the Divine expression of the holy will of God. The altar of sacrifice, placed in front of the sanctuary, reminds the people of their transgressions, while at the same time the sacrifice of the victims is prophetic of the future redemption. The consecrating prayer opens and closes with adoration. It spreads before God all the wants of the people, and asks from Him deliverance in every time of need (ch. ix. 3). It enumerates first temporal distresses, but the whole petition culminates in the ever-recurring pleading for forgiveness. This is the burden of the whole temple service, and this character is reproduced in Christian worship. In the time of its highest spirituality there were no properly consecrated Christian temples. *Aras non habemus* said Minutius Felix. A temple is nevertheless a necessity of worship; and we are free to recognize this apart from any superstitious notion, and remembering that while the heaven of heavens cannot contain the Most High, He yet condescends to dwell in the humble and contrite heart. There has been no longer a sanctuary in the old exclusive sense, since the blood was shed which has redeemed the whole earth to God. Our houses of prayer are not now more holy in themselves than our homes. Let us consecrate them by consecrating ourselves to God, and rendering to Him the worship which is His due—the sacrifice of our whole being. Let our prayers, like that of Solomon, begin and end with adoration, and let the burden of them be the expression of our repentance for sin. Let them have, like the prayer of the theocratic king, a breadth of intercession for the whole people of God, and let them lay at the foot of the cross the burden of the woes of humanity and the needs of the Church.—E. de P.

Vers. 41—43.—*The Stranger's Interest in the Temple.* Kindly human sympathy is one of the most marked characteristics of this prayer of Solomon. This is seen in the way in which he enters into various supposed conditions of need and suffering among his people; takes the burden and the "plague" upon himself as if it were his own; a true intercessor on their behalf. His royalty assumes here the aspect of fatherhood. The model king is one in heart and interest with those over whom he rules. We are reminded, too, that before the "mercy-seat" of God all human distinctions are lost. All suppliants stand on one common level, subject to the same dangers and necessities. All true prayer, therefore, is thus broad in its sympathies. But in this passage the king's supplications take a wider range than the needs of his own people. He pleads for the "stranger," the foreigner from a "far country." This is strictly in harmony with the Divine economy of the time, however much it may seem to be otherwise. It is remarkable how much there was in the Mosaic law that was expressly intended to enforce on the people a generous regard for those who were beyond their pale. They were commanded not to "vex a stranger" (Exod. xxii. 21), to relieve his poverty (Levit. xxv. 35), even to "love" him as "God loveth him in giving him food and raiment" (Deut. x. 18, 19), and all this in memory of the fact that they themselves were once "strangers in the land of Egypt." Strangers, moreover, were to be permitted to hear the solemn reading of the law in the "year of release" (Deut. xxxi. 12), and to offer sacrifices on the same conditions as themselves. "One law and one manner shall be for you and for the stranger that sojourneth with you" (Num. xv. 16). So that Solomon gave expression to the spirit of the dispensation to which he belonged when he thus prayed. Certain broad truths underlie this prayer—

I. **JEHOVAH'S UNIVERSAL SOVEREIGNTY.** He is the "God of the whole earth," and not merely of any particular portion of it (Isa. liv. 5). "Is he the God of the Jews only and not of the Gentiles?" (Rom. iii. 29.) "The God of the spirits of all flesh" (Num. xvi. 22). The whole Mosaic economy was built on the grand truth of the unity and absolute world-wide supremacy of Jehovah. The heathen, according to their principle of local deities, might acknowledge the God of the Hebrews as having authority over his own, but a Hebrew who should in any way recognize the gods of other nations and think of Jehovah merely as a national deity would be a traitor to the commonwealth. The only living and true God can have no rival. The gods of the nations are idols, and "an idol is nothing in the world"—"a lying vanity," a vile "abomination." "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God" (1 Cor. viii. 4, 5; x. 20). To "know God," to have "him whom they ignorantly worship" declared to them, is "eternal life" to men. The absence of this knowledge is death. The curse and misery of the world is that it "knows not its God." Solomon here dimly recognizes this truth; and the case he contemplates is that of some child of the Universal Father in whom the sense of need has been awakened, "coming from a far country" to "seek the Lord, if haply he may feel after him and find him" (Acts xvii. 27, 28).

II. **THE REPRESENTATIVE CHARACTER OF ISRAEL.** They were a representative people in two respects. (1) Inasmuch as they were called to bear witness to the glory of the "great name" of Jehovah. His name is the symbol of His personality, the attributes of His being and character—spirituality, purity, righteousness, love, &c. Their mission was to make known to mankind the God who had revealed Himself in wondrous forms to them. How they failed to rise to the height of this mission their national history only too sadly tells. The utterances of the psalmists and prophets are full of the spirit of it, but all this was far above the comprehension of the great mass of the people. They utterly mistook the meaning of the distinction conferred upon them, and God taught them by the discipline of subjection and captivity the lesson that in the day of their national glory they failed to learn. In this mission as a witness Israel was a type of the Christian Church. Christ declared the Father's name to His disciples and He sent them forth on an errand like His own (John xvii. 18—26). How grand a vocation, to reflect the glory of His "great name" on the world's darkness, to say to the nations, "Behold your God!" (2) They

were a representative people also in the sense that in their history God illustrated the general method and the uniform laws of His moral government. The "strong hand and the stretched out arm" here suggests the marvellous manifestation of Divine power that marked the career of the people from the beginning, the whole course of providential training and moral discipline through which they passed. But the principles on which God deals with one nation are the principles on which He deals with all. He is no "respector of persons." The history of the "chosen people" unfolds His universal purpose and plan, illustrates unvarying laws, the conditions of all personal, social, and national life. And so it comes to pass that after every review of Israel's experiences we may say, "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples," &c. (1 Cor. x. 11).

III. THE ATTRACTION OF THE TEMPLE FOR ALL LONGING HUMAN HEARTS AS THE SCENE OF GRACIOUS DIVINE MANIFESTATION. That which made it the centre of interest to pious Jews made it so also to earnest souls of other lands. The truth and mercy symbolized and enshrined there—promises, atoning sacrifices, benedictions—answered to universal needs of humanity. Solomon supposes a case in which the vague sense of this should lead the "stranger in a far-off land" to look with longing eyes, or to bend his steps, towards "the house over which God's name is called." We have no historical record of strangers actually worshipping in the first temple as they did in that built after the captivity; but God said, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all people" (Isa. lvi. 6, 7; Mark xi. 17); and there may have been many who, with a far-reaching hand of faith, "took hold of His covenant" as established there.

IV. THE RESPONSE GOD GAVE TO EVERY TRUE SUPPLIANT, WHOEVER HE MIGHT BE. "Hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place," &c. This intercessory prayer, we may be sure, was answered. God does not awaken holy yearnings in any soul that He will not satisfy. "In every nation, he that feareth him," &c. The sovereignty that reigns over all lands is that of Almighty Love. There is room in the infinite Father's heart for all, even the far-off "stranger," and "the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him."—W.

Ver. 49.—*Occasions for Prayer.* In the prayer of dedication Solomon suggests occasions on which it would be natural for men to turn to their God. The Divine Presence is constant, but our realization of it is not. Many require the shock of some unexpected or lamentable occurrence to rouse them to prayer. This effect, however, will only be seen in those who have, underlying their forgetfulness and sensuousness, an abiding (though sometimes inoperative) belief in God. This Israel for the most part had. Hence Solomon's belief that in their future times of distress and difficulty they would turn to Him who dwelt between the cherubims. Analyze the prayer, and see the following occasions suggested as those in which supplication would be natural.

I. WHEN MEN MAKE VOWS AND PROMISES. Compare ver. 81 with the ordinances of Moses (Exod. xxii. 7—9). The oath was taken in the presence of God, because the thought of Him as the Searcher of hearts would induce serious consideration and careful exactitude, and because He was tacitly invited by His providence to confirm or to punish the spoken word. Show how the principle, right in itself, became abused and vitiated, so that Christ condemned the practices of His day (Matt. v. 33—37). Learn from the ancient practice (1) *that our utterances should be made as by men conscious of the nearness of the God of truth.* Apply this to the immoralities of some business transactions, to the prevalence of slander in society, &c. (2) *That our resolutions should be formed in a spirit of prayer.* How vain the pledge and promise of amendment, unless there be added to the human resolve the help of God's providence in circumstances, and the grace of His Spirit in the heart! Give examples of each.

II. WHEN MEN ARE INJURED OR DEFEATED BY THEIR ADVERSARIES. "When thy people Israel be smitten down before the enemy" (ver. 53). National defeat in war should lead to self-examination on the part of those smitten. Too often the investigation is applied only to material resources: incompetent officials are dismissed,

weakened regiments are strengthened, new alliances are formed, &c. The mischief may lie deeper. Sometimes God is calling the people not to redeem national honour, but to seek national righteousness. The teaching of the verse may be applied figuratively to defeats suffered by Christian controversialists or by philanthropic workers, &c. Every check in onward progress is a summons to thought and prayer. "In the day of adversity consider." Illustrate by examples in Scripture, e.g., by the defeat of Israel at Ai, and its issues.

III. WHEN MEN ARE TREMBLING UNDER NATURAL CALAMITIES. Reference is made in ver. 35 to the withholding of rain; in ver. 37 to "famine, pestilence, blasting, mildew, locust, and caterpillar." Such troubles were sent in vain to bring the Egyptians to repentance. Compare those plagues with Elijah's message to Ahab, and with the threats of other prophets. Such statements as Deut. xi. 17 enshrine an abiding truth. In the long run the violation of God's laws do bring disasters of the very kind specified here. If the law of industry be violated, the harvests fail; if the law of mutual dependence be ignored by nations, commerce is crippled, and impoverishment comes; if the laws against self-indulgence, pride, ambition, &c., be defied, the spendthrift has the result in poverty, the proud nation in the miseries of war, &c. Even the disasters which are accounted "natural phenomena," then, should lead the wise-hearted to prayer, the sinful to penitence; and God will hear in heaven His dwelling-place, and answer and forgive. Show how, during the ministry of our Lord, the cripples, the blind, the diseased came to Him. Their misery made them feel their need of what He alone could give, and many of them became conscious of their spiritual wants from considering first the want that was physical. As they were thus led, so the Church has been which in the Old Testament was oppressed most by the earthly wants, and in the New by the spiritual. Those in the far country learn, by beginning to "be in want," that God is calling them to arise and return to Him.

IV. WHEN MEN ARE CONSCIOUS OF THEIR SIN. All through this prayer reference is made to sin and to the consequent necessity for pardon (vers. 38, 46—50). Point out the climax in ver. 47: (1) "We have sinned"—have not kept in the ways of God—sin in its negative aspect; (2) "have done perversely"—acts of perversity; (3) "have committed wickedness"—the overwhelming passion which drives into corruption. The necessity of humble confession as an integral part of prayer from the lips of fallen man can readily be shown from Scripture. Examples of conscience of sin impelling to prayer seen in David (Psa. li), the publican (Luke xviii. 18). "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John i. 9).

V. WHEN MEN ARE GOING FORTH TO CONFLICT IN GOD'S NAME. "If thy people shall go out to battle against their enemy whithersoever thou shalt send them," &c. (ver. 44). We must not forget that Israel was a theocracy. David, for example, spoke of his foes as being God's foes. So had it been with Moses, Joshua, &c. The consciousness of that gives almost superhuman power. "Man, being linked with Omnipotency, is a kind of omnipotent creature," says Bacon. Even when the belief that one is on God's side is false, the belief itself is an inspiration. Examples from history of such belief well or ill founded—Joan of Arc, the Puritans, &c. In actual war no nation can fairly put up this prayer unless the cause of war is that of which we can say, "whithersoever thou shalt send." No mistake need exist in reference to foes whom Christ came to destroy. The promise, "Lo! I am with you," was the inspiration of the apostles as they confronted false philosophies, crass ignorance, brutal customs, degrading superstitions. Hence, if they were going forth to battle with such evils, the prayers of the Church went up on their behalf. Men were set apart for their Christian mission by prayer (give examples), and in their work they often turned to their intercessors, saying, "Brethren, pray for us!" Feeling our insufficiency to overcome the adversaries of the gospel, let us, like the apostles, "continue in prayer and supplication" till we are "endued with power from on high."—A. R.

Ver. 61.—*A Royal Benediction.* The prayer of Solomon is followed by a

benediction. "He stood and blessed all the congregation," &c. (vers. 54, 55). But though he assumed for the time the priestly function, his utterance was not cast into the usual form of priestly benediction. It was rather an ascription of praise to the God who had fulfilled His promises and given rest to His people, and an exhortation to them that they on their part should follow that path of life in which alone they could hope to realize the further fulfilment of those promises, and enjoy the heritage of blessing that was theirs. Lessons are suggested here that are of force and value for all time.

I. THE RELATION BETWEEN TRUE PRAYER AND PERSONAL RIGHTEOUSNESS. Solomon felt that all the impassioned supplications that he had been pouring out before the Lord, and all the sympathetic enthusiasm of the people in these temple services, would be but a mockery unless he and they were prepared to walk with all fidelity in the way of God's commandments. They would soon be leaving the sacred shrine of worship. They could not always be amid the ecstatic and rapturous associations of the temple. They must go back to the matter-of-fact, prosaic world, to their posts of honour and responsibility, to the privacy of their homes, to their haunts of busy life, to their paths of commerce and of labour. Let them worship there. Let them dwell with God there. Let them embody there, in all the forms of practical virtue, the spirit of devotion that has inspired them amid these hallowed scenes. The "statutes and commandments" of the Lord had reference in great part to the due observance of the ritual of temple worship, but they also claimed, as much then as now, to control the whole spirit and conduct of human life in all its aspects. The relation between prayer and conduct is of a twofold character. They act and react the one on the other. True prayer sheds a hallowing influence over the entire field of a man's daily activity. When his soul has been face to face with God, absorbed in Divine communion, the inspiration of holy thought and feeling of which he has been conscious will inevitably betray itself in the way in which he acts when he mingles with the things and the beings of earth. The glory of heaven that has shone upon him cannot fail to be reflected in the beauty of his character and deed. A prayerful spirit is an earnest, pure, upright, loving spirit, and such a spirit will govern the whole form and method and aim of a man's life. Prayer solves difficulties, clears one's vision of the path of duty, draws strength from Divine sources for all toil and suffering, raises the tone and level of moral action, fortifies the spirit for any emergency, fills the heart with the peaceful joy of a better world. On the other hand, the conduct of life necessarily affects for good or ill the spirit and efficacy of prayer. If it is needful to pray in order that we may live as Christians, it is equally needful that we should live as Christians in order rightly to pray. The importance of prayer as one chief function of spiritual life doubles the importance of all our actions, because our prayers are so much as our doings are. According as we stand towards the world, with all the social relationships and duties that belong to our place in it, so do we stand before the mercy-seat. Think, for instance, how the beneficial effect of *family prayer* may be nullified by the prevailing spirit of family life. By the discord that may be allowed to reign in it, by its lack of the graces of mutual respect and loving self-sacrifice, by the worldliness of its associations, the meanness of its ambitions, the frivolity of its pleasures, the vanity of its cherished societies—how completely may the soul of domestic devotion be destroyed. Let a man be morally reckless in the intercourse and transactions of daily life, and all freedom, "boldness," gladness in prayer is at an end. Anything like loving, confiding converse with the "Father who seeth in secret" is impossible to him. If he cannot look without fear and shame in the face of his fellow man, how shall he dare to look in the face of God? The "heavens become as brass" above his head which no voice of prayer can penetrate. When Saul's heart is thoroughly set in him to do evil it is vain for him to inquire of the Lord. "The Lord answers him no more, neither by Urim, nor by prophet, nor by dream." Let there be a Divine unity and harmony in our life. Let our conduct in all human relationships show us to be what, in our hours of devotion, we seem to ourselves to be. Let it be our ambition every day "to live more nearly as we pray."

II. THE RELATION BETWEEN PRACTICAL VIRTUE AND THE STATE OF THE SECRET HEART. A man's heart must be "perfect with the Lord" before he can walk acceptably in the path of His commandments. The old legal economy was not after all so superficial as it seemed to be. God's commandment was "exceeding broad." Literal as the moral laws were, and formal as the ceremonial precepts, they touched at every point the life of the spirit within. "Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law. That the man who doeth these things shall live by them" (Rom. x. 5), but the righteousness was not in the mere *doing*. David, the noblest representative of the spirit of the law, well knew that as it is from the fountain of the evil heart that all transgression proceeds, so from the purified heart springs all practical righteousness. "Create in me a clean heart, O God," &c. (Psa. li. 10). The glory of Christianity is that it not only recognizes this principle, but actually brings to bear on the heart the renewing, healing power. It cleanses the fountain of life within. The law could disclose the secret evil, convince of sin, rebuke, restrain, but it could not make men righteous. The gospel does. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness," &c. (Rom. x. 4). "What the law could not do," &c. (Rom. viii. 3, 4). Keep your heart in habitual contact with the highest sources of spiritual inspiration—in familiar converse with Him who is the fountain of truth and purity and love. Watch over its most secret thoughts and impulses. Guard its sensibilities from the contaminations of the world and the hardening influences of life. Seek to preserve the freshness of its Divine affections and the integrity of its allegiance to Christ, if you would walk as He did, "in loveliness of perfect deeds."

III. THE BENEFICIAL INFLUENCE OF A SACRED MEMORY. "As it is this day." Solomon would have that day to dwell in their memories and hallow all their days. Times of special Divine manifestation and highest religious consciousness show us what we may be, what God would have us to be, what is the true level of our spirit's life.—IV.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER IX. 1—9.

#### THE ANSWER TO SOLOMON'S PRAYER.—

This chapter opens with an account of God's second appearance to Solomon. It must not be supposed, however, from the apparent close connexion of this relation with the preceding narrative, that it stands to it in equally close chronological order. It probably finds a place here because the historian has grouped together all the suitable materials in his possession which related to the temple. But see on ver 1.

Ver. 1.—And it came to pass when Solomon had finished the building of the house of the Lord, and the king's house [ch. vii. 1], and all Solomon's desire which he was pleased to do [By "desire" we are not to understand "pleasure buildings" (cf. vers. 10, 19). The chronicler gives the true meaning; "all that came into Solomon's heart." It is, however, somewhat doubtful what works are comprehended under this term. 2 Chron. vii. 11 limits it to the two great erections already described—"all that came into his heart to make in the house of the

Lord and in his own house." But it is by no means certain that our author intended the word to be thus restricted; it is quite possible, e.g., that some of the buildings mentioned below (vers. 15—19) are to be included. But another question of much greater importance presents itself here. In the Divine communication of vers. 3—9 there is constant and unmistakable reference to the prayer of dedication (see especially ver. 3); in fact, this message is the *answer* to that prayer. It has been held, consequently, that the answer must have followed, if not immediately, yet soon after the petitions were uttered; if so, the dedication must clearly have taken place, not on the completion of the temple (chap. vi. 38), but on the completion of the palace, &c.; in other words, the temple must have been finished fully thirteen years before it was consecrated and occupied. Rawlinson suggests that the delay was perhaps occasioned by the circumstance that the furniture of the temple was not till then ready; but ch. vi. 38, Heb., seems to state distinctly that *all* the vessels and appointments of the sanctuary were finished at the date there given. Reasons have been given elsewhere (see note on ch. viii. 1) in support of the position that the dedication cannot

possibly have been delayed for so long a period, especially after the strenuous efforts which had been made to hurry on the undertaking. Nor does the text, when carefully examined, really require this hypothesis; indeed, it suggests some reasons for thinking that a considerable period must have intervened between the prayer and the response. For the tone of this response is unmistakably foreboding, if not minatory. Vers. 6-9 contain a stern warning. But there was nothing, so far as we know, in the attitude of Solomon or of Israel at the time of the dedication to call for any such denunciation. At that time, as the prayer surely proves, Solomon's heart was perfect with the Lord his God. But the response has unmistakably the appearance of having been elicited by signs of defection. The wide difference, consequently, between the spirit of the prayer and the tone of the answer suggests that some time must have elapsed between them, and so far supports the view that the dedication was not delayed until the palace, &c., was completed. And it is also to be remembered that the prayer of dedication had not been without acknowledgment at the time. The excellent glory which filled and took possession of the house was itself a significant and sufficient response. No voice or vision could have said more plainly, "I have heard thy prayer, I have hallowed this house." But when, some thirteen years later—about the very time, that is, when he was at the height of his prosperity, and when, owing to the completion of his undertakings, we might fear lest his heart should be lifted up with pride—when Solomon and his court began to decline in piety and to go after other gods, then this merciful message opportunely refers him to the prayer which he was in danger of forgetting, and warns him of the consequences of the apostasy to which he was tending.]

Ver. 2.—That the Lord appeared to Solomon the second time [see on ch. vi. 11, and cf. xi. 9; Solomon had received a message during the building of the temple], as he had appeared unto him at Gibeon [*i.e.*, in a dream (ch. iii. 5)].

Ver. 3.—And the Lord said unto him [This message is given at greater length in 2 Chron. vii. 12-22. Vers. 13, 14, *e.g.*, contain a reference to that part of the prayer which related to drought and rain], I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication [These two words are found similarly united in Solomon's prayer, vers. 38, 45, 54], that thou hast made [Heb. *supplicated*] before me; I have hallowed this house which thou hast built [*sc.* by the manifestation described ch. viii. 11. Cf. Exod. xxix. 43: "the tabernacle shall be sanctified" (same

word) "by my glory." In 2 Chron. we read, "I have chosen this place to myself for a house of sacrifice," where, however, it is worth considering whether instead of the somewhat singular *בית יי* the original text may not have been *בית יי*, as in ch. viii. 13] to put my name there [ch. viii. 29; cf. vers. 16, 17, 18, 19; also Deut. xii. 11; Luke xi. 12] for ever [ch. viii. 13. As Solomon offered it, so God accepted it, in perpetuity. That the house was subsequently "left desolate" and destroyed (2 Kings xxv. 9) was because of the national apostasy (vers. 8, 9)], and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually. [In ch. viii. 29 Solomon asked that God's "eyes may be open . . . towards the house." The answer is that not only His eyes shall be open, but eyes and heart shall be *there* (Ephes. iii. 20; see Homiletics on ch. iii. 5);—the eye to watch, the heart to cherish it.]

Ver. 4.—And [Heb. *And thou*, emphatic] if thou wilt walk before me as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart before me and in uprightness [cf. ch. iii. 6, 14; xi. 34. David was not perfect, as our author tells us elsewhere (ch. xv. 5; cf. ch. i. 6; 2 Sam. xxiv. 10). His integrity consisted in his unvarying loyalty to the true God. Even when overcome by that fierce temptation (2 Sam. xi.) he never faltered in his allegiance to the truth. There was no coquetting with idolatrous practices; cf. *Psa.* xviii. 20-24], to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgments [the echo of David's last words, ch. ii. 3, 4. It is probable, however, that the historian has only preserved the substance of the message. It is doubtful whether Solomon himself would remember the exact words]:

Ver. 5.—Then I will establish [same word as in ch. ii. 4, where see note. Surely he would remember this word as it would recall his father's charge to his mind] the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever [this is the answer to the prayer of ch. viii. 26] as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fall thee a man upon the throne of Israel. [2 Sam. vii. 12, 16; 1 Kings ii. 4; vi. 12; *Psa.* cxxiii. 12. But the primary reference is to ch. viii. 25; see Introduction, sect. III.]

Ver. 6.—But if ye shall at all [rather *altogether*, or *assuredly*] turn from following me [The A. V. entirely misrepresents the force of the Hebrew, *If to turn, ye shall turn*, which must mean complete, not partial, apostasy. Cf. 2 Chron. vii. 19, and 2 Sam. vii. 14, 15], ye or your children [as the promises of God are to us and our children (Acts ii. 39), so are His threatenings], and will not keep my commandments and my

statutes which I [LXX. *Μουσις*; *Qui facit per alium*, &c.] have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them [Exod. xx. 5; Deut. v. 9; xiii. 2]:

Ver. 7.—Then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them [Cf. Deut. iv. 26, 27; and for the fulfilment see 2 Kings xxv. 11, 21;] and this house which I have hallowed for my name [Jer. vii. 14] will I cast out of my sight [same expression, 2 Kings xxiv. 20]; and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among all people [the exact words of Deut. xxviii. 37. Similar words in Isa. xiv. 4; Micah vi. 16. Much the same punishment is denounced in Levit. xxvi. 14—38, and Deut. iv. 45, 63]:

Ver. 8.—And at this house, which is high [Heb. *And this house shall be high*, יְהִי עֲלִיּוֹן. Our translators were probably influenced by 2 Chron. vii. 21, the text of which is יִשְׂרָאֵל הָיָה עֲלִיּוֹן which would seem to be an emendation, designed to clear up the difficulty rather than an accidental variation of the text. But here the literal rendering is probably the truer, the meaning being “this house shall be conspicuous, as an example”—so the Vulg. *domus haec erit in exemplum*. The LXX. accords with the Hebrew text, ὁ οἶκος οὗτος ἕσται ὁ ὑψηλός, but the Syriac and Arabic read, “this house shall be destroyed.” Keil sees in the words an allusion *implicite* to Deut. xxvi. 19, and xxviii. 1, where God promises to make Israel עֲלִיּוֹן, and says “the blessing will be turned into a curse.” The temple should indeed be “high,” should be what Israel would have been, but it shall be as a warning, &c.; but this connexion is somewhat far-fetched and artificial. Thenius would read for עֲלִיּוֹן, עֲמִים “ruins,” after

Micah iii. 12; Jer. xxvi. 18; Psa. lxxix. 1; but it is hardly right to resort to conjectures, unsupported by a single version or MS., so long as any sufficient meaning can be extracted from the words as they stand, and no one can deny that “high” may surely signify “conspicuous.” Cf. Matt. xi. 23], every one that passeth by it shall be astonished. [עֲמִים primarily means to be dumb with astonishment, Gesen., *Theo.* iii. p. 1435] and shall hiss [חִסֵּץ, like “hiss,” is an onomatopoeic word. It does not denote the hissing of terror (Bähr) but of derision; cf. Jer. xix. 8; xlix. 17; Job xxvii. 23; Lam. ii. 15, 16. Rawlinson aptly remarks, as bearing on the authorship of the Kings, that this is a familiar word in Jeremiah (see ch. xviii. 16; xxv. 9; xxix. 18; l. 13; li. 37, in addition to the passages cited above), and that the other prophets rarely use it. The fact that much of this charge is in Jeremiah’s style, confirms the view taken above (note on ver. 4), that the *ipsissima verba* of the dream are not preserved to us. The author indeed could hardly do more than preserve its leading ideas, which he would naturally present in his own dress]; and they shall say, Why hath the Lord done thus unto this land and to this house? [Similar words Deut. xxix. 24, 25; Jer. xxii. 8.]

Ver. 9.—And they shall answer, Because they forsook the Lord their God who brought forth their fathers out of the land of Egypt [Based on Deut. xxix. 25. Solomon in his prayer referred repeatedly to this great deliverance, vers. 16, 21, 51, 53], and have taken hold upon other gods and have worshipped them and served them; therefore hath the Lord brought upon them all this evil

## HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—9.—*The Second Appearance to Solomon.* “Behold the goodness and severity of God” (Rom. xi. 22). To Solomon goodness, to Israel severity.

I. THE GOODNESS OF GOD is manifested—

1. *In revealing Himself to Solomon.* The greatest favour God can show us is to show us Himself; the greatest gift is to give us Himself.

“Give what Thou wilt, without Thee I am poor,  
And with Thee rich, take what Thou wilt away.”

“I will love him and will manifest myself unto him” (John xiv. 21). “I will come in to him and sup with him” (Rev. iii. 20). “We will make our abode with him” (John xiv. 23). There are no richer promises than these. Well may we exclaim, “*O altitudo!*” (Rom. xi. 33.) “O why should heavenly God to men have such regard!”

Yes, the riches, honour, glory, &c., given to Solomon were of small account compared with the good thoughts and high aspirations bestowed upon him. Riches

are such third-rate blessings that God bestows them indiscriminately on the evil and the good. But noble resolves and high purposes—"courtliness and the desire of (true) fame, and love of truth, and all that makes a man"—these He reserves for His children. Solomon's riches and glory proved his ruin; the revelations he received were the true source of his greatness.

2. *In warning Solomon.* The very kindest thing a friend can do for us is to admonish us when we are going wrong. "Thou mayest be sure that he that will in private tell thee of thy faults is thy friend, for he adventureth thy dislike and doth hazard thy hatred" (Sir W. Raleigh). God showed this proof of love to Solomon. In the night watches, in the darkness and silence, away from the glamour and flattery of the court, the Divine voice was heard in his secret soul. And the plainness of the warning was a part of its mercifulness. The trumpet gave no uncertain sound (vers. 5—8). God set before him that day "life and good, death and evil" (Deut. xxx. 15). By one to whom such wisdom had been vouchsafed, warnings should have been unneeded. But they *were* needed—and they were mercifully granted. The good Shepherd goes "o'er moor and fell, o'er crag and torrent" to bring back the straying sheep.

II. THE SEVERITY OF GOD IS EXHIBITED—

1. *In the punishment denounced against Israel.* "Cut off;" "cast out of my sight;" "a proverb and a byword;" "shall be astonished and shall hiss"—these are its terms. But observe: (1) None of these things needed to have befallen them. God had no pleasure in the death or dispersion of His elect people. It was their own fault if they were cut off. (2) These things were denounced in kindness to stay them in their sin and so to prevent their dispersion. These were the *sanctions* of that dispensation. "The law is not made for a righteous man, but," &c. (1 Tim. i. 9). (3) There was no disproportion or undue rigour in these penalties. What seems to us severity is really exact justice, or rather mercy, to the world. As Israel had been favoured above all peoples, so, in strict equity, should it be punished above all. "The glory, and the adoption, and the covenants," &c. (Rom. ix. 4), could not appertain to them without bringing with them "many stripes" for the disobedient. Those exalted to heaven shall be brought down to hell (Matt. xi. 23). It was necessary for *our* admonition that the chosen people should not afford the world the spectacle of a nation sinning unpunished (1 Cor. x. 11).

2. *In the punishment inflicted.* For how literally have these words been fulfilled! What an evidence of the truth of God the history of Israel supplies! This, at any rate, is no *vaticinium ex eventu*. "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke iv. 21). "A proverb and a byword"—eighteen centuries at least testify to the truth of these words. "Cast out of my sight;" let the horrors of the siege of Jerusalem (see Jos., B. J. v. ch. x.—xiii., vi. *passim*). "Never," he says, "did any other city suffer such miseries") explain to us these words. And there is not a country of Europe, there is hardly a city, in which the history of the Jew is not traced in blood, written within and without in "mourning and lamentation and woe." Claudius expelled them from Rome (Acts xviii. 2); our Edward I. drove them out of Guienne and England. "Ivanhoe" gives some idea of their treatment in this country; but a romance could not record a tithe of the horrors of which Clifford's Tower in York or the Jews' house in Lincoln could tell. And yet it is allowed that they have always been treated more tenderly in England than in the rest of Europe. But even here, and down to the present day, the word "Jew" is too often a name of hate. In Servia, in Moldavia and Wallachia, they are still the objects of fierce persecution and not always unmerited obloquy. Even the "Anti-Semitic League," now (1880) being organized in Germany, is a part of the "severity" of God, a proof of the "sure word of prophecy." In Jerusalem, again, the metropolis of their race, they are accounted the filth and offscouring of all things. At the Greek Easter the refrain is often heard in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, "O Jews, O Jews, your feast is a feast of apes." What a commentary, too, is the Jews' "place of wailing" on this scripture! The "holy and beautiful house" a desolation, the temple precincts trodden under-foot of the Gentiles! Conqueror after conqueror, pilgrim after pilgrim, has asked the question,

“Wherefore hath the Lord done thus?” &c., while the “ever-extending miles of gravestones and the ever-lengthening pavement of tombs and sepulchres” answer, “Because they have forsaken the Lord their God,” &c. (ver. 9; Jer. xxii. 8, 9).

“Tribes of the wandering foot and weary breast,  
When will ye fly away and be at rest?  
The wild dove hath its nest, the fox its cave,  
Mankind their country—Israel but the grave.”

*Application.* Rom. ii. 21. In the history of the Israelitish nation we may see the principle of God’s dealing with individual souls (see Keble’s Occasional Papers, &c., pp. 435 sqq.) But we may also read in it a warning for the Christian Church (Rev. ii. 5).

#### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—9.—*The Renewed Covenant.* This Divine manifestation was probably similar in form to that with which Solomon was favoured at the beginning of his reign, of which it is said, “In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night” (ch. iii. 50). We have no means of judging as to the precise time of this occurrence; but the close connection of thought between what God here says to Solomon and the prayer at the dedication (seen most clearly in 2 Chron. vii. 14, 15) leads us to suppose that it took place immediately after that event. It illustrates:

I. THE FIDELITY OF GOD AND THE BLESSED RESULTS THAT ATTEND IT. God’s faithfulness is seen (1) *in the answering of the prayer*—“I have heard thy prayer,” &c. The vision was itself an instant and very gracious Divine response. All true prayer is heard. No pure breath of supplication, the incense of the heart, ever ascends to Heaven in vain. God does not disappoint the hopes and longings He has Himself awakened. As the vapours that rise from land and sea sooner or later return again, distilling in the silent dew, descending in fruitful showers upon the earth—not one fluid particle is lost—so every cry of filial faith that goes up to the great Father of all comes back in due time in some form of heavenly benediction. And more, the answer is often far larger and richer than our expectations. He “doeth exceeding abundantly,” &c. (Eph. iii. 20). Solomon had prayed “That thine eyes may be open towards this house.” God answers, “Mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually.” The very heart of God dwells where His suppliant people are. This anthropopathic mode of speech is a gracious Divine accommodation to our human wants and weaknesses. God condescends to us that we may the better rise to Him. It is the necessarily imperfect yet most welcome expression of a sublime reality that we could not otherwise know. God has a tender “heart” towards us as well as an observant “eye.” And wherever we seek Him with all our hearts there His heart responds to the throbbing of ours—a sympathetic personal Presence, meeting our approach, pitying our necessities, giving love for love. Note, too, the constancy of this grace—“for ever,” “perpetually.” “The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” Wherever He records His name there He “dwells.” When He blesses, when He gives or forgives, it is “for ever.” If the grace is cancelled, if the benediction is withdrawn, the fault is ours, not His. “Though we believe not, yet He abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim. ii. 13). (2) *In the repetition of the promise*, “If thou wilt walk before me,” &c. (vers. 4, 5). The promise is reiterated as a sacred and inviolable engagement which God on His part will never break. “The sure mercies of David.” All Divine promises are sure. We have but to place ourselves in the line of their fulfilment and all is well with us. They are steadfast as the ordinances of heaven and earth. Natural laws are God’s promises in the material realm. Obedience to them is the sure path to physical well-being. Are His counsels in the moral and spiritual sphere likely to be less steadfast and reliable? Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the promises of His grace can never fail. “They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness” (Psa. cxi. 8).

II. THE INFIDELITY OF MAN AND THE FATAL CONSEQUENCES THAT FOLLOW IT. "But if ye shall at all turn from following me," &c. Here is a solemn note of warning, the presage of that guilty apostasy by which the Jewish people became in after years the most signal example to men and nations of the waywardness of human nature and the retributive justice of God. We are reminded that the faithfulness of God has a dark as well as a bright side to it. As the cloud that guided the march of the Israelites out of Egypt was light to them, but a source of blinding confusion and miserable discomfiture to their adversaries, so this and every other attribute of God bears a different aspect towards us according to the relation in which we stand to it, the side on which we place ourselves. Be true to Him, and every perfection of His being is a joy to you, a guide, a glory, a defence; forsake Him, and they become at once ministers of vengeance. Even His love, in its infinite rectitude and purity, dooms you to the penalty from which there can be no escape. Whether in the physical or the spiritual realms, one feature of the very beneficence of God's laws is that they must avenge themselves. Learn here (1) *that all human loss and misery spring from forsaking God.* "If ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children," then shall all these woes come upon you. All sin is a departure from the living God. "My people have committed two evils, they have forsaken me," &c. (Jer. ii. 13). Adam cast off his allegiance to God when He listened to the voice of the tempter. Idolatry in its deepest root has this meaning (see Rom. i. 21—28). Every sinful life is a more or less intentional and deliberate renunciation of God, and its natural results are shame, and degradation, and death. The course of the prodigal in Christ's parable is a picture of the hopeless destitution of every soul that forsakes its home in God. "They that are far from thee shall perish" (Psa. lxxiii. 27). (2) *That according to the height of privilege so is the depth of the condemnation when that privilege is abused.* The very height of the "hallowed house" shall make the ruin the more conspicuous and the more terrible. There is no heavier judgment that God pronounces upon men than when He says, "I will curse thy blessings." The best things are capable of the worst abuse. And when the highest sanctities of life are violated they become the worst grounds of reproach and sources of bitterness. The greater the elevation, the deeper and more dreadful the fall. "Thou Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven," &c. (Luke x. 15). (3) *That one inevitable penalty of transgression is contempt and scorn.* "Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among all people." "He that passeth by shall be astonished and shall hiss." "When the salt has lost its savour it is henceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under-foot of men" (Matt. v. 13). The wicked may be in honour now, but the time is coming when they "shall awake to shame and everlasting contempt."—W.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER IX. 10—23.

**SOLOMON'S BUILDINGS AND UNDERTAKINGS.**  
—So far the historian has spoken exclusively of the two greatest works of Solomon's reign, the Temple and the Palace, and principally of the former. Even the message just related was, as we have seen, the response to the prayer offered when the temple was consecrated. But he now proceeds to mention other proofs of Solomon's greatness, and of the prosperity of his reign—doubtless because the glory of Israel then reached its climax, and the author would be tempted to linger over these details because

of the dark contrast which his own time supplied—and this leads him to speak of the means by which all these enterprises were accomplished. The particulars here given are but fragmentary, and are grouped together in a somewhat irregular manner. It would seem as if both this account and that of the chronicler had been compiled from much more copious histories, each writer having cited those particulars which appeared to him to be the most interesting and important. But the design of the historian in either case is evident, viz., (1) to recount the principal undertakings of this illustrious king, and (2) to indicate the resources which

enabled him to accomplish such ambitious and extensive designs. These latter were (1) the alliance with Hiram, which secured him the necessary materials (vers. 11—14); (2) the forced labour of the subject races (vers. 20—23); and (3) the voyages of his fleet (vers. 26—28).

Ver. 10.—And it came to pass at the end of twenty years [seven of which were occupied on the temple and thirteen on the palace (ch. vii. 1)], when [or, *during which*. LXX. ἐν οἷς ἠκοδομήθη. This may well be the meaning of קָנָה אֲשֶׁר, though אֲשֶׁר, *qui*, undoubtedly sometimes has the sense of *quum*] Solomon had built the two houses, the house of the Lord and the king's house. [Observe how all the palaces are regarded as one house. Note on ch. vii. 1.]

Ver. 11.—(Now Hiram the king of Tyre [Here we have a parenthesis referring us back to ch. v. 8—10] had furnished Solomon with cedar trees and with fir trees and with gold [The gold is here mentioned for the first time. No doubt Hiram's shipping had brought it in before the Jewish navy was built. It was this probably that led to the construction of a fleet] according to all his desire), that then [this is the apodosis to ver. 10] king Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities [really they were mere *villages*. "It is a genuine Eastern trick to dignify a small present with a pompous name" (Thomson). But יָרַח is a word of very wide meaning] in the land of Galilee.

יָרַח lit., *circuit, region* (like *Ciccar*, ch. vii. 46), hence often found as here with the art. = *the region of the Gentiles* (Isa. ix. 1; 1 Macc. v. 15; Matt. iv. 15), so called because it was inhabited by Phœnicians (see 2 Sam. xxiv. 7, and Strabo, xvi. p. 767) originally designated but a small part of the considerable tract of country later known as the province of "Galilee," viz., the northern part in the tribe of Naphtali (Josh. xx. 7; 2 Kings xv. 29; Isa. ix. 1. Cf. Jos., Ant. v. 1. 18). It is easy to see why this particular region was surrendered to Hiram. (1) It was near his country (2 Sam. xxiv. 7); (2) the people were Phœnicians, allied to Hiram, but strangers to Solomon, both in race and religion; (3) Solomon could not with propriety alienate any part of Immanuel's land, or convey to a foreigner the dominion over the people of the Lord. Levit. xxv. 23 forbade the alienation of the land; Deut. xv. 15 the rule of a stranger.

Ver. 12.—And Hiram came out from Tyre to see the cities which Solomon had given him; and they pleased him not. [Heb. *were not right in his eyes*. It has been con-

jectured that Hiram had hoped for the noble bay of Acco or Ptolemais (Milman, Rawlinson), but surely he had seaboard enough already. It was rather corn lands he would most need and desire. His disappointment is amply accounted for by the fact that the country assigned him was a hungry and mountainous, and therefore comparatively useless, tract. "The region lay on the summit of a broad mountain ridge" (Porter).]

Ver. 13.—And he said, What cities are these which thou hast given me, my brother? [Cf. chap. xx. 32. It would seem, at first sight, as if this form of speech was then, as now, the usage of courts. But the *Fellahin* of Palestine, the "modern Canaanites," still address each other as "my father" or "my brother." See Conder, "Tent-work," p. 332]. And he called them the land of Cabul [The meaning of this word is quite uncertain. The LXX. reads Ὀριον, which shows that they must have read כָּבֹל instead of כָּבֹל; indeed, it is possible that the words have the same meaning (Gesén.) Stanley (S. and P. p. 364) thinks these cities formed the *boundary* between the two kingdoms, and refers to the use of ὄρια in Matt. xv. 21; Luke vi. 17, &c. According to Josephus, Καβαδών is a Phœnician word, meaning *displeasing*; but his etymologies are to be received with caution, and Gesenius justly pronounces this a mere conjecture from the context. Thénius and Ewald re-

gard the word as compounded of כ and כָּל = *as nothing*; Keil connects it with the root כָּבַל, which would yield the meaning *pawned or pledged*, and hence concludes that this strip of territory was merely given to Hiram as a security for the repayment of a loan (see below on ver. 14); while Bähr derives it from כָּבַל, an unused root, akin to the preceding = *vinxit, constrinxit*, and would see in it a name bestowed on the region because of its *confined* geographical position. He does not understand the word, however, as a term of contempt. "How," he asks, "could Hiram give the district a permanent name which contained a mockery of himself rather than of the land?" But the word was obviously an expression of disparagement, if not disgust, which, falling from Hiram's lips, was caught up and repeated with a view to mark not so much his displeasure as Solomon's meanness. But it is not necessary to find a meaning for the word, for it is to be considered that a city bearing this name existed at that time and in this neighbourhood (Josh. xix. 27), the site of which, in all probability, is marked by the modern *Kabil*, eight miles east of Acco

(Robinson, iii. 87, 88; Dict. Bib. i. 237; Thomson, "Land and Book," i. 281, 511). It is possible, indeed, that it may have been one of the "twenty cities" (ver. 11) given to Hiram. And if this city, whether within or without the district of Galilee, were notorious for its poverty or meanness, or conspicuous by its bleak situation, we can at once understand why Hiram should transfer the name to the adjoining region, even if that name, in itself, had no special significance] unto this day. [See on ch. viii. 8.]

Ver. 14.—And Hiram sent (חֲמִשָּׁנִים) must be understood as pluperfect, "Now Hiram had sent," referring to verse 11. This fact is mentioned to explain the gift of the cities, viz., that they were in payment for the gold he had furnished. The timber and stone and labour had been paid for in corn and wine and oil. See on ch. v. 11] to the king sixscore talents of gold. [This sum is variously estimated at from half a million to a million and a quarter of our money. (Keil, in *loc.*, and Dict. Bib. iii. 1734. It equalled 3000 shekels of the sanctuary (Exod. xxxviii. 24—26). Keil, who, as we have seen, interprets Cabul to mean *pledged*, says somewhat positively that these 120 talents were merely lent to Solomon to enable him to prosecute his undertakings, and that the twenty cities were Hiram's security for its repayment. He further sees in the restoration of these cities (2 Chron. viii. 2, where see note) a proof that Solomon must have repaid the amount lent him. The "sixscore talents" should be compared with the 120 talents of ch. x. 10, and the 666 talents of ch. x. 14.]

Ver. 15.—And this is the reason [or *manner, account*, חֲרָבָה. Keil: "This is the case with regard to," &c. The historian now proceeds to speak of the forced labour. The LXX. inserts this and the next nine verses after ch. x. 22] of the levy [see on ch. v. 13, and xii. 18] which Solomon raised; for to build [The punctuation of the A.V. is misleading. The Hebrew has no break—"which Solomon raised for building," &c.] the house of the Lord and his own house and Millo [Heb. invariably, *the Millo*, as in 2 Sam. v. 9; 1 Kings xi. 27; 2 Kings xii. 20; 2 Chron. xxxii. 5; LXX. ἡ ἄκρα. The import of the word is much disputed, but Wordsworth has but slight warrant for saying that it means fortress. According to some it is an archaic Canaanitish term, "adopted by the Israelites when they took the town and incorporated into their own nomenclature" (Dict. Bib. ii. p. 367), an idea which finds some support in Judges ix. 6, 20. Mr. Grove would further see in it a name for Mount Zion, *ἀκρα* being the

invariable designation of that part of the city in the Maccabees. But see Jos., B. J. v. 4. 1; Ant. xv. 11. 5; and Porter, i. pp. 96, 109. Lewin ("Siege of Jerusalem," p. 256) identifies it with the great platform on which temple and palace alike were built. But the word yields a definite meaning in the

Hebrew (= מִלּוֹא, "the filling in"). Gesenius consequently understands it to mean, a *rampart (agger)* because this is built up and filled in with stones, earth, &c. And the name would have a special fitness if we might suppose that it was applied to that part of the wall of Jerusalem which crossed the Tyropean valley. This ravine, which practically divided the city into two parts, would have been the weakest spot in the line of circumvallation, unless it were partly filled in—it is now completely choked up by *débris*, &c.—and protected by special fortifications; and, if this were done, and we can hardly doubt it was done (see on ch. xi. 27), *Hannillo*, "the filling in," would be its natural and appropriate name. And its mention, here and elsewhere, in connexion with the *wall*, lends some support to this view and the wall of Jerusalem [We learn from 2 Sam. v. 9 that David had already built Millo and the wall. Rawlinson argues from chap. xi. 27 that these repairs had been "hasty, and had now—fifty years later—fallen into decay," and that Solomon renewed them. More probably the words indicate an enlargement of the Tyropean rampart, and an extension of the walls. See note there and on chap. iii. 1. Solomon, no doubt, wished to strengthen the defences of the capital, on which he had expended so much labour, and where there was so much to tempt the rapacity of predatory neighbours] and Hazor [For the defence of the kingdom he built a chain of fortresses "to form a sort of girdle round the land" (Ewald). The first mentioned, Hazor, was a place of great importance in earlier times, being the "head of all those (the northern) kingdoms" (Josh. xi. 10). It stood on an eminence—as indeed, for the sake of security, did all the cities of that lawless age (*ib.*, ver. 13 marg.)—overlooking Lake Merom. It was at no great distance from the north boundary of Palestine, in Naphtali (Josh. xix. 36), and being favoured by position, it was strongly fortified—Hazor means *fortress*—and hence Joshua made a point of destroying it. It appears, however, to have speedily regained its importance, for in Judg. iv. 2, 17 we find it as the capital of Jabin, king of Canaan. It was selected by Solomon as the best site for a stronghold, which should protect his northern border, and as commanding the approach from

Syria. As it is not mentioned in ch. xv. 20, it would appear to have escaped in the invasion of Benhadad. Possibly it was too strong for him) and Megiddo [Josh. xii. 21; xvii. 11; Judg. v. 19. This place was chosen partly because of its central position—it stood on the margin of the plain of Esdraelon, the battle-field of Palestine, and the battles fought there prove its strategic importance, Judg. v. 19 (cf. 1 Sam. xxxi. 1); 2 Kings xxiii. 29; Judith iii. 9, 10—and partly, perhaps, because the high road from Egypt to Damascus passed through it. It dominated the passes of Ephraim (see Judith iv. 7). It has till recently been identified with *el-Lejjûn* (from *Legio*. Compare our *Chester*, &c.) (Robinson, ii. 116 sqq.; Stanley, S. and P., p. 347; Porter, 286, 287); but Conder ("Tent-work," p. 67) gives good reasons for fixing the site at the "large ruins between Jezreel and Bethshean, which still bears the name of *Mujedd'a*, i.e., on the eastern side of the plain) and Gezer [This commanded the approach from Egypt, and would protect the southern frontier of Solomon's kingdom. See Josh. x. 33; xii. 12; xxi. 21; Judges i. 29; 2 Sam. v. 25; 1 Chron. xx. 4. It stands on the great maritime plain, and is also on the coast road between Egypt and Jerusalem. The site was identified (in 1874) by M. Clermont Ganneau with *Tell Jezer*. The name means "cut off," "isolated" (Gesén.) "The origin of the title is at once clear, for the site is an out-lier—to use a geological term—of the main line of hills, and the position commands one of the important passes to Jerusalem" (Conder, p. 6).

The mention of Gezer leads to a parenthesis of considerable length (vers. 16—19). The question of the levy is put aside for the time, whilst the historian explains how it was that the king came to build Gezer. He then proceeds to mention the other towns built during the same reign.

Ver. 16.—For Pharaoh king of Egypt had gone up and taken Gezer and burnt it with fire [The total destruction of the place and its inhabitants by fire and sword looks more like an act of vengeance for some grave offence than like ordinary warfare], and slain the Canaanites that dwelt in the city [Though Gezer was allotted to Ephraim (Josh. xvi. 3) and designated as a Levitical city (*ib.*, xxi. 21), the Canaanite inhabitants had never been dispossessed (Josh. xvi. 10; LXX. "Canaanites and Perizzites;" cf. Judg. i. 29), and they would seem to have enjoyed a sort of independence], and given it for a present [דָּוָתָהּ, *dotatio*, dowry. It is the custom of the East for the husband to purchase his wife by a present (Gen. xxix. 18;

2 Sam. iii. 14, &c.); but in royal marriages a dowry was often given. "Sargon gave Cilicia as a dowry with his daughter. . . . Antiochus Soter gave his claims on Macedonia as a dowry to his step-daughter Phila, when she married Antigonus Gonatas. Coele-Syria and Palestine were promised as a dowry to Ptolemy Epiphanes, when he married Cleopatra, sister of Antiochus the Great," &c. (Rawlinson). Gezer being a *wedding* present, its conquest must have taken place years before the date to which the history is now brought down] unto his daughter, Solomon's wife.

Ver. 17.—And Solomon built Gezer [In the case of Gezer it was an actual rebuilding. But as applied to Beth-horon, &c., "built" probably means *enlarged, strengthened*] and Beth-horon the nether [mentioned in connexion with Gezer, Josh. xvi. 3 (cf. x. 10). It is deserving of mention that the two cities of Beth-horon still survive in the modern villages of *Beitûr el-tahta* and *el-fok*, names which are "clearly corruptions of Beth-horon "the Nether" and "the Upper" (Stanley, S. and P., p. 208). One lies at the foot of the ravine, on an eminence, the other at the summit of the pass. Like Megiddo and Gezer, this town, too, lay on a high road, viz., that between Jerusalem and the sea coast. The selection of Beth-horon for fortification by Solomon is also justified by history—three decisive battles having been fought here (see Josh. x. 10; 1 Mac. iii. 13—24, and Jos., Bell. Jüd. ii. 19, 8. The object of the king in fortifying this place was to protect the uplands of Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim against invasion from the Philistine plain. It is perhaps not unnoteworthy that, according to our author, it was Beth-horon the *nether* that Solomon "built," as this would naturally have suffered more than its loftier neighbour from war. According to 2 Chron. viii. 5, however, Solomon built Beth-horon the upper also.

Ver. 18.—And Baalath [probably the place mentioned in Josh. xix. 44, and therefore a town of Dan. By some it has been identified, but on wholly insufficient grounds—the mention of Tadmor immediately afterwards being the chief—with Baalbek. This is one of the names which prove how ancient and widespread was the worship of Baal (Gesén., *Thesaurus*, 225; *Dict. Bib.*, i. 147, 148)] and Tadmor in the wilderness, in the land. [Whether this is (1) the famous Palmyra, or (2) Tamar, an obscure town of south Judah, is a question which has been much disputed. It should be stated in the first place that the *Cethib* has תָּמָר, but the *Keri*, after 2 Chron. viii. 4, reads תְּדֹמֹר, as do all the versions; and secondly that a *Tamar* is

mentioned Ezek. xlvi. 19 and xlvi. 23 a place which may well be identical with "Hazazon Tamar, which is Engedi" (2 Chron. xx. 2; cf. Gen. xiv. 7. In favour of (1) are the following considerations: (1) the statement of the chronicler that Solomon did build Palmyra (for of the identity of "Tadmor" with Palmyra there can be no reasonable doubt; see Dict. Bib. iii. 1423). (2) The probability that Solomon, with his wide views of commerce, would seize upon and fortify the one oasis in the great Syrian desert in order to establish an *entrepôt* there (see on ver. 19). (3) The words "in the wilderness," which, of course, are eminently true of Palmyra. Against it, however, may be urged (1) that Tamar was much more likely to be changed into Tadmor than Tadmor into Tamar. (2) That this place is distinctly described as "in the land," which, *strictly*, Palmyra was not. But here it is to be observed that the chronicler omits these words, and that the Syriac, Arabic, and Vulgate render, "in the land of the wilderness." Keil says our text is manifestly corrupt, and certainly the expression is a singular one. Some would, therefore, alter נָחַל into בְּרָחֹם, or into בְּרָחֹת (after 2 Chron. viii. 4). Both of the emendations, however, while undoubtedly plausible, are purely conjectural. Wordsworth, who thinks Palmyra is meant, says it is described as "in the land" to indicate that God had fulfilled his promise to extend the *land* of Solomon far eastward into the *wilderness* (Psa. lxxii. 9). And a Jewish historian, especially in the time of his country's decadence, might well recount how this great city had once been comprised within the boundaries of Israel. In favour of (2) are these facts: (1) That it is the reading of the text. It is said, however, that the ancient name of Tadmor was Tamar, and the place clearly owed its name to the *Palm* trees. But the name is always *Tadmor* in the Palmyrene inscriptions. (2) That this place was "in the wilderness," *i.e.*, of Judah. (3) That it was "in the land," and (4) that it was in close proximity to the places just mentioned. The evidence is thus so evenly balanced that it is impossible to decide positively between the two.

Ver. 19.—And all the cities of store that Solomon had [cities where the produce of the land was stored for the use of the troops or household, or against a season of scarcity (Gen. xli. 35; Exod. i. 11), or possibly (Ewald) they were emporiums for the development of trade. The fact that these store cities are mentioned in the same breath with Tadmor, is an argument for the identification of that place with Palmyra, which Solomon could

1 KINGS.

only have built as a means of gaining or retaining control over the caravan trade between the East and the Mediterranean. Cf. 2 Chron. xvii. 12; xxxii. 28, and Gen. xli. 48. They would seem to have been chiefly on the northern frontier, 2 Chron. viii. 4 ("in Hamath"); *ib.* ch. xvi. 4 speaks of "the store cities of *Naphthali*." It should be remembered that Solomon had an adversary in Damascus, and cities for his chariots, and cities for his horsemen [Cf. ch. iv. 26. These were not so much fortresses (vers. 15—18) as places adapted to accommodate his cavalry, &c. For horsemen we should perhaps read *horses*. See note on ch. v. 6], and that which Solomon desired to build [Heb. *and the desire of Solomon which he desired*; cf. ver. 1. The use of the cognate verb refutes the idea that Solomon's "desire" is another name for pleasure-buildings or pleasaunces, as does also "desire" in ver. 11. It is certain, however, that such buildings were erected, and it is probable that they are referred to here] in Jerusalem and in Lebanon [It is highly probable that pleasure-houses were built in Lebanon (Cant. vii. 4, *passim*), for which Solomon may well have had a strong affection, and pleasure-gardens in Jerusalem (Eccles. ii. 4—7). See Stanley, pp. 197—199; and we may reasonably imagine (with Ewald) that in these latter he sought to grow specimens of the plants, &c., about which he 'spoke' (ch. iv. 33; cf. Eccles. ii. 5). "It is a curious fact that in the ground hard by the 'fountains of Solomon' near Bethlehem, which exhibit manifest traces of an ancient garden, and where the intimations of Josephus would lead us to suppose that Solomon had a rural retreat, are still to be found a number of plants self-sown from age to age, which do not exist in any other part of the Holy Land" (Kitto, "Bib. Illus." vol. iv. p. 101). Some of Solomon's journeys to these favourite resorts, we can hardly doubt, are referred to in Cant. iii. 6—10; iv. 8 sqq.; vi. 11] and in all the land of his dominion.

Ver. 20.—And all the people that were left of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites [Judges i. 21—36; iii. 5; 1 Chron. xxii. 2] which were not of the children of Israel.

Ver. 21.—Their children that were left after them in the land [this is explicative of ver. 20], whom the children of Israel also [also is not in the Hebrew, and is meaningless] were not able utterly to destroy, upon those did Solomon levy a tribute of bond service [see on ch. v. 13, and cf. Judges i. *passim*, and 1 Chron. xxii. 2] unto this day.

Ver. 22.—But of the children of Israel did Solomon make no bondmen [see however

ch. v. 13, 18. This service, though compulsory, was not servile. Bondage was forbidden, Levit. xxv. 39. The levy were treated as hired servants and had wages; but they were men of war, and his servants [cf. ch. i. 9. Not only "officials of the war department" (Bähr) but officers of every kind], and his princes [these were the heads both of the military and civil services], and his captains [Heb.  $\text{קָטָנִים}$ . LXX.  $\rho\sigma\upsilon\alpha\rho\alpha\iota$ . Exod. xiv. 7; xv. 4; 2 Sam. xxiii. 8; 2 Kings ix. 25; x. 25, &c. These *third men* were really "a noble rank of soldiers who fought from chariots" (Gesén.), each of which would seem to have held *three men*, one of whom drove, while two fought: thence used of the body-guard of kings. That they formed a *corps*, and were not literally "captains," is clear from 1 Sam. xxiii. 8, &c.] and rulers of his chariots, and his horsemen.

Ver. 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 [see on ch. v. 16].

Ver. 24.—But [ $\text{כִּי}$ , lit. *only*. Keil rightly connects the word with  $\text{כִּי}$  below. "So soon as . . . then." Cf. Gen. xxvii. 30. This and ver. 25 are not interposed arbitrarily, as might at first sight appear, but refer to ch. iii. 1—4. The completion of the palace rendered it no longer necessary or proper that Solomon's daughter should dwell in a separate house. The chronicler tells us that she had dwelt in David's palace on Mount Zion, and that Solomon was constrained to remove her, because he looked upon all the precinct as now consecrated (2 Chron. viii. 11)]. Pharaoh's daughter

came up [ $\text{עָלָה}$ ]. Keil hence argues that the palace stood on higher ground than David's house. But this conclusion is somewhat precarious. The approach to the palace involved an ascent, but Zion was certainly as high as Ophel] out of the city of David unto her house which Solomon [Heb.  $\text{בָּרָא}$ ] had built for her: then did he build Millo. [Thenius infers from these words that Millo was a fort or castle for the protection of the harem. But there is no warrant for any such conjecture. In the first place, this wife would seem to have been lodged in her own palace apart from the other wives. 2. We can offer a better explanation of the word Millo (see ver. 15). 3. The word "then" may mean either (1), that when her palace was completed, Solomon then had workmen who were liberated and were employed on Millo (Keil), or (2), that when she vacated David's house, the building of Millo could be proceeded with.

Ver. 25.—And three times in a year [i.e., no doubt at the three feasts, the times of greatest solemnity, and when there was the largest concourse of people. See 2 Chron. viii. 12. The design of this verse may be to show that there was no longer any offering on high places. It would thus refer to ch. iii. 2, as ver. 24 to ch. iii. 1] did Solomon offer burnt offerings and peace offerings upon the altar which he built unto the Lord [the chronicler adds, "before the porch"], and he burnt incense. [It has been supposed by some that Solomon sacrificed and burnt incense *propria manu*. According to Dean Stanley ("Jewish Ch." ii. pp. 220, 221), "he solemnly entered, not only the temple courts with sacrifices, but penetrated into the Holy Place itself, where in later years none but the priests were allowed to enter, and offered incense on the altar of incense." But this positive statement is absolutely destitute of all basis. For, in the first place, there is nothing in the text to support it. If Solomon ordered, or defrayed the cost of, the sacrifices, &c., as no doubt he did, the historian would properly and naturally describe him as offering burnt offerings. *Qui facit per alium facit per se*, and priests are expressly mentioned as present at these sacrifices (ch. viii. 6; 2 Chron. v. 7—14; vii. 2, 5). We have just as much reason, and no more, for believing that the king built Millo (ver. 24) with his own hands, and with his own hands "made a navy of ships" (ver. 26), as that he sacrificed, &c., *in propria persona*. And, secondly, it is simply inconceivable, if he had so acted, that it should have attracted no more notice, and that our historian should have passed it over thus lightly. We know what is recorded by our author as having happened when, less than two centuries afterwards, King Uzziah presumed to intrude on the functions of the priests (2 Chron. xxvi. 17—20); cf. 1 Kings xiii. 1), and we know what had happened some five centuries before (Num. xvi. 35), when men who were not of the seed of Aaron came near to offer incense before the Lord. It is impossible that Solomon could have disregarded that solemn warning without some protest, or without a syllable of blame on the part of our author. And the true account of these sacrifices is that they were offered by the king as the *builder of the temple*, and probably throughout his life, by the hands of the ministering priests (2 Chron. viii. 14). Thrice in the year he showed his piety by a great function, at which he offered liberally] upon the altar [Heb. *upon that*, sc. altar  $\text{אֲלֹתָיִם}$ . See Gesén. Lex., p. 94; Ewald, Syntax, 332a (3)] that was before the Lord. [The altar of incense stood before the entrance to the

oracle, the place of the Divine presence. See on ch. vi. 22]. So he finished the house. [Same word, but in the Kal form in ch. vii. 51. The Piel form, used here, may convey the deeper meaning, "he perfected," *i.e.*, by devoting it to its proper use. It was to be "a house of sacrifice" (2 Chron. vii. 12).

Ver. 26.—And king Solomon made a navy of ships [Heb.  $\text{ספינות}$ , a collective noun, *classis*. The chronicler paraphrases by  $\text{גליות}$ , plural. This fact finds a record here, probably because it was to the voyages of this fleet that the king was indebted for the gold which enabled him to erect and adorn the buildings recently described. (As to form, &c., of the ships, see Dict. Bib. ii. p. 1014). But no historian could pass over without notice an event of such profound importance to Israel as the construction of its first ships, which, next to the temple, was the great event of Solomon's reign] in Ezion-geber [lit., the backbone of a man (or giant). Cf. Num. xxxiii. 35; Deut. ii. 8; 2 Kings xiv. 22; 2 Chron. viii. 17. The name is probably due, like Shechem (see note on ch. xii. 25) to a real or fancied resemblance in the physical geography of the country to that part of the human body. Stanley (S. and P. p. 84) speaks of "the jagged ranges on each side of the gulf." Akaba, the modern name, also means back. 2 Chron. l.c. says Solomon went to Ezion-geber, which it is highly probable he would do, which is beside [Heb.  $\text{עֵזֶן גִּבְעָר}$  = *apud* (Ges., Lex. s.v.) Eloth [lit., trees akin to Elm, where were palm trees (Exod. xv. 27; xvi. 1). The name is interesting as suggesting that Solomon may have found some of the timber for the construction of his fleet here. A grove of palm trees "still exists at the head of the gulf of Akaba" (Stanley S. and P. p. 20). Palms, it is true, are not adapted to shipbuilding, but other timber may have grown there in a past age. But see note on ver. 27. For Elath, see Porter, p. 40; Deut. ii. 8; 2 Sam. viii. 14 (which shows how it passed into the hand of Israel); 2 Kings viii. 20; xiv. 22; xvi. 6. It gave a name to the *Elanitic Gulf*, now the *Gulf of Akaba*], on the shore [Heb. *lip*] of the Red sea [Heb. *Sea of Rushes*. LXX.  $\eta \text{ ἰσθμὸς ῥάλασσα}$ . The redness is due to subaqueous vegetation. "Fragments of red coral are for ever being thrown up from the stores below, and it is these coralline forests which form the true 'weeds' of this fantastic sea" (Stanley, S. and P. p. 83). There is also apparently a bottom of red sandstone (*ib.* p. 6, note). It is divided by the Sinaitic peninsula into two arms or gulfs, the western being the Gulf of Suez, and the eastern the Gulf of Akabah. The former

is 130 miles, the latter 90 miles long], in the land of Edom. [The subjugation of Edom is mentioned 2 Sam. viii. 14.]

Ver. 27.—And Hiram sent in the navy his servants, shipmen that had knowledge of the sea with the servants of Solomon. [The chronicler states (2 Chron. viii. 18) that he sent ships as well as servants, and it has been thought that ships were transported, in parts or entire, by land across the Isthmus of Suez, and there are certainly instances on record of the land transport of fleets. (Keil reminds us that Alexander the Great, according to Arrian, had ships transported—in pieces—from Phœnicia to the Euphrates, and that, according to Thucydides (Bell. Pelop. iv. 8) the Peloponnesians conveyed 60 ships from Coreyra across the Leucadian Isthmus, &c.) But this, especially when the state of engineering science, &c., among the Hebrews is taken into account, is hardly to be thought of. It is quite possible, however, that timber for shipbuilding was floated on the Mediterranean down to the river of Egypt, or some such place, and then transported either to Suez or to Akaba. Probably all that the chronicler means is that Hiram provided the materials and had the ships built. The Israelites, having hitherto had no fleet, and little or no experience of the sea, were unable to construct ships for themselves. And the Tyrians may have seen in the construction of a fleet for eastern voyages, an opening for the extension of their own maritime trade. Possibly in the first voyages Tyrians and Jews were co-partners.]

Ver. 28.—And they came to Ophir [It is perhaps impossible to identify this place with any degree of precision. The opinions of scholars may, however, be practically reduced to two. The first would place Ophir in India; the second in southern Arabia. In favour of India is (1) the three years' voyage (but see on ch. x. 22); (2) most of the other treasures brought back by the fleet, exclusive of gold, are Indian products. But against it is urged the important fact that no gold is now found there, south of Cashmere, whilst south Arabia was famed for its abundant gold (Psa. lxxii. 15; Ezek. xxvii. 22). On the other hand, it is alleged that in ancient times India was rich in gold (Ewald, iii. p. 264), and that there are no traces of gold mines in Arabia. The question is discussed at considerable length and with great learning by Mr. Twisleton (Dict. Bib. art. "Ophir"). He shows that it is reasonably certain (1) that the Ophir of Gen. x. 29 is the name of some city, region, or tribe in Arabia, and (2) that the Ophir of Genesis is the Ophir of the Book of Kings. And Gesenius, Bähr, Keil, &c.

agree with him in locating Ophir in the latter country. Ewald, however, sees in Ophir "the most distant coasts of India," and it is probable that the Hebrews used the word somewhat loosely, as they did the corresponding word *Tarshish*, and as we do the words East and West Indies. They were not geographers, and Ophir may have been merely an emporium where the products of different countries were collected, or a *nomen*

*generale* for "all the countries lying on the African, Arabian, or Indian seas, so far as at that time known" (Heeren). See on ch. x. 5], and fetched from thence gold, four hundred and twenty talents [The chronicler says 450. The discrepancy is easily accounted for, 20 being expressed by 2; 50 by 5. Wordsworth suggests that "perhaps thirty were assigned to Hiram for his help" and brought it to king Solomon.

### HOMILETICS.

Ver. 25.—*The Two Altars of Judaism.* This text is somewhat remarkable as bringing before us at the same moment the two altars of the Jewish Church—the great brazen altar of sacrifice and the golden altar of incense. The present is therefore, perhaps, a fitting place to study their use and significance.

For it is with good reason that they are here joined together. Though the ritual of the first was quite distinct from that of the second, yet each was an essential part of the same religious system; each was a centre of Hebrew worship. Moreover, the second was the complement of the first. Incense was the appropriate adjunct of sacrifice. And the two together formed practically the sum of the ordinary ceremonial of the children of the old covenant.

The altars themselves, however, will require but little notice, for they both alike derived their interest and importance from the purposes they served. The altar of sacrifice is not even mentioned by our historian in his account of the temple arrangements; while the chronicler dismisses it in a single verse. And neither the Kings nor the Chronicles describe the size, structure, &c., of the altar of incense. It is true the altar "sanctified the gift" (Matt. xxiii. 19; Exod. xxix. 37, 44), perhaps sanctified the incense also (but see Exod. xxx. 35—37), but all the same, the sacrifice and the incense, not the brazen or the golden altars, are the important and significant things. The two altars, that is to say, really bring before us the two questions of *Sacrifice and Incense*.

I. THE ALTAR OF SACRIFICE. But before we turn our thoughts to the sacrifices smoking on the altar, let us glance for a moment at the altar itself. Observe—

1. *Its position.* Outside the temple, the "house of sacrifice" (2 Chron. vii. 12; Matt. xxiii. 35), but in the court of the priests, and, therefore, exclusively for the service of the priests.

2. *Its dimensions.* It was fifteen feet high, and its top was a square of thirty feet (2 Chron. iv. 1). It was designedly high—the altar of the tabernacle was but four and a half feet high. It was high, despite the inconveniences resulting therefrom. The height required that a ledge or platform should be constructed round it; that a long slope or flight of steps should be ascended in order to reach it; and that the lavers and sea should be high in proportion (ch. vii. 23, 25, 27, 38). Its great size and capacity—it presented a superficies of 900 square feet—was because of the great number of victims which were occasionally offered upon it at one time.

3. *Its horns.* These were no freak of the architect, but were of the essence of the structure, and of Divine obligation (Exod. xxvii. 2). The blood was put upon them (*ib.* xxix. 12; Levit. iv. 7, 18, 30, 34; viii. 15; ix. 9, &c.); the sacrifice, at least in early times, was bound to them (Psa. cxviii. 27); the suppliant for life clung to them (ch. i. 50; ii. 28, &c.) The altar was designed, that is to say, for sacrifice; but it also served at the same time for sanctuary.

And now let us look at the *sacrifice*, at "the gift upon the altar." Observe—

1. *It is an offering.* Whatever the character of the sacrifice, burnt offering, sin offering, peace offering, meat offering, it was an offering, a gift. Whether whole bullocks were consumed, or only the fat, kidneys, &c., it had been first consecrated, devoted, given, to God. This is, perhaps, the primary idea of sacrifice. The victim **must** be presented before it could be immolated.

2. *It was ordinarily an offering made by fire* (1 Sam. ii. 28). The holy fire kindled by God (Levit. ix. 24), and which for long centuries was never suffered to go out (Levit. vi. 13), the element which at that time, and ever since, has been regarded in the East as an image of the Godhead, if not a sign of His presence, this consumed everything. The tongues of flame not only carried the smoke and smell of the sacrifice—hecatomb, holocaust, whatever it was—up into the blue sky and to the throne of God, but they, so to speak, devoured the victim; they feasted on the sacrifice.

3. *It was an offering of life.* Not only was this a matter of fact—that the victim was first slain, then offered on the altar, but this idea was expressed in the ritual of the sacrifice. The blood was poured out at the foot of the altar, or sprinkled on its horns, or borne into the most holy place. But the blood is the life of the flesh (Levit. xvii. 11), and hence the sprinkling of the blood was the core and centre of all sacrifice. (See Bähr, *Symbolik*, ii. pp. 199 sqq.) The very *separation* of the elements again—the blood poured in one place, the flesh or fat burnt at another—pictured death; for when the blood is withdrawn from the body death ensues. The consuming fire, too, spoke of death. So that in sacrifice men offered to God the most mysterious and precious of man's possessions and of God's gifts, the life, the *ψυχή*, which came from God and went back to God. It was an old and reasonable belief that the gods would have our nearest and dearest—see Tennyson's beautiful poem, "The Victim"—hence the gift to the altar was the life.

4. *It was an offering for life.* The full significance of sacrifice, we may readily believe, the Jew did not know. It is doubtful whether even the high priest comprehended the blessed meaning of those solemn rites in which he bore a part. But this they did know, that the life offered at the altar was an atonement for their life. The *lex talionis*, "an eye for an eye," &c. (Exod. xxi. 24), had taught them this. So had much of their expressive ceremonial, *e.g.*, the laying of the hands on the head of the victim, &c. (Levit. iii. 2; iv. 4, &c.) So above all had the express words of Scripture, "The life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar for an atonement for your souls (Heb. *lives*, same word as above), for it is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul" (Heb. *through the life*, *sc.* of the blood) Levit. xvii. 11. They understood, that is, that sacrifice was not only eucharistic, but that it was also deprecatory and in some way expiatory. They hoped that it would somehow reconcile them and restore them to communion with God, the Life, the *Anima animantium*.

More than this, however, the Jewish worshipper did not see in the sacrifice. But for us who turn our gaze to Mount Moriah from the hill of Calvary, it has an additional significance. We may see in it—

5. *A picture of the offering of Jesus Christ.* An imperfect picture, no doubt—a shadow, a type, a parable, but still the outline is clear and distinct. We see here the priest, the victim, the altar, the mactation, the blood-pouring, the elevation, the death. As a *picture*, indeed, all sacrifice "showed the Lord's death" (1 Cor. xi. 26) much more vividly and touchingly than the Holy Communion does.

6. *A pleading of the death of Christ.* This is the crown and blossom of sacrifice. It was an *ἀνάμνησις*, a silent but eloquent memorial before God. Only thus can we adequately explain the elaborate sacrificial system of Moses. From any other point of view sacrifices are, as Coleridge confessed, an enigma. But see in them tokens, memorials, pleadings of the one vicarious death, and all is clear. Then we can comprehend why they should have offered thousands of victims "year by year continually." Every bullock, every sheep, was, though the worshippers knew it not, a mute reminder of the one sacrifice for sin. Each was a foreshadowing of the death; the death of Him who is "the life" (John xiv. 6); each spoke to the heart of God of the precious blood of Christ. Let us trace the parallel a little more in detail.

#### 1. *The Altar prefigured the Cross.*

(1) *In its position.* The true altar of incense is in heaven. The altar of sacrifice was altogether of this world; it was in the truest sense "an altar of earth." But while outside the temple of heaven, the cross was yet in the court of the priests,

for "Immanuel's land" was a sort of precinct or forecourt of the eternal sanctuary, and it was the home of a nation of *priests* (Exod. xix. 6). Hence we may learn (1) that sacrifice is only offered where there is sin, and (2) that the cross goes together with the kingdom (Rev. i. 5, 6); it is the altar of the Holy Catholic Church.

(2) *In its elevation.* Probably the altar was made high to give it due honour and prominence, or there may have been the thought of elevating the sacrifice towards heaven. But, whatever the reason, it struck the eye; everyone saw that it was the centre and ornament and distinguishing mark of the court of the priests. Now the cross itself was probably raised but two or three feet above the ground—pictures generally represent it incorrectly—but it was planted on a hill. Conder ("Tent-work," pp. 196, 198) identifies Calvary with a rounded knoll, above a cliff or precipice some thirty feet high, near the Damascus gate, and it still—and this is the important thing—"towers above the wreck of time." It is still the glory and badge and attraction of Christ's people of priests. It was fitting, too, that He should be raised above earth who was from above (John iii. 31); that He should be suspended between earth and heaven who should reconcile earth to heaven.

(3) *The cross had no horns*, but it had *arms*—arms to which the victim was bound, arms which were stained with His blood, arms which offer shelter and sanctuary to the world.

"Lord, on the cross Thine arms were stretched,  
To draw Thy people nigh," &c.

2. *The Sacrifice prefigured the Crucifixion.* It is hardly needful or possible here to point out in what manifold ways the various sacrifices of the Law foreshadowed the oblation of Calvary. It must suffice to say here that this too was a voluntary offering (Heb. ix. 14), a *whole offering* (לֵילֵךְ—cf. Heb. x. 10, &c.), the grateful savour of which *ascended* (the idea of the word אָשַׁע) to heaven (Gen. viii. 21; Ephes. v. 2); that the *life* was given (Matt. xx. 28) and *blood* poured (1 Peter i. 2); that the blood was poured for the remission of sins (Matt. xxvi. 28; Heb. ix. 22), and the life given for the life of the world (John vi. 51). It is for us to lay our hands on the head of the sacrifice, and the analogy is complete. We must bring no offering of our own merits, but must take refuge under the arms of the Cross—

"Nothing in my hand I bring,  
Simply to thy Cross I cling."

It must not be supposed, however, that because sacrifices, properly so called, have ceased, because they have found their blessed fulfilment in "the one offering," "once for all" (Heb. x. 10, 14), therefore the *pictures* and *pleadings* of that offering have ceased also. On the contrary, the death of Calvary, which cannot be repeated, is for ever pleaded (Rev. v. 6) in the heavenly temple. In this sense it is a *continual offering* (Exod. xxix. 42). And it is also pleaded by the Church on earth. For the holy sacrament, like the sacrifice, tells of death, and of the same vicarious and victorious death. The sacrifice pleaded the merits of Him who should come; the sacrament the merits of One who has come. The first was, the second is, an ἀνάμνησις of the death which won our life. (See Homiletics on ch. vi. pp. 114, 115.)

II. THE ALTAR OF INCENSE. It is often forgotten that Judaism had two altars. But who shall say that the altar of incense was less important or less gracious than that of sacrifice.

A few simple questions will perhaps best bring this subject of incense before us. Let us therefore ask—

1. *What was the incense?* It was (see Exod. xxx. 34 sqq.) (1) *a confection of sweet spices*; a compound of the most fragrant and grateful products of the earth, which when burned emitted a pleasing odour. (2) *A perfume ordained of God.* Its constituents and their proportions were alike prescribed (*ib.* vers. 34, 35). These were to be "tempered (Heb. *salted*) together." Hence the scrupulous care with which it was prepared and preserved in the "house of Abtines." And hence the

probability that the story of thirteen ingredients (Jos., B. J. v. 5. 5) of the addition of cassia, cinnamon, &c., to the elements mentioned in the Law, is a Rabbinical fable. Such a confection would have been "strange incense." (3) *It was a perfume reserved for God* (Exod. xxx. 37, 38). None might be made for private use under pain of death (*ib.* ver. 38). Hence it was called "most holy" (Heb. *holy of holies*).

2. *Where was it offered?* In two places. Occasionally in the most holy place; usually on the golden altar which stood before that place. Hence this altar is spoken of as "before the Lord," and is called "the altar that belongeth to the oracle" (ch. vi. 22). It was clearly, therefore, and peculiarly an offering to God, whose throne was in the sanctuary, and whose palace was the temple. It was burnt before the Presence, whose seat was between the cherubim. Indeed, it is not improbable that it was only burnt *outside* the oracle, because the priests must not enter the most holy place. (The golden altar, as we have just seen, really "belonged to the oracle.") When the high priest *did* enter, on the day of atonement, the incense was burnt within the veil. And the Sadducees were accounted heretical because they contended that the incense might be kindled outside and then carried inside the holy of holies.

3. *When was it burned?* It was burned (1) *morning and evening*. When the lamps were trimmed at the break of day; when the lamps were lighted at the approach of night. Thus every little life—for our days are "lives in miniature"—was rounded off with incense. There was not a day for many hundred years but began and ended with this sweet service. (2) *With the morning and evening sacrifice*. It was bound up with the offerings of the great altar. "Mane, inter sanguinem et membra suffiebat, vesperi, inter membra et libamina" (Talmud, quoted by Lightfoot). "When the incense and prayers were finished, the parts of the victim were laid on the altar." So that the incense and the sacrifice were really parts of the same service. The two altars of Judaism presented their offerings to heaven at the same time. (3) *It was a "perpetual incense"* (Exod. xxx. 9), just as the sacrifice is called a continual burnt offering (*ib.* xxix. 42). The sweet perfume, we may remember here, never died out in the holy place. There was an everlasting fragrance, year in, year out, in the earthly abode of the heavenly King. (4) *It was offered together with prayer*. See Luke i. 10; Rev. v. 8; viii. 1—4; and Lightfoot, "Heb. and Talm. Exerc. on Luke i. 10."

4. *By whom was it offered?* (1) *By the priests*. Originally, it is believed, by the high priest exclusively, but subsequently a priest was chosen by lot (Luke i. 9) to perform this office each morning and each evening. And we are told that as this was esteemed the most honourable of all the functions of the priests, and as a blessing was thought to be attached to its performance, the lot was cast among those who were "new to the incense," *i.e.*, among those who had not offered it already. (2) *By the priests alone*. No function was more jealously guarded than this. On two memorable occasions (Num. xvi. 35—40; 2 Chron. xxvi. 16 sqq.) a terrible dispensation proclaimed that "no stranger, who was not of the seed of Aaron, should come near to offer incense before the Lord."

5. *Why was it offered?* Maimonides held that it was merely, or principally, designed to counteract the stench which would arise from the victims slain for the morning and evening sacrifice. Others have beheld in it merely a recognition of the majesty and sovereignty of God, and have seen its counterpart in the perfumes which were offered before the monarchs of the East (cf. Matt. ii. 11). But a moment's reflection will show that both these conceptions are miserably inadequate and unworthy. It is inconceivable that so prominent and essential a part of the Jewish system can have had no higher meaning or have no analogue in Christianity. It is universally admitted that the brazen altar and its sacrifices were full of symbolism. How can we think that while these prefigured Christ's death the golden altar and its incense foreshadowed nothing. No, they must have typified something, and something connected with the work of the eternal Son of God.

For observe, just as there is an altar raised on Calvary, just as there is a sacrificial altar of which we Christians eat (Heb. xiii. 10), so is there an altar in heaven (Rev. viii. 8). Nor will this surprise us if we bear in mind that the Mosaic worship was

fashioned after the mode of the heavenly, and that the tabernacle and its furniture were made according to the pattern showed in the Mount.

What, then, did incense symbolize? Was it prayer? It has been very generally supposed (after Psa. cxli. 2) to be an emblem of prayer. But this is a view which reflection hardly justifies. For (1) prayer was offered at the *time of incense*; it was an invariable adjunct thereto, and we should hardly have the type and antitype, the shadow and the substance, together. The type is only needed until the antitype takes its place. (2) Incense is said to be offered *with prayers* (Rev. v. 8), where the "which" (*αἷ*) would seem to refer to the "vials" (*φιάλας*) rather than to the *θυμιαμάτων* (ch. viii. 1—4). In the passage last cited, this is beyond doubt. The incense was to be *added* to (A. V. "offered"), and was therefore distinct from, the prayers of all saints.

No, the incense offered day by day, and century after century, prefigured the *gracious intercession of Christ*, that intercession through which alone our prayers are presented, which alone ensures their acceptance, and without which sinful man cannot draw near to God. When the high priest entered the oracle, as the representative of the congregation, the cloud of incense must cover him lest he should die. We have but to notice how close is the correspondence between type and antitype to be convinced that this is its true meaning. (1) His prayers are like the fragrant incense. In Him the Father is well pleased. And they are ordained of God. He is the "Anointed," the "Advocate with the Father," "the one Mediator." (There is a "strange incense," too—the mediation of saints and angels.) (2) He stands "before the throne," "at the right hand of God," "in heaven itself." (3) He "ever liveth to make intercession for us." The incense never dies out of the heavenly courts. When we pray, morning and evening, our Intercessor prays also. When we offer our sacrifices, He offers the incense at the same time. And He is also (4) our High Priest. When He passed through the heavens with His own blood to make atonement, the incense, to make intercession, was not forgotten. And if it be objected that in heaven the incense was offered by the elders (Rev. v. 8), or angels (*ib.* viii. 3), we may remember that the ministry at the golden altar, which strictly appertained to the high priest alone, was also shared by other ministers of the congregation, and the angels are "ministering spirits."

So that both the altars of Judaism speak to us of Christ: the one of His death, the other of His "endless life," the first of the "one offering," the second of the ceaseless intercession. And between them they shadowed forth the fulness and completeness of our salvation. "We have an Advocate with the Father"—this is the gospel of the incense. "We have a great High Priest"—this is the evangel of incense and sacrifice alike.

#### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 25.—*Solomon's Worship.* Our text appears at first sight to be introduced into this chapter in a superfluous and arbitrary manner. It is not without good reason, however, that this record of Solomon's religious worship stands between statements about his fortifications and his fleet. We have much to learn from the Old Testament method of blending the earthly with the spiritual, and of suffusing national enterprise with religion. The verse before us, read in connexion with the statement made in ch. iii. 2, indicates that, after finishing the temple, Solomon swept away the abuses, and remedied the defects which had prevailed. He had built the temple, and now would be the leader of his people in using it. He did not consider that the erection of an altar excused him from sacrificing on it. He was not one of those who will encourage others to devotion, while they neglect their own personal responsibility. Apply this to any who contribute to a society, but withhold all personal service; or aid in the celebration of worship, while their own hearts are never engaged in it. If we compare the text with 2 Chron. viii. 12, 13, we see that it was not only on the national festivals (Passover, Pentecost, and Feast of Tabernacles), but on all occasions appointed by Mosaic law, that Solomon, through the priests, presented offerings before the Lord

No allusion is made here to expiatory sacrifices (the sin offering and the trespass offering) but these, of necessity, preceded those mentioned here. All the more fitly does the text represent what we should offer when we draw near to God, through the merits of the expiation already made for us by Him who became, on our behalf, a sin offering. This verse will answer the question of conscience, "*What shall I render unto the Lord?*"

I. THE DEDICATION OF SELF. Burnt offerings were representative and not vicarious. They represented the dedication of himself to God on the part of the worshipper. St. Paul shows us this (Romans xii. 1), "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice," &c. The appropriateness of the type can be easily shown by alluding to such points as these:—1. *The sequence of the burnt offering on the expiatory sacrifice.* No burnt offering was made until a previous sin offering had been presented. The worshipper must first be brought into covenant with God. Were the burnt offering presented first, the barrier of sin between man and God would be ignored, and the idea of an atonement would be denied. Our offering of ourselves is only acceptable through the previous sacrifice of Christ. 2. *The completeness of the burnt offering.* The sacrificer laid his hands on the victim, and then it was placed whole on the altar, its death signifying the completeness of the presentation of the man, body and soul, to the Lord. Show that God has the right to demand our whole selves; not a share in affection and thought simply. 3. *The occasions for presenting the burnt offering.* (1) *Daily* (Exod. xxix. 38—42) to show that at no time are we "our own." (2) *Doubly on the sabbath* (Num. xxviii. 9, 10). The seventh day a time for special consideration and self-consecration. (3) *On great festivals* (Num. xxviii. 11; xxix. 39). Times of exceptional deliverance, enrichment, &c., are seasons for renewed self-dedication. Press home the entreaty of Rom. xii. 1.

II. THE GIVING OF THANKS. Peace offerings were of various kinds, but had the same meaning. They were a presentation to God of his best gifts, a sign of grateful homage, and at the same time afforded means for the support of God's service and His servants. Flour, oil, and wine were offered with the daily burnt offering. The shew-bread was renewed each sabbath day. Special offerings were made on the sabbath and other festivals. The first-fruits were presented, and corn from the threshing-floor at the annual feasts, &c. (1) *All these were of a Eucharistic nature*, and teach us to render thanks and praise to God (Heb. xiii. 15). (2) *They betokened communion with God*, for in part they were eaten by the people in His presence. (3) *They aided in the sustenance of public worship.* The priests had the breast and shoulder. See the lesson Paul draws Phil. iv. 18. (4) *They ministered to the necessities of the poor.* Peace offerings constituted great national feasts. Give examples. Show Christ's care for the poor. Allude to such verses as Heb. xiii. 16. We express thankfulness to the Lord, and acknowledgment of His goodness, by distributing to others as they have need. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

III. THE OFFERING OF PRAYER. "He burnt incense upon the altar." Incense was offered morning and evening (Exod. xxx. 7, 8), and on the great day of atonement (Levit. xvi. 12). The altar of incense stood before the holy of holies in the holy place, where only the priests could stand. Sacredness and sweetness were suggested by the incense, so carefully and secretly compounded, so exclusively used in the service of God. As a symbol it denoted prayer; taken in its broadest sense, as the outflowing of the soul in adoration, prayer, praise toward God. Refer to Psalm cxli. 2, where prayer and incense are blended as reality and symbol; to the smoke in the temple (Isaiah vi. 3, 4); to the people praying while Zacharias was burning incense (Luke i. 10); to the prayers of the saints before the throne (Rev. v. 8; viii. 3, 4). 1. *Prayer should be reverent.* (The incense altar was close to the holy of holies, under the immediate eye of God.) 2. *Prayer should be constant.* (Incense was perpetual. "Pray without ceasing.") 3. *Prayer should be the outcome of self-dedication.* (Incense was kindled by a live coal from the altar of burnt offering.) 4. *Prayer is accepted through the merits of the atonement.* (The horns of the altar of incense were sprinkled with blood.)—A. R.

## EXPOSITION.

## CHAPTER X. 1—13.

THE VISIT OF THE QUEEN OF SHEBA.—The last words of the preceding chapter spoke of Solomon's fleet, of its voyages, and the treasures it brought home. The historian now proceeds to tell of one result to which these voyages led. The fame of the king and his great undertakings was so widely diffused, and excited so much wonder and curiosity, that a queen of Arabia came, among others, to see the temple and the palaces and the many marvels of Solomon's city and court. The prediction of Solomon's prayer (ch. viii. 42) has soon had a fulfilment.

Ver. 1.—And when the queen of Sheba [There is no good ground for doubting that by שָׁבָא we are to understand the kingdom of Southern Arabia (Yemen). It is true that while Gen. xxv. 3 (cf. 1 Chron. i. 32) speaks of Sheba, the son of *Joktan*, one of the colonists of southern Arabia, Gen. x. 7 and 1 Chron. i. 9 mention another Sheba, the son of *Cush*, and a doubt has arisen whether this was an Arabian or an Ethiopian princess, and it is alleged that she was the latter by Josephus, who calls her "queen of Egypt and Etnopia," and by some Rabbinical writers, and in the traditions of the Abyssinian church. But the kingdoms of Sheba (שָׁבָא) and Saba (שָׁבָא) are entirely distinct (Psa. lxxii. 10), the latter being the name both of the capital and country of Meroë, a province of Ethiopia (Jos., Ant. ii. 10. 2); while the former in like manner designates both the chief city and also the kingdom of the Sabæans (Job i. 15). This tribe would seem to have grown richer and stronger than all the other Arabian peoples by means of its commercial enterprise, and it was especially famed for its gold, gems, and spices (Ezek. xxvii. 22; Jer. vi. 20; Isa. lx. 6; Joel iii. 8; Job vi. 19; Psa. lxxii. 10). It is noticeable that in both kingdoms government by female sovereigns was not uncommon (cf. Acts viii. 27); but it is very remarkable to find any country under the rule of a queen at this early date. (The idea that either of these lands was *always* governed by queens has no real basis.) The name of this princess, according to the Koran, was *Balkis*, according to Abyssinian belief, *Maqueda*. Whether she was a widow or virgin is unknown] heard [Heb. *hearing*. Doubtless through the Arab traders. The record of this visit,

following immediately upon the mention of the voyages (ch. ix. 26), is a grain of evidence in favour of locating Ophir in Arabia] of the fame (Heb. *hearing*; cf. ἀκοή, which also means the thing heard, report. Compare ἀποκάλυψις, κτύχησις, &c.) of Solomon concerning the name [Heb. שָׁמַיִל, i.e., "in relation to, in connexion with, the name," &c. No doubt it was the house he had built "שָׁמַיִל" (cf. chs. iii. 2; v. 17, 18; viii. 17, 18, 19, 20, &c.) had made him famous. But the expression is somewhat unusual, and these words are omitted by the chronicler.

Gesenius and Ewald, however, regard the ל as instrumental, "the fame given him by the name," &c., as Judg. vii. 18; Ezek. xii. 12, &c., and Wordsworth compares the use of ἐν in Greek. The LXX. and other versions read "the name of Solomon and the name of the Lord." But the text is on every ground to be retained. The alliteration in this verse (probably accidental) is to be noticed. There is also a slight *paronomasia*] of the Lord, she came to prove (LXX. *πειράσαι, to test*) him with hard questions [Heb. *in riddles*; LXX. ἐν ἀνίγνωσι. The Arabian mind has ever delighted in dark sayings, enigmas, &c., and extensive collections of these have been made by Burckhardt and others (see Keil in *loc.*) According to Dius (cited in Josephus, Contra Ap. i. 17. 18) Solomon also had dialectical encounters with Hiram and with Abdeleon, or, according to Menander, a younger son of Abdeleon, a man of Tyre.]

Ver. 2.—And she came to Jerusalem [a great undertaking in those days. Our Lord lays stress on this long journey, ἐκ τῶν πειράτων τῆς γῆς, Matt. xii. 42; Luke xi. 31] with a very great train [Heb. *with a very heavy force or host* (לְיָדָא)]. Thenius understands the words of an armed escort, which may well have been necessary considering the countries through which she passed, and the treasures she carried. It would also be quite in the spirit of the age that the queen should be escorted by a band of her soldiers. But it is not so certain that this idea was in the historian's mind], with [not in Heb.] camels [2 Chron. ix. 1 has "and camels."

But the word is here explicative of the יָדָא preceding (Keil). It does not, however, decide against an armed force, as camels would be in any case required. The camel was a familiar object to the Jews (Exod. ix. 3; Levit. xi. 4; Deut. xiv. 7, &c.); but such a

procession as this would create great astonishment in Jerusalem, and we may imagine how the people would line the bazaars as she passed, and the acclamations with which they would greet the queen (cf. i. 40; Matt. xxi. 9) and her swart attendants] that bare spices [Heb. *balsams*; hence spices generally; LXX. *ἰβύγρα*. Exod. xxv. 6; xxxv. 28; Ezek. xxvii. 22. The perfumes of Arabia are proverbial (see Herod. iii. 107—113), and Yemen is the chief spice country (Dict. Bib. i. p. 91), and very much gold [Psa. lxxii. 15. Gold is not now found in Arabia, nor are there any traces of gold mines; but Strabo and Diodorus both state that it was found there, and, according to the latter, in nuggets of considerable size (Dict. Bib. i. p. 707). It is quite possible, however, that much of the "gold of Arabia" came to its emporiums from other lands. This particular present was doubtless brought by the queen because she had heard of the extensive use made of it by Solomon, and of the enormous quantities he required. "Strabo relates that the Sabeans were enormously wealthy, and used gold and silver in a most lavish manner in their furniture, their utensils, and even on the walls, doors, and roofs of their houses" (Rawlinson)] and precious stones [the onyx, emerald, and turquoise are still found in Arabia, and in former times the variety was apparently much greater (Plin., Nat. Hist. xxxvii.)]; and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of [Heb. *spake to him*] all that was in her heart. [The words are not to be restricted, as by Keil, to riddles. There may well have been, as the earlier interpreters supposed, *religious discourse—gravissimas et sacras quaestiones.*

Ver. 3.—And Solomon told her [7'3] is used of solving riddles in Judges xiv. 13 (Bähr), and interpreting dreams Gen. xli. 24; Dan. v. 12] all her questions [Heb. *words*]; there was not anything hid from the king, which he told her not.

Ver. 4.—And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house he had built [ver. 5 compels us to understand this of the palace, not of the temple. Josephus says she was especially astonished at the house of the forest of Lebanon],

Ver. 5.—And the meat of his table [ch. iv. 22, 23], and the sitting ["The rooms of the courtiers in attendance" (Keil). But 7'3 may mean an *assembly* (Psa. i. 1), and possibly the queen saw them when gathered together for a meal] of his servants, and the attendance [Heb. *standing*. According to Keil, "the rooms of the inferior servants." But ver. 8 appears to be decisive against this

view] of his ministers [*i.e.*, those who ministered to him. The word "servants" is, perhaps, to be understood of state officers; the word "ministers" of personal attendants (as in Acts xiii. 5, &c.) That the latter were an inferior class, the "standing" shows], and their apparel [cf. Matt. vi. 29. The rich and costly dress of Eastern courtiers and attendants is sometimes furnished by the king (Gen. xlv. 22; 1 Sam. xviii. 4; 2 Kings v. 5; Dan. v. 7; Esth. v. 8; 1 Macc. x. 20. Cf. Chardin, "Voyage en Perse," iii. 230], and his cupbearers [By this word Keil would understand "drinking arrangements." But see 2 Chron. ix. 4, "cupbearers (same word) and their apparel"], and his ascent [7'3]. It is somewhat doubtful whether we are to interpret this word, *ascent*, or *burnt offering*. 2 Kings xvi. 18, 1 Chron. xxvi. 16, Ezek. xl. 26 make for the former, and the chronicler has

7'3 which undoubtedly means "*ascent*." But all the translations understand the word of burnt offerings—the LXX. has *καὶ τὴν ὀλοκαύτωσιν*—and the word, "which occurs at least 300 times in the Bible," always (with one exception) signifies burnt offering. It is objected against this interpretation (1) that we should require the plural, *i.e.*, "burnt offerings;" but this is by no means certain, as the historian may refer to one particular holocaust (see ch. ix. 25) which the queen witnessed; and (2) that the sight of burnt offerings could not have caused her any astonishment (Keil). But their prodigious number may surely have done so; and we are certainly to understand that Solomon was remarkable for the scale of his sacrifices. Considering, however, that the word undoubtedly means "ascent" in Ezek. xl. 26, and that it is so paraphrased by the chronicler, it is perhaps safer to retain this rendering here; there was no more spirit in her [same expression Josh. v. 1, and cf. ii. 11. For various legends as to this queen, see Stanley, "Jewish Ch." ii. pp. 234—236].

Ver. 6.—And she said to the king, It was a true report [Heb. *Truth was the word*] that I heard in mine own land of thy acts [or words. Same word as above and in the next verse] and of thy wisdom.

Ver. 7.—Howbeit, I believed not the words ["Fame, as it is always a blab, so oftentimes a liar" (Bp. Hall)] until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and behold, the half was not told me; thy wisdom and prosperity exceeded the fame [Heb. *thou hast added wisdom and good to the report*] which I heard.

Ver. 8.—Happy [Heb. *O the happiness,*

as in Psa. i. 1; ii. 12; xxxiii. 12, &c.] are thy men [LXX. *wives, γυναικες*]; happy are thy servants, which stand continually before thee [see on ch. i. 2], and that hear thy wisdom.

Ver. 9.—Blessed be the Lord thy God [From this mention of the name of Jehovah, taken in connexion with Matt. xii. 42, it has been concluded that the queen became a convert to the faith of Israel. But this inference is unwarranted. Polytheism permitted, and, indeed, encouraged, a full recognition of the gods many of the different races and regions. See on ch. v. 7, and cf. 2 Chron. ii. 12 and Ezra i. 3. Observe, too, it is "Jehovah, thy God." And it is very significant that all her gifts and treasures were for the king; none were offerings to the temple] which delighted in thee [cf. ch. v. 7], to set thee on the throne of Israel; because the Lord loved Israel for ever [a graceful and thoroughly Oriental compliment. This visit was as flattering to the pride of the chosen people as to their king], therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice.

Ver. 10.—And she gave the king an hundred and twenty [Josephus says *twenty*] talents of gold [Psa. lxxii. 15. "The rivers still run into the sea; to him that hath shall be given" (Ep. Hall). As to the *talent*, see on ch. ix. 14], and of spices very great store [Heb. *much exceeding*ly (Ewald, 287 c.) "The immense abundance of spices in Arabia . . . is noted by many writers. Herodotus says that the whole tract exhaled an odour marvellously sweet (iii. 113). Diodorus relates that the odour was carried out to sea to a considerable distance from the shore (iii. 46). According to Strabo the spice-trade of Arabia was in the hands of two nations, the Sabeans and Gerrhaeans, whose profits from it were so enormous that in his time they were the two wealthiest nations on the face of the earth (xvi. 4. 19)." Rawlinson], and precious stones; there came no more such abundance of spices as these which the queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon. [Josephus states (Ant. viii. 6. 6) that the cultivation of the balsam in Palestine dates from this visit; the plant having been one of the queen's gifts.

The two following verses form a sort of parenthesis. In speaking of the gold and gems brought by the Arabian queen, it occurs to the historian to state that both of these commodities were also brought in by the fleet. Possibly, too, the mention of the spices reminded him of the fragrant almug trees brought from Ophir (Bähr). But it

would rather seem that they are included as one of the chief products of the voyage.

Ver. 11.—And the navy of Hiram also [*i.e.*, built and equipped by him, ch. ix. 26—28], that brought gold from Ophir, brought in from Ophir great plenty of almug trees [In 2 Chron. ii. 8; ix. 10, called "algum-trees." The origin and meaning of the word are alike uncertain. By some (see Gesen., Thes. i. p. 93) the *Al* is supposed to be the Arabic article, as found in *Al-coran*, *Al-cohol*, *Ad-miral*, &c., but later authorities (see, *e.g.*, Max Müller, "Science of Language," p. 214) lend no support to this view. "Celsius enumerates fifteen different trees, each of which has been supposed to have a claim to represent the almug tree of Scripture" (Dict. Bib. iii. Appendix, p. vi.) It is now, however, pretty generally agreed that the red sandal-wood (*pterocarpus sandaliorius*, Linn.; or, according to others, *santalum album*, the white species) is intended—a tree which grows in India and on the coast of Malabar. It is said that in India sandal-wood is called *valguha* (same root); and Stanley sees in almug the "Hebraized form of the Deccan word for sandal." Dr. Hooker, however, (Dict. Bib. *l.c.*) regards the question as still undecided, and precious stones. [Stanley remarks on the frequent references to gold and silver and precious stones in the Book of Proverbs (chs. i. 9; iii. 14, 15; viii. 10, 11; x. 20; xvi. 16, &c.), as one indication that it belongs to the age of Solomon.]

Ver. 12.—And the king made of the almug trees pillars [lit., *props*. In 2 Chron. ix. 11 we have a different word, מְסֻלֹת (cf. Judg. xx. 31, 32; 1 Sam. vi. 12, &c.), there translated *stairs*. The word in the text מְסֻלֹת is ἄπαξ λεγ. Keil understands "steps with bannisters;" Bähr (after Jarchi) "tesselated pavements;" Gesenius, "balusters;" Thenius, "divans;" Böttcher, "benches and similar moveables." But was not the pavement already laid, and of cedar; and would the sanctuary have *divans*, &c.?] for the house of the Lord, and for the king's house, harps also and psalteries [also mentioned together (Psa. lxxi. 22; cviii. 2; cl. 3). They were *stringed* instruments, but their precise shape and character is quite uncertain. One species of sandal-wood, or of wood closely allied to it, is said to have been much sought after for musical instruments] for the singers: there came no such almug trees, nor were seen unto this day.

Ver. 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. [Heb. *ac-*

ording to the hand of king Solomon. The chronicler has, "beside that which she had brought unto the king." That is to say, in addition to the fitting presents which he made in return for her gifts, he freely gave her whatsoever she asked for. To ask for a coveted thing is no breach of Oriental propriety. The Ethiopian Christians find in these words (and considering the character of Solomon and the license of that age, perhaps not altogether without reason) a basis for their belief that she bore Solomon a son, Melimelek by name, from whom, indeed, the present sovereigns of Abyssinia claim to derive their descent.] So she turned and went to her own country, she and her servants.

Bishop Wordsworth has remarked (p. 44) that the record of this visit disappoints us. He says, "He (Solomon) answered her hard questions. He showed her his palace . . . but we do not hear that he invited her to go up with him into the house of the Lord,"

&c. Again: "The visit of the queen of Sheba seem to have been without any spiritual result." "In like manner," he adds, "we hear nothing of any attempt on Solomon's part to improve his friendship and commercial relations with Hiram into an occasion for communicating the better merchandise of Divine truth to the Sidonians." But surely this criticism overlooks the fact that Judaism was not a missionary religion, and that the chosen people had no sort of commission to convert the heathen. It is, no doubt, a mystery; but it is a fact, that for 2,000 years the light of God's truth was, by the counsel and purpose of God, restricted within the extremely narrow confines of Israel, and that the "fulness of the time," when the Gentiles should be "fellow-heirs," was distant from Solomon's day by a whole millennium.

### HOMILETICS.

**Vers. 1—13.—The Queen of Sheba.** Well may the journey of this Eastern queen have a triple mention in the sacred page (1 Kings x.; 2 Chron. ix.; St. Matt. xii.; St. Luke xi.), for it is almost, if not altogether, *sui generis*. We are so familiar with the story from our infancy that we often fail to realize its true character and proportions. A woman, a princess, an Arab queen, travels some three thousand miles in search of wisdom. We have read of long voyages undertaken and of great hardships endured by men who were in search of gold. Fable tells of the search for a golden fleece; history tells of many voyages to a fancied *El Dorado*, but here only, and in the case of the Magi, do we read of a traveller who brought gold and sought wisdom.

And our Lord has honoured this history—this almost romantic story—by drawing one of its lessons with His own hand (Matt. xii. 42). But though He has there furnished the outline, He has left it for us to fill in the colouring. And the rest of the story He has left untouched; the other lessons we have to gather for ourselves. We have, therefore, to consider, I. The journey of the queen. II. Her rich offerings to Solomon. III. Solomon's royal presents to her.

I. AS TO THE JOURNEY—the one point noticed by our blessed Lord. He has reminded us (1) of *its character*. She came "from the ends of the earth." (2) *Of its purpose*. It was to "hear the wisdom of Solomon." Let us collect our thoughts round these two centres, the *nature* and *object* of this enterprise.

I. THE NATURE OF THIS JOURNEY. Four particulars must be borne in mind. (1) *The length of the way*. Presuming that Sheba was Yemen (see note on ver. 1), her capital would be at no great distance from Mocha or Aden, *i.e.*, it would be some fifteen hundred miles distant from Jerusalem. But ancient journeys are not to be measured by miles, but by hours. Now both the queen and her company travelled by camels, and the camel can only go, with any degree of comfort, at a walking pace, and, like other beasts of burden, must have occasional rests. Even if they had some "swift dromedaries" for the queen, the pace must have been regulated by the sumpter camels. We may be pretty sure, therefore, that the party would not travel, on the average, more than twenty miles a day, which would give something like seventy-five days for the journey to Jerusalem, and the same for the return. (2) *Its fatigues and hardships*. Eastern queens, even of the Sabæans,

were not unacquainted with luxury (note on ver. 2), and the journey through the "great and terrible wilderness" would subject this lady to many discomforts. Camel-riding is very tiring; desert-travel profoundly wearisome. Whatever comforts her "very great train" might be able to procure her, nothing could alter the blazing sun overhead, the burning sands beneath, or the utter desolation and monotony of the desert. Those who have made the journey to Sinai will have some idea what the daily life of this party was like. (3) *Its perils*. "Perils of the wilderness" (cf. *Psa. xci.*; *Deut. viii. 15*), and "perils of robbers" alike. Her course lay through the land of Ishmael, whose "hand was against every man," and she carried with her large treasure—a tempting bait to the rapacious Bedouin. True, she had an armed escort, but that would not exempt her from dangers. Nor were these "perils by the way" all. She had left her kingdom without its head. An insurrection might be fomented against her (*Luke xix. 14*), or a usurper might snatch her crown. And all this was (4) *undertaken by a woman*. True, she was an Arabian, and therefore presumably hardy and patient, but all the same the sex of the traveller increases our admiration, especially when we consider the estimation in which women have generally been held in the East. And she was a queen, and left a court, left her fragrant country, "Araby the blest," to plod painfully and slowly over the desert reaches, till she came to the "city of the vision of peace."

II. THE PURPOSE OF THIS UNDERTAKING. Many sovereigns have left their homes at the head of "a very great train" both before and since her day, but with what different objects in view. They have swept across continents—the Rameses, the Shishaks, the Alexanders, the Tamerlanes of history, but not for wisdom. Theirs was no peaceful or kindly mission. Some, like Peter the Great, have visited foreign courts for the sake of advancing the commerce, &c., of their country. Some, like the Persian Shah recently, have travelled far to see the wonders of the world, and to taste of its pleasures; but she came to "prove Solomon with hard questions," to "commune with him of all that was in her heart," t

"reason high  
Of providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,  
Fixed fate, freewill, foreknowledge absolute."

It is clear that to her "wisdom" was "the principal thing," and she brought gold and rubies (*Job xxviii. 18*; *Prov. iii. 15*; *viii. 11*) to obtain it. She is like the "merchantman seeking goodly pearls." She has found one pearl of great price, and she will give all that she has to possess it. True, she saw the wonders of Solomon's court, but she came to hear his wisdom. She envied his courtiers, not because of their places, palaces, &c., but because they stood before him (*ver. 8*) and heard his words.

And our Saviour has said that this conduct will condemn the men of *His* generation. It were easy to show how. But it will be more to the point if we consider how it may condemn the men of our own time.

1. *Christ is "more (πλείον) than Solomon."* Solomon was the wisest of men; Christ was "the wisdom of God." Solomon, a great king; Christ, "King of kings and Lord of lords" (*Rev. xvii. 4*). Compare the Song of Solomon with the Beatitudes; the Proverbs with the Sermon on the Mount; Solomon's end and Christ's death. We should not dare to compare them had not He done it before. 2. *Christ is here.* No need to cross deserts or continents to find Him. "Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above)," &c. (*Rom. x. 6, 7*). And say not, "True, He was present in those Galilean synagogues, in those streets of Jerusalem, but He is not here." His own words affirm the contrary (*Matt. xxviii. 20*; *xviii. 20*, &c.) He is present everywhere.

"One Spirit, His  
Who wore the platted crown with bleeding brows,  
Fills universal nature."

But more especially is he present in His Church, His word, His sacraments. &c. Christ has come from the uttermost parts of the world to us. It is not we who

have to leave a kingdom. He has left His that he may "appoint unto us a kingdom."

"Thy Father's home of light;  
Thy rainbow-circled throne,  
Were left for earthly night,  
For wanderings sad and lone."

And yet men will not listen to Him, will not learn of Him. It is said that ninety-five per cent. of our labouring classes do not stately attend any place of Christian worship. And of those who do, how many do His bidding? In the great assize all these will meet the Queen of the South. She will witness of the journey she took, of the sacrifices she made, of the risks she incurred, to sit at the feet of Solomon. She will tell of Solomon's "ascent," &c., and she will put to shame and everlasting contempt those to whom the words and wisdom, the sacrifice and ascension of the Lord were unholy or indifferent things (Heb. x. 29).

And not the Queen of the South alone. The kings of the East, Melchior, Jasper, Balthasar—so tradition calls them—they too came a long journey to see the child Christ. And how many pagans in Africa, in India, in the islands of the sea, have gone long miles just to hear one sermon from the passing missionary? Will not all these condemn the men of this generation?

III. HER OFFERINGS TO SOLOMON. It was the custom of those days to approach king, seer, &c., with a present (ver. 25; Psa. lxxii. 10; 1 Sam. ix. 7; Judg. vi. 18). And she did not come empty. We read of "camels bearing spices," of 120 talents of gold, &c. (ver. 10). Now observe: (1) *She gave of what she had.* Her country produced or imported gold; it produced spices and precious stones (note on ver. 2). Other visitors to Solomon gave garments, horses, &c. (ver. 25). These she had not, but she gave what she could (2 Cor. viii. 12). (2) *She gave what Solomon needed.* We know how much gold he required; not for the temple only—that was apparently completed—but for his great and varied undertakings. She brought 120 talents of the "gold of Arabia"—literally the ransom of a province (ch. ix. 14). She brought spices—in ver. 15, we read of "the traffick of the *spice* merchants"—and precious stones—in 2 Chron. iii. 6 we find that Solomon garnished the house with these. So that, like Hiram, she helped to prepare a shrine for the Holy One of Israel. (3) *She gave generously.* Her munificence was unexampled—"very much gold" (ver. 2). "There came no more such abundance of spices," &c. (ver. 10).

And shall not her *gifts*, too, condemn our parsimony? For Christ, the Divine Solomon, has need of our spices and silver and gold. He too is building a temple (1 Peter ii. 5). He too plants store cities and treasures in His realm. He would have the whole round world girdled with Christian temples. He would make it one vast "Paradise" (Eccles. ii. 4, 5). And He needs our agency and our offerings. He wants the perfume of *sacrifice* on our part (Phil. iv. 18; Eph. v. 2; 2 Cor. ii. 15). The Queen of the South did not offer to Solomon of that which cost her nothing. But how seldom is the widow's mite offered to our king. "All these of their abundance have cast in," &c. (Luke xxi. 3). Compared with her gift how miserable are our subscriptions and offertories. Note: There is a striking similarity between her gifts and those of the Magi. Both too were offered to a king.

IV. SOLOMON'S GIFTS TO HER. She was not the loser either by her long journey or her costly presents. A prince like Solomon could not permit her to make sacrifices. *Noblesse oblige.* His generosity must exceed hers. So he gave her "all her desire," "whatsoever she asked" "according to the hand of the king" (ver. 13, Heb.) We see here a picture of the recompenses of our God. "According to his riches in glory" (Phil. iv. 19). "Exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. iii. 20). "Ask and it shall be given you" (Matt. vii. 7). His gifts too are "according to the hand of a king," and what a king! He cannot remain in any man's debt. "A cup of cold water only" He will abundantly recompense.

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—3.—*The Queen of the South.* This incident is remarkable as the only one in the reign of Solomon to which reference is made in the New Testament. Solomon is twice spoken of by our Lord in His recorded discourses. In one case His royal magnificence is declared inferior to the beauty with which God has clothed the "lilies of the field." "Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" (Matt. vi. 29). Art can never vie with nature. What loveliness of form or hue that human skill can produce is comparable with that of the petals of a flower? What is all the glory with which man may robe himself to that which is the product of the creative finger of God? In the other case, it is the wisdom of Solomon that our Lord refers to, as having its wide-spread fame illustrated by the visit of the Queen of Sheba, and as being surpassed by the higher revelation of truth in Himself. "The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment," &c. (Matt. xii. 42). The interest and importance of this incident is greatly heightened by its thus finding a place in the discourses of Christ. In itself there is no very deep meaning in it. It supplies few materials for high moral or spiritual teaching. The interchange of civilities between two Oriental monarchs is related by the historian with innocent pride, as setting forth the surpassing grandeur of the king whose reign was to him the golden age of his own nation's life. There is something of a romantic charm in it, too, that naturally gave rise to fanciful traditions being added to the biblical story. But beyond this it is an event of no great moment. This use of it, however, by our Lord lifts it out of the region of the commonplace, gives it other than a mere secular meaning, makes it an important channel of Divine instruction. Every name is honoured by association with His. Every incident becomes clothed with sacred interest when made to illustrate the relation of human souls to Him. Let us look at these two persons, then, in the light of the New Testament reference to their interview.

I. SOLOMON, IN HIS WISDOM, A TYPE OF THE "GREATER" CHRIST. The distinctive personal characteristic of Solomon was his "wisdom." The fame of it is regarded by some as marking the uprising of a new and hitherto unknown power in Israel. Whence came this new phenomenon? We trace it to a Divine source. "The Lord gave unto David this wise son" (ch. v. 7). "God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much" (ch. iv. 29). No doubt the extended intercourse with surrounding nations that he established was the beginning of a new life to Israel, bringing in a flood of new ideas and interests. This supplied materials for his wisdom but did not create it. It was not learnt from Egypt, or the "children of the East." It was a Divine gift, that came in response to his own prayer (ch. iii. 9). 1. One broad feature that strikes us in Solomon's wisdom is its remarkable versatility, the variety of its phases, the way in which its light played freely on all sorts of subjects. It dealt with the objects and processes of nature. It was a kind of natural science. He has been called "the founder of Hebrew science," the "first of the world's great naturalists." "He spake of trees, from the cedar tree," &c. (ch. iv. 33). One would like to know what the range and quality of his science really was; but the Bible, existing as it does for far other than scientific purposes, does not satisfy our curiosity in this respect. It dealt with moral facts and problems—a true practical philosophy of life; its proper ends and aims, its governing principles, the meaning of its experiences, its besetting dangers and possible rewards. It dealt with the administration of national affairs. This is seen in his assertion of the principle of eternal righteousness as the law by which the ruler of men must himself be ruled. His wisdom lay in the gift of "an understanding heart to judge the people and discern between good and evil," and the people "feared the king, for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to do judgment" (ch. iv. 29). We are thus reminded of the unity of nature and of human life. Truth is one, whether in thought, feeling, or conduct, in things private or public, secular or spiritual. Wisdom is the power that discerns and utilizes the innermost truth of all things, finds out and practically applies whatever is essentially Divine. 2. Solomon's wisdom assumed various forms of expression: the Proverbial form, as

in the "Book of Proverbs;" the Poetic form, as in his "Songs" and "Psalms;" the Socratic form, by question and answer, riddles—"dark sayings"—and the interpretation thereof. It is in this latter form that his wisdom here appears. Tradition says that Hiram engaged with him in this "cross questioning," and was worsted in the encounter; so here the queen of Sheba came "to prove him with hard questions," and "communing with him of all that was in her heart she found that he could tell her all her questions," &c. By all this we are led to think of "One greater than Solomon." (1) "Greater," inasmuch as He leads men to wisdom of a higher order. Solomon is the most secular of the inspired writers of the Old Testament. Divine things are approached by him, as it were, on the lower, earthly side. A prudential tone is given to the counsels of religion, and vice is set forth not so much as wickedness but as "folly." Think of the marked difference between the utterances of Solomon's wisdom and the sublime spiritual elevation of David's psalms. And when we come to Christ's teaching, what immeasurably loftier heights and deeper depths of Divine truth are here! Redemption, holiness, immortality, are His themes—the deeper "mysteries of the kingdom of heaven;" "in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. ii. 3). (2) "Greater," inasmuch as the Divine fount of wisdom must needs be infinitely superior to any mere human channel through which it flows. Solomon was after all but a learner, not a master. His were but guesses at truth. Christ's were the authoritative utterances of the incarnate "Word." Solomon spoke according to the limited measure of the spirit of truth in him. Christ spoke out of His own infinite fulness. "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him" (John iii. 34). Whence, indeed, did Solomon's wisdom come but from Him, the true fountal "Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world"? The words that the wise in every age have spoken were but dim, dawning rays of the light that broke in a glorious day upon the world when He, the Sun of Righteousness, arose.

II. THE QUEEN OF SHEBA, IN HER SEARCH AFTER WISDOM, AS AN EXAMPLE FOR OURSELVES. All the motives that actuated her in this long pilgrimage from the far-off corner of Arabia we know not. Mere curiosity, commercial interest, personal vanity may have had something to do with it. But the words of the narrative suggest that it was mainly an honest thirst for knowledge, and specially for clearer light on highest matters of human interest. Learn (1) The nobility of a simple, earnest, restless search after truth. (2) The grateful respect which a teachable spirit will feel towards one who can unveil the truth to it. (3) The joyous satisfaction of soul that springs from the discovery of the highest truth. How much does such an example as this in the realms of heathen darkness rebuke the spiritual dulness and indifference of those who with the Light of Life shining gloriously upon them in the person of Christ refuse to welcome it, and walk in it! "Many shall come from the east and the west," &c. (Matt. viii. 11, 12).—W.

Vers. 1—13.—*The Queen of Sheba.* The suggestiveness of Solomon's intercourse with surrounding nations. His magnanimity was as remarkable as his magnificence. His broad policy stood out in striking contrast with the narrowness of some of his contemporaries and successors. It was one evidence of his divinely inspired wisdom. In some respects his enlightenment puts to shame modern diplomacy. Trace his relations with the king of Tyre and the queen of Sheba. These were not exceptionally treated by the wise-hearted ruler. His country was open to the commerce of surrounding peoples, and his court free to all who would live in amity with him. Indicate the typical nature of his kingdom—the golden age of God's people. Apply to the reign of Him who said, "A greater than Solomon is here!" Remarks on the position and the commerce of the land from which this great queen came.

Her conduct is full of suggestions for us—

I. HER COMING SHOWS THE PAINS THOSE SHOULD TAKE WHO ARE SEARCHING FOR TRUE WISDOM. The journey was long, arduous, costly. It may have raised opposition amongst the people she ruled. In spite of all she came. Give examples of men who in old time travelled far in search of wisdom, visiting schools of philosophy, astrologers, and sages, consulting oracles like that at Delphi. Not<sup>1</sup>

demand of men in our days who investigate natural phenomena. Instances abound of travellers who have laid down life, as did Franklin and Livingstone, in journeys of discovery; of surgeons and physicians who have run personal risk to learn by crucial experiment a means of cure; of scientific discoverers who have sacrificed time and effort to make sure of one fact, or establish one law, &c. In contrast with all this how small the effort to win true riches, to know essential truth. Many are content with hearsay evidence. The queen of Sheba was not. At any cost she would see and know for herself. Perhaps it was with some remembrance of her visit that Solomon wrote Prov. ii. 3—5: "If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then thou shalt understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." Compare this with the parable of the merchant seeking goodly pearls (Matt. xiii. 45, 46). See also Col. ii. 3.

II. HER CONFESSION EXPRESSES THE FEELING OF THOSE WHO HAVE COME TO ONE GREATER THAN SOLOMON. "The half was not told me" (vers. 6, 7). St. Paul speaks of "the unsearchable riches of Christ;" of "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ," &c. In proportion as men really know Him, and live near Him, does He appear more winsome and worthy. Cite the utterances of such men as Bernard, Wesley, &c. Their words fall from our lips in song, yet they seem extravagant to us on our low level of religious life, and at our sad distance from Christ. Such bursts of praise we may use as tests of our devotion. Christ has not changed, but too often His people see Him from afar. Any one who is living near the Lord can say, "The half was not told me" of Thy love and glory.

III. HER OFFERING SUGGESTS THE PRESENTATION WE SHOULD MAKE TO OUR LORD. Read verse 10. Draw out the parallel between this and the coming of the Magi (Matt. ii.), when they fell down and worshipped the child Jesus, and opened their treasures and presented to Him gifts—gold and frankincense and myrrh.

"Say, shall we yield Him, in costly devotion,  
Odours of Edom and offerings Divine;  
Gems of the mountain, and pearls of the ocean,  
Myrrh from the forest, or gold from the mine?"

"Vainly we offer each ample oblation;  
Vainly with gifts would his favour secure;  
Richer, by far, is the heart's adoration;  
Dearer to God are the prayers of the poor."

See Isa. i. 12; Psa. xl. 6, &c.

IV. HER ENTERTAINMENT REMINDS US OF THE WELCOME GIVEN BY OUR LORD.

1. *Like Solomon* (ver. 3) *Christ answers our questions.* He knew His disciples "were desirous to ask Him," so they needed not even to frame their questions. Unspoken prayers are heard. 2. *Like Solomon* (ver. 5) *Christ reveals His glory.* The transfiguration, the last talk with the apostles, the apocalypse, &c. 3. *Like Solomon* (ver. 13) *Christ loads us with benefits.* Pardon, peace, strength, joy, &c.—of greater worth than gold and precious stones. These material, those imperishable.

*Let the earnestness of this queen rebuke our sloth and unbelief.* "The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, a greater than Solomon is here" (Matt. xii. 42).—A. R.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER X. 14—29.

SOLOMON'S WEALTH, POMP, AND POWER.—The visit of the Queen of Sheba, in itself a striking proof of the fame and greatness of Solomon, is followed by a description of his revenues, his throne, and various other par-

ticulars of his wealth and magnificence, some of which are related here because they were the products of the voyages of that same fleet which had been the means of acquainting the queen with Solomon and his glory.

Ver. 14.—Now the weight of gold that

came to Solomon in one year [probably one particular and exceptional year, probably also the year of the queen's visit, not year by year (Wordsworth, *al.*), as the Vulgate (*per singulos annos*). One fleet only came home from its voyage after three years, and the gold would hardly weigh precisely 666 talents year by year] was six hundred threescore and six talents of gold. [The correspondence with the number of the beast (Rev. xiii. 18; cf. Ezra ii. 13) is in all probability not altogether accidental. It is possible, *i.e.*, that the number of the beast is a reminiscence of this number of talents. For we may surely see in this statement of Solomon's prodigious wealth an indication of his worldliness, the turning-point, perhaps, in his estrangement from God. "The love of money" may have been the root of all his evil. It is certainly remarkable that from this time forward his career is one of steady declension. It is also remarkable that while he is here represented to us as a "royal merchant," the mark of the beast is on the *buyers* and *sellers* (Rev. xiii. 17). But see "Expositor," May, 1881. It is, of course, possible that the number has been corrupted, but, on the other hand, it may have been recorded, partly because of the singularity of the sum total. The 666 talents include the receipts from all sources—taxes, tribute, and voyages—with the exception made presently (ver. 15). Rawlinson quotes Keil (in his earlier edition) as estimating this amount at £3,646,350. But in his later work, Keil puts it in round numbers at two and a half millions (17,000,000 thalers), while Mr. Poole calculates it at about £8,000,000. These widely varying figures are instructive, as showing that both estimates are little more than guesswork. We do not know the value of the Hebrew talent, nor, indeed, can it ever be rightly appraised until we know its purchasing power. The *denarius*, *e.g.*, is generally valued at 8½d. (or 7½d.) because it contained some 58 grains of pure silver, but its real *value* was nearer three shillings, inasmuch as it was a fair wage for a day's work on the land (Matt. xx. 2). In any case, it is clear that this sum should hardly be compared with the *annual* revenue of other Oriental empires, as by Rawlinson (see above).

Ver 15.—Beside that he had of the merchantmen [The root מָרַח signifies to *wander* or *travel* about. In Num. xiii. 16, 17, it is used of *spies*. It may here be applied to persons who travelled for purposes of trade; but the versions differ very materially in their rendering of the word; the LXX. understanding it of *tribute* (τῶν φόρων τῶν ὑποταγμένων); the Chaldee, Syriac, and Arabic of *artizans*; the Vulgate of *ambassadors*. And the word is nowhere else used

of traders. For the construction, see Ewald 287e], and of the traffick [it is noteworthy that no such word is used before מְרַחֵם (above) of the *spice* [not in Heb.] merchants מְרַחֵם is akin to מְרַחֵם. Like the preceding word, the primary meaning is to *go about* (מְרַחֵם *foot*); hence, to *trade*. It is probable that Solomon's great commercial enterprises were conducted for his own benefit, *i.e.*, that the merchants were little more than agents, who bought and sold for the king. Such is the custom of Eastern kings (Kitto), and of all the kings of Arabia [מְרַחֵם is very variously interpreted.

According to Gesenius it means *foreigners*, and he would understand "foreign kings who made an alliance with the Israelites," and so the Chaldee. Keil: "the kings of the mixed population" (mentioned Exod. xii. 38. Cf. Jer. i. 37; Neh. xiii. 3). Perhaps the words are best explained by Jer. xxv. 24: "The kings of Arabia (מְרַחֵם) and . . . of the mingled people (מְרַחֵם) that dwell in the desert," *i.e.*, the desert of *Arabia deserta*, bordering on Palestine. The chronicler here gives us מְרַחֵם, *i.e.*, not the Arabia of the geographers, but the tract of country south and east of Palestine, as far as the Red Sea (Gesenius). No doubt these kings, who were great sheeppasters, paid their tribute in flocks of sheep and goats (2 Chron. xvii. 11; 2 Kings iii. 4), and of the governors of the country. [The word מְרַחֵם (cf. ch. xx. 24) is a foreign word, perhaps Sanskrit, apparently borrowed by the Jews from the Persians. It is used of Tatnai (Ezra v. 6), of Zerubbabel (Haggai i. 1), and of Nehemiah (Neh. v. 14). Probably our author, in whose day it was a familiar and well-understood word, substituted it for some older Hebrew designation. But the office and character of these "governors" is more difficult to define than the name. Rawlinson thinks that, in some parts of the empire, the kings—the "empire of Solomon," he observes, "was in the main a *congeries* of small kingdoms"—"had been superseded by governors." But it seems as natural to understand the term of the twelve prefects mentioned in chap. iv., who were "the governors of the land," or of similar officers in the different outposts of the kingdom. We know that the contributions which passed through their hands were furnished in *kind*; hence, perhaps, it is that this income is distinguished from the gold of ver. 14.

Ver. 16.—And king Solomon made two hundred targets [מְרַחֵם], from a root which signifies *protect*, a large oblong shield, which covered the entire person (Psa. v. 12),

*θυρίδες*, *scutum*. See 1 Sam. xvii. 7, 41. The LXX. here reads *δάραι*, i.e., spears] of beaten gold [The authorities are divided as to the meaning of *בְּזָהָב*, here translated *beaten*. This rendering is supported by Bähr and Keil (after Kimchi), but Gesenius understands *mixed* gold. Rawlinson infers from the *weight* that the shields were only plated (shields were commonly made of wood, covered with leather). But whether they were solid or not does not decide the question whether the gold was pure or alloyed. "Shields of gold" are mentioned 2 Sam. viii. 7; 1 Macc. vi. 39] : six hundred shekels [Heb. omits *shekels*, as elsewhere, Gen. xxiv. 22; xxxvii. 28; Judg. vii. 26, &c. There were apparently two kinds of shekel, the Mosaic and the royal (for the latter see 2 Sam. xiv. 26). The former was twice as much as the latter, but there is no agreement amongst commentators as to the weight or value of either. Nor can we be certain which is indicated here. Thenius decides for the former, and estimates the weight of the gold on each target to be 17½ lbs., and the value to be 6000 thalers (£900), or, according to Keil, 5000 thalers (£750). Keil, however, inclines to the belief that the royal shekel is meant, in which case the weight would be 9 lbs., and the value about £400. Bähr, however, estimates the gold at no more than £78 (523 thalers)] of gold went to one target.

Ver. 17.—And he made three hundred shields [portable shields (*peltas*, Vulgate) adapted for use in hand-to-hand encounters (2 Chron. xii. 9, 10; cf. 2 Sam. i. 21). That these were much smaller shields is clear from the text. These shields were borne by the royal body-guard on great occasions (ch. xiv. 27). They were taken away by Shishak (*ib.* ver. 26)] of beaten gold; three pound [שָׁלֹשׁ מִנָּה, *mvā, mina*. As 2 Chron. ix. 16 has here 300 shekels, it follows that the *maneh* = 100 shekels. From Ezek. xlv. 12, however, it would seem that there were *manehs* of different value] of gold went to one shield [i.e., half as much as to the target]; and the king put them in [Heb. *gave them to*] the house of the forest of Lebanon [ch. vii. 2. They would certainly be suspended on the walls, but whether on the inside or the outside is not quite certain, and the text affords us no means of deciding. We know that elsewhere shields were suspended outside the walls of armouries, &c. "At Tyre the beauty of the place was thought to consist in the splendour and variety of the shields of all nations hung on its walls (Ezek. xxvii. 10, 11). In Rome the temple of Bellona was studded with them. In Athens, the round marks where

they hung can still be traced on the walls of the Parthenon. There were also arms hung round the walls of the second temple (Jos., Ant. xv. 11. 3)."] Stanley. It is supposed that along with those made by Solomon were hung the shields taken by David from the Syrians, as according to 2 Sam. viii. 7, LXX., these latter also were carried off by Shishak. It has been inferred from Cant. iv. 4 that these also were 500 in number, and that the entire thousand were suspended on a part of the house of the forest of Lebanon known as the Tower of David; cf. Isa. xxii. 8; Psa. xlvii. 9].

The historian now proceeds to describe the great feature of another of Solomon's palaces. As the house of the forest of Lebanon was distinguished by the golden shields which emblazoned and glorified its walls, so was "the porch of judgment" (ch. vii. 7) by the chryselephantine throne.

Ver. 18.—Moreover the king made a great throne [Heb. *seat*. The use of a chair where the custom of the country is to squat on the ground, or to recline on a divan, is always a mark of dignity. See 2 Kings iv. 10; Prov. ix. 14] of ivory [Heb. *tooth*. Below in ver. 22 we have *elephant's tooth*. It is generally thought that this "throne of the house of David" (Psa. cxxii. 5) was of wood, veneered with ivory, as was the practice in Assyria (Rawlinson, "Ancient Monarchies," i. p. 463), and in the chryselephantine statues of the Greeks (Paus. ii. 4. 1; vi. 25. 4, &c.) Bähr says there is no more necessity for believing this throne to have been of solid ivory than the "ivory house" mentioned in ch. xxii. 39. Cf. Psa. xlv. 8; Amos iii. 15; vi. 4. But there is surely this difference between them, that the palace could not possibly be constructed entirely of ivory, whereas the throne might be, and some of the thrones of India have been (Rawlinson)], and overlaid it with the best [שֵׁנִי, from the root שָׁנָה, *separavit* = *aurum depuratum*. The chronicler explains the word by שֵׁנִי זָהָב (2 Chron. ix. 17)] gold. [It is very unlikely that the gold entirely covered and concealed the ivory, especially if the latter was merely a veneer. Keil and Bähr consider that the gold was laid on the wood and the ivory inserted between the plates, but the text does not speak of overlaying with ivory, but of overlaying ivory with gold. And the presumption is that the ivory was solid. In the Greek statues both ivory and gold were applied in *laminae*, the former representing the flesh, the latter the drapery.]

Ver. 19.—The throne had six steps ["The characteristic feature in the royal throne

was its elevation" (Dict. Bib. iii. p. 1493); cf. Isa. vi. 1], and the top [Heb. *head*] of the throne was round behind [same word ch. vii. 23, 24. Thenius and Bähr understand it of an arched or rounded canopy attached to the back; Keil supposes that the back was arched or rounded in form]; and there were stays [Heb. *hands*, i.e., arms] on either side on the place of the seat [see drawing of Assyrian throne in Layard's "Nineveh," ii. 301; Dict. Bib. iii. p. 1494], and two lions [probably of wood overlaid with gold. Cf. Jer. x. 3, 4] stood beside the stays.

Ver. 20.—And twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other, upon the six steps [It is somewhat doubtful whether there were twelve or fourteen lions in all. Most commentators assume that there were fourteen, and the text will certainly bear that construction. But it is altogether more likely that there were twelve; that is to say, that the two lions on the topmost step are the two mentioned in the preceding verse as "standing beside the stays," otherwise there would have been four lions on that step. And we all know that *twelve* had a significance such as could not attach to any other number (Bähr, *Symbolik*, i. 201—205; ii. 133, 423). It would signify that all the tribes had an interest in the royal house (cf. ch. xii. 16; 2 Sam. xx. 1); and a right of approach to the throne (cf. ch. xviii. 31). The lion, a familiar emblem of sovereignty among many nations, had an especial appropriateness in this case, as being the symbol of the tribe of Judah (Gen. xlix. 9; cf. Num. xxiii. 24; xxiv. 9). We are to see in them partly "symbols of the ruler's authority" (Keil), and partly, perhaps, they represented the twelve tribes as guardians of the throne. "The king mounted between figures of lions to his seat on the throne, and sat between figures of lions upon it" (Wordsworth). Thrones somewhat similar to this in character, but much less magnificent, are represented on the Assyrian monuments. The historian might justly add]: there was not the like made [Heb. *not made so*] in any kingdom.

Ver. 21.—And all king Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold [as were those of Assyria and Babylon. This lavish display of wealth was characteristic of Oriental courts. Rawlinson quotes Chardin's description of the splendour of the court of Persia, "*Tout est d'or massif*," &c., and adds, "Both Symes and Yule note a similar use of gold utensils by the king of Ava (Symes, p. 372; Yule, p. 84)"], and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold [כֶּסֶף; see on ch. vi. 20.

LXX. χρυσῷ συγκεκλιμένα. This immense quantity of gold is quite paralleled in the accounts of profane writers. "Sardanapalus, when Nineveh was besieged, had 150 golden bedsteads, 150 golden tables, a million talents of gold, ten times as much silver, &c. (Ctesias, ap. Athenaeus, xii. p. 29). No less than 7170 talents of gold were used for the vessels and statues of the temple of Bel in Babylon. . . Alexander's pillage of Ectabana was estimated at 120,000 talents of gold," &c. (Bähr, *in loc.*); none were of silver [Heb. *none silver*. The Marg., "there was no silver in them," i.e., they were unalloyed, is a misapprehension of the true meaning]: it was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon.

Ver. 22.—For [Reason why silver was so lightly esteemed. It was because of the prodigious quantity both of gold and silver brought in by the fleet] the king had at sea a navy of Tarshish [It has been much disputed (1) whether this was a second fleet, or the same as that mentioned ch. ix. 26—28, as trading to Ophir, and (2) whether this fleet, if it were not the same, went to Ophir or to Tartessus in Spain. Keil and Bähr contend that there was but one fleet, first, because there is no mention of a second fleet at ch. ix. 28, and, secondly, because the cargoes were practically the same. I incline (with Rawlinson, *al.*) to think there were two separate navies, for the following reasons: (1) The expression "navy of Tarshish" (in 2 Chron. ix. 21 expanded into "ships going to Tarshish," which Keil and Bähr are compelled to set aside as a mistake on the part of the writer), taken in connexion with the following words, "with (כֶּסֶף, together with, as well as) the navy of Hiram" (i.e., as we conclude from ver. 11, the navy *manned*, or, it may be, *owned*, by Hiram) points to a separate fleet; (2) the cargoes, so far from being the same, strike me as being altogether diverse. The Ophir fleet brought in "gold, almug trees, and precious stones." The navy of Tarshish "gold and silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks." See below. (3) Even if we understand here by the "navy of Hiram" a Phœnician fleet, still a second fleet is indicated. But this leads us to consider the destination of these ships. The term, "fleet of Tarshish," does not in itself prove anything, for the expression, "ships of Tarshish," is almost a synonym for "merchant vessels." In ch. xxii. 48 we read, "Jehoshaphat made ships of Tarshish to go to Ophir," and they "were broken at Ezion-geber" (cf. Psa. xlviii. 7; Jonah i. 3). It is probable that in Jewish lips the words were a *nomen generale* for all vessels going long voyages (Isa.

ii. 16; Psa. xlvi. 7; compare our "East Indiaman," "Greenlander"). But the words "in the sea," יָם, are most naturally understood of that ocean which the Jews called *par excellence* "the sea," or "the great sea" (Num. xxxiv. 6, 7), *i.e.*, the Mediterranean, though the term יָם is undoubtedly used of the Red Sea, the Sea of Galilee, and the Dead Sea. And the more so as we know that the Tyrians had an extensive commerce with Tartessus, which was a great emporium of trade from the earliest times. Bähr objects that "no gold is found in Spain, but few peacocks, and little ivory;" but Rawlinson, on the other hand, affirms that "Spain had the richest silver mines known in the ancient world, and had a good deal of gold also" (Plin., Nat. Hist. iii. 4), while "apes and ivory were produced by the opposite coast of Africa" (Herod. iv. 191. As to peacocks see below). And it is a powerful argument in favour of Tartessus that it is the plentifulness of *silver* in Solomon's days has suggested this reference to the fleet. For though silver "was found in the land of the Nabateans, according to Strabo, xvi. 784" (Keil), yet it was to Tartessus that the ancient world was chiefly indebted for its supplies of that metal. On the whole, therefore, it seems probable that a second fleet, trading with the Mediterranean seaports, is here described. And Psa. lxxii. 10 is distinctly in favour of this conclusion. When Ewald says ("Hist. Israel," iii. 263) that the Phœnicians would hardly tolerate a rival in the Mediterranean, he surely forgets that they had been admitted by the Jews to share the trade of Ophir] with the navy of Hiram; once in three years [This period agrees better with a voyage to Spain than to Southern Arabia. And if we understand it of Spanish voyages, it removes one difficulty in the way of placing Ophir in Arabia. It has also been urged that "the Hebrews reckoned parts of years and days as whole ones" (Kitto); but this hardly would apply to the expression "once in three years"] came the navy of Tarshish, bringing gold and silver, ivory [Heb. *tooth of elephants*, LXX. *ὀόντες ἀεγάρων*. It is noteworthy that the name for elephant used here is derived from the Sanskrit (Ges.)], and an argument has been drawn hence in favour of placing Ophir in India, and of identifying the Tarshish fleet with the navy of Ophir. But such conclusions are extremely precarious. The name may have first come to the Jews from India, in which case it would be retained, from whatever quarter the commodity was subsequently derived. See Rawlinson, p. 546], and apes [יָם is in like

manner identified by Gesenius, *al.*, with the Sanskrit *kapi*. Sir J. Emerson Tennant ("Ceylon," ii. p. 102) says "the terms by which these articles (ivory, apes, and peacocks) are designated in the Hebrew Scriptures are identical with the Tamil names by which some of them are called in Ceylon to the present day"], and peacocks. [So the ancients interpret the original word, though some of the moderns would understand "parrots." But the root יָם appears in several Aryan tongues (*cf.* *ραῦς*, from *ραῦς*, and *pavo*) as indicating the peacock (Ges., Max Müller, *al.*) which originally came from India. Whether it was also found in Africa is uncertain. Aristophanes (Birds, 485) says, *καίτρα Περσικὸς ὄρνις*. Wordsworth very justly sees in the mention of these curious beasts and birds a symptom of declension in simplicity and piety, a token that "wealth had brought with it luxury and effeminacy, and a frivolous, vainglorious love for novel and outlandish objects."

Ver. 23.—So King Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and wisdom [Cf. ch. iii. 13. "There is something ominous of evil here. Riches are put *before* wisdom. This was not the case in the beginning of Solomon's reign (ch. iii. 11)"] —Wordsworth.

Ver. 24.—And all the earth sought to [Heb. *sought the face of*] Solomon, to hear his wisdom which God had put in his heart [*i.e.*, mind. Cf. ch. iv. 34].

Ver. 25.—And they brought [Heb. *and these* (visitors were) *bringing*] every man his present [It is doubtful whether we are to understand by this word *tribute*, or *gifts*. The succeeding words, "a rate year by year," would seem to imply the former; the fact that the visitors came not as subjects, but to "hear the wisdom," &c., the latter. Bähr understands that the presents "were repeated year by year, so highly had Solomon risen in estimation." But even this supposition does not explain the "rate"] vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and garments [cf. Gen. xlv. 22; 2 Kings v. 26; Ezra ii. 69], and armour [rather, "arms, weapons" (Ges.) Ewald understands *perfume*; LXX. *σάκκη*, *i.e.*, oil of myrrh], and spices [cf. ver. 10], horses and mules [see on ch. i. 33], a rate year by year [Heb. *the matter of a year in his year*].

The remaining verses of this chapter, which, in the account of the chronicler, find a place at the end of the first chapter of his second book, repeat some of the information already given in chs. iv. 26 and ix. 19, and furnish a few additional particulars as to the wealth and commerce of the king.

Ver. 26.—And Solomon gathered together his chariots and horsemen, and he had a thousand and four hundred chariots [these words have an important bearing on ch. iv. 26, where see note], and twelve thousand horsemen. [The question may suggest itself here, why did Solomon, who was a “man of peace,” maintain such a formidable array of chariots and horsemen? For not only was it in contravention of Deut. xvii. 16 (cf. 1 Sam. viii. 11), but it was entirely unnecessary, especially for a nation inhabiting a hilly country like that of Israel. We find, consequently, that David, when he took a thousand chariots from Hadarezer (1 Chron. xviii. 4), only reserved for his own use one hundred of them, though he was at the time engaged in war. It may perhaps be said that this force was necessary to keep the tributary kings in due subjection. But it seems quite as likely that it was maintained largely for the sake of pomp and display. Solomon seems to have determined in every way, and at any cost, to rival and surpass all contemporary kings. The maintenance of this large force of cavalry is another token of declension, whom he bestowed in the cities for chariots (ch. ix. 19), and with the king at Jerusalem.

Ver. 27.—And the king made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones [an obviously hyperbolic expression], and cedar trees made he to be as the sycamore trees [the *שִׁטִּים*] is the *σικωμορία* of the New Testament (Luke xix. 4), *i.e.*, as the name imports, the fig-mulberry—the “*sycamine tree*” of Luke xvii. 6 would seem to denote the mulberry proper. Though now but comparatively rare in Palestine, it is clear that formerly it was very common (see, *e.g.*, Isa. ix. 10, whence it appears that it was used for building purposes, and where it is also contrasted with the cedars). It was esteemed both for its fruit and its wood, so much so that David appointed a steward to have the supervision both of “the olive-trees and the sycamore trees in the Shefelah” (1 Chron. xxvii. 28). The sycamores of Egypt, which were used for the coffins of mummies (Dict. Bib. iii. p. 1394), are referred to in Psa. lxxviii. 47, in a way which bespeaks their great value. There is a good description of the tree in Thomson, “Land and Book,” i. 23—25] that are in the vale [Same word as in 1 Chron. *l.c.* The Shefelah is a “broad swelling tract of many hundred miles in area, which sweeps gently down from the mountains of Judah ‘to mingle with the bounding main’ of the Mediterranean” (Grove, Dict. Bib. iii. p. 1611). This “Low Country” extended from Joppa to Gaza. The translation “vale” is altogether misleading. Conder (“Tent-work,” p. 5) de-

scribes it as “consisting of low hills, about five hundred feet above the sea, of white soft limestone,” and adds that “the broad valleys among these hills . . . produce fine crops of corn, and on the hills the long olive groves flourish better than in other districts”—an incidental and valuable confirmation of the text. “The name Sifa, or Shephelah, still exists in four or five places round Beit Jibrin” (Eleutheropolis), *ib.* p. 276] for abundance.

Ver. 28.—And Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt, and linen yarn: the king’s merchants received the linen yarn at a price. [This is a difficult passage, and the difficulty lies in the word *קָנָה*, here rendered “linen yarn.” Elsewhere the word signifies, a *congregation*, or *gathering*, as of water (Gen. i. 10; Exod. vii. 19; Levit. xi. 36). Consequently, Gesenius (with Vatavlious, *al.*) would here interpret, “company.” “And the company of kings’ merchants took the company (of horses) at a price.” The great difficulty in the way of this interpretation is perhaps the paronomasia, which, though not altogether without precedent, would be formal and unusual in grave history. Somewhat similarly Bähr: “and as to horses . . . and their collection, the merchants of the king made a collection for a certain price,” but this again is strained and artificial. Perhaps it is safer to see in the word the name of a place. The LXX. (similarly the Vulgate) renders, “from Egypt and from Thekoa,” *καὶ ἐκ Θεκοῦ*, which Keil, however, contends is manifestly a variation of an older reading, *καὶ ἐκ Κοῦ*, “and from Kova.” As to Koa or Kova, it is objected that no such place is mentioned elsewhere, and it is alleged that if it were a market for horses, or even if it were a frontier station, where the duties on horses were collected, we should surely have heard of it again. But this is by no means certain. Koa may well have been an insignificant post on the frontier which it was only necessary to mention in this connexion. *Θεκοῦ* certainly looks like an emendation, but it is to be remembered that although Tekoa (Amos i. 1; 2 Chron. xi. 6; xx. 20) was apparently an insignificant village, still it gave its name to a district; it was no great distance from the Egyptian frontier—it was some six Roman miles south of Bethlehem, according to Jerome (*in Amos*, Proem.), and it may have been the rendezvous of the Egyptian and Hebrew horse-dealers. The text would thus yield the following meaning: “And as for the export of Solomon’s horses from Egypt and from Koa (or Tekoa), the king’s merchants took them from Koa (or Tekoa) at a price.”

Ver. 29.—And a chariot [including

perhaps the two or three horses (see note on ch. v. 6) usually attached to a chariot, and the harness.  $\text{כָּרָב}$  is used (2 Sam. viii. 4; x. 18; Ezek. xxxix. 20) for *chariot and horses* came up and went out of Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver [about £80 (Wordsworth, £35), but, as these figures show, the precise value cannot be ascertained with certainty. But it is quite clear that these amounts cannot have been the custom duty, or the profits after reckoning all expenses (Ewald) paid on chariots and horses, but must represent the actual price], and an horse for an hundred and fifty: and so for all the kings of the Hittites. [We can hardly see in these Hittites representatives of the seven nations of Canaan (Wordsworth, *al.*), though the term "Hittite" is sometimes undoubtedly used as a *nomen generale* for Canaanites (Josh. i. 4; Ezek. xvi. 3), for the Canaanitish tribes had been reduced to bond-service, the Hittites amongst them (ch. ix. 20). The word is probably used somewhat loosely of the semi-independent tribes bordering on Palestine, the *Khatti* of the Assyrian in-

scriptions (Dict. Bib. i. 819), with whom Solomon had a sort of alliance. It is a curious coincidence that we find horses and chariots associated in popular estimation with the Hittites, at a later period of the history (2 Kings vii. 6). Nor are we justified in supposing that these horses and chariots were furnished as cavalry to "Solomon's vassals, whose armies were at his disposal, if he required their aid" (Rawlinson), for the kings of Syria are mentioned presently, and some of these at least were enemies to Solomon. Probably all we are to understand is that neighbouring nations received their supply of horses from Egypt—the home of horses and chariots (Exod. xiv. 6; xv. 1; Dent. xvii. 16; Isa. xxxi. 1; Jer. xlvi. 2—4)—largely through the instrumentality of Solomon's merchants], and for the kings of Syria ["who became the bitterest enemies of Israel" (Wordsworth): one fruit of a worldly policy], did they bring them out by their means. [Heb. *by their hand they brought them out, i.e. they exported them through Solomon's traders.*

#### HOMILETICS.

**Vers. 14—29.—The Decline and Fall of Solomon.** The fall of Solomon, in itself one of the most portentous facts in Scripture history (see Homiletics, pp. 78—80), is rendered doubly suggestive and admonitory by a consideration of the way in which it was brought about. It was not that he succumbed to some fierce onslaught of temptation; it was no terrible rush of passion—no sudden guilty love of "fair idolatresses," as some have held—wrought his ruin; on the contrary, his decline in piety was so gradual and slow as to be almost imperceptible. It is almost impossible—and this consideration alone is most instructive—to trace with certainty the steps which led to his downfall. The Arab tradition teaches that a little worm—no more—was, silently and unseen, gnawing at the staff on which this Colossus leaned, and that it was only when it broke and he fell that men discovered he was dead—an instructive parable of his moral and spiritual decay. **We may well cry here,—**

"O fall'n at length that tower of strength  
Which stood foursquare to all the winds that blew."

But it is much more pertinent to ask what brought that proud fortress to the ground. It would have sustained unshaken the blows of engines of war; it would have defied the hurdling storm and tempest, but it could not resist the gradual subsidence of its foundations, and so, while preserving a fair appearance almost to the last, it settled and settled, and at the last became a heap of ruins.

Let us trace, then, as best we can, that downward course which ended in the builder of the temple building altars to Baal; let us lay bare, if we can, this worm that was noiselessly but ceaselessly eating out his inner life. Perhaps we cannot discover all its hidden workings, but we can surely see some.

Up to the date of the dedication of the temple all would seem to have gone well. Unless the dedication prayer is, as some have affirmed, the composition of a later age, the prince who poured out his soul before God in those earnest and gracious words cannot have erred very far from the right way. And the message

he received during the building of the temple confirms this view. It is a message not of warning but of encouragement. It is at the completion of the palaces that we discover the first certain token of defection. For it was then that the Lord appeared unto him the second time, and the communication then made was undeniably minatory. Its tone of threatening is inexplicable, except on the supposition that Solomon's "heart was not right with the Lord," &c. At this period, then, about the twenty-fourth year of his reign, the destroying worm was already at work.

Nor is it difficult to conjecture what was the first beginning of declension on Solomon's part. We find it in the erection of the palaces, or rather in the carnal mind and the self-love and the desire for ostentation which led to their erection. It is just possible that the building of these palaces was not, in itself, to be condemned. It is suspicious, no doubt, and argues selfishness and heartlessness, when, as in Russia, Turkey, &c., the huge and costly residences of the Crown contrast everywhere with the wretched hovels of the peasantry. And one would naturally expect the theocratic king to attain a higher level and to devote himself more to the advancement of his people's good than ordinary rulers. But it must be remembered that under Solomon the Jewish people enjoyed an unprecedented prosperity (ch. iv. 20, 21). The entire nation shared in the wealth and abundance of the court. We cannot be certain, consequently, that the palaces, *per se*, involved a departure from the law, the more so as some of them were necessary for purposes of state and justice (see on ch. vii. 7). But the matter appears in a very different light when we come to consider the way in which they were reared. Forced labour, on the part of the subject races at least, can no doubt be justified from Scripture (Josh. ix. 21 sqq.), at any rate, for the house of God (ver. 23), but not for the pleasure or aggrandisement of the monarch (1 Sam. viii. 11, 16). "It is not of the Lord of Hosts that the people shall weary themselves for *very vanity*" (Hab. ii. 13). And when we remember that Jeroboam was probably encouraged to rebel by seeing and hearing the murmurings of the house of Joseph (ch. xi. 28) of whose labours he was the overseer, and that this and similar burdens laid upon the people (ch. xii. 4) resulted in the revolt of the ten tribes, we can hardly suppose that Solomon completed his great undertakings (ch. ix. 15—19) without inflicting positive hardship and grave injustice on large numbers of his subjects. It is probable, indeed, that the woe pronounced against a later monarch (Jer. xxii. 13, 14) had not been unmerited by him. He had "used his neighbour's service without wages," &c. Possibly he had raised his forest of cedar pillars, &c., by the sweat and groans of his serfs. It was a common thing for Eastern autocrats to do, but when "Jedidiah" did it, the cries of the oppressed labourer went up "into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth."

But whether the erection of the palaces was in itself wrong or not, and whether the raising of the "levy" (ch. ix. 15) was oppressive or not, there can be little doubt that the "proud look and high stomach" (Psa. ci. 5; cxxxi. 1, 2)—the very spirit which David had disclaimed—which prompted some of these understandings was altogether sinful. Solomon is now no longer the "little child" he once was (ch. iii. 7). Now that he has "strengthened himself," like his son after him, he begins to forget his God and to forsake His law (2 Chron. xii. 1). It has been promised him that he shall exceed all other kings in wisdom and riches and honour (ch. iii. 12, 18); but this is not enough for him, he must surpass them also in the outward tokens of wealth and power. His palaces, to begin with, must be greater than theirs. He no longer covets the best gifts (see Homiletics, p. 55). The fine gold is become dim.

Still, so far, there has been no deliberate, or perhaps even conscious, infraction of the law—only the worldly and selfish mind. He may well have argued that his state required this show of magnificence; that the Canaanites were ordained of God to hew wood and draw water at his pleasure. But this only shows how slight are the beginnings of evil; how fine sometimes is the line which divides right from wrong, and how easily our judgment is warped by our inclinations. It is the old story, *Homo vult decipi et decipitur*.

It is impossible to say in what precise order the records of Solomon's reign are to be arranged, but it is probable that the next downward step is to be traced in the alliance in which he engaged with the Tyrians. We cannot blame him, of course, for the "league" of ch. v. 12. But for that, he could hardly have built the temple, to say nothing of the palaces. Whether he was justified, however, in having at sea "a navy of Tarshish *with the navy of Hiram*" (ch. x. 22) may well be doubted. For it was part of God's plan that the Jewish people should "dwell alone and not be reckoned among the nations" (Num. xxiii. 9). Their geographical position was one of almost complete isolation. They were not destined to be a great commercial country. Their land was to be the theatre of our redemption. Theirs were

" those holy fields  
Over whose acres walked those blessed feet,  
Which eighteen hundred years ago were nailed  
For our salvation, to the bitter cross ;"

and it was no preparation for the Incarnation that it should become the home of "griple merchants." Contact and copartnership with idolaters could hardly be for the advantage of the faith. Nor is it difficult to see that Solomon's commerce grew at the expense of his religion. Riches, proverbially a dangerous possession, were with him—wise though he was—a step towards utter ruin. All the time that his fleets were ploughing the main, that caravans of merchants were filling his store cities, that he was driving bargains with the Syrians and Hittites (ver. 29), leanness was spreading in his soul—he was becoming more and more a secular prince. It has been justly remarked that the mention of "apes and peacocks" (ver. 22), is a significant indication of the moral and mental deterioration which he was undergoing. To think that the wisest of men should find his pleasure in the antics of the one or the plumage of the other; or that he, the viceroy of Jehovah, should import jibbering baboons and strutting fowls, if not for himself, for the outlandish women of his court. No, these "wide views of commerce," this partnership with the Tyrians, this influx of prosperity, has not been for Solomon's or Israel's good. Indeed, if we study the character of the average nineteenth century Jew, we may form a fair idea of what commercial enterprise and lust of gold did for Solomon, the first of Hebrew chapmen.

And yet this commerce, it is easy to see, may have been in its commencement unexceptionable. Possibly it was in part undertaken to provide gold for the embellishment of the temple. But it soon engendered, if indeed it was not engendered by, that "love of money which is the root of all evil." As Solomon grew richer he loved riches more. Ver. 23 is full of significance. "So Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth *for riches and wisdom.*" Time was when wisdom held the first place (ch. iii. 11). And so it came to pass that he who at first was "rich toward God," and who, like David his father, had only accumulated gold for the glory of the sanctuary, proceeded to "multiply silver and gold to himself" (Deut. xvii. 17). Even his drinking vessels were of pure gold (ch. x. 21). So that his commerce and its prodigious gains led at last to a distinct violation of the law. He has not ceased to serve God. He still sacrifices and burns incense three times a year (ch. ix. 25). But he is trying to serve God and mammon, and mammon has gained the mastery. It is probably mentioned as a circumstance full of significance, that the weight of gold that came to him in one year was *six hundred and sixty-six* talents (ver. 14). For as seven is the number of the covenant, so six marks a falling short of that covenant, and the first distinct violation of the covenant consisted in the multiplication of silver and gold.

And when a breach in the law was once made we are not surprised to hear presently that it was widened. *Facilis descensus Averni.* From the multiplication of the precious metals it was an easy step to the multiplication of horses. And here we see at once how Solomon's conscience has become seared, or he has learnt to disregard its warnings. He knew perfectly well that his "twelve thousand horsemen" were a violation of the law. And he could hardly excuse himself on the

ground that they were required for purposes of defence. The hilly country of Palestine does not admit of their being deployed therein. It was partly because they could only be employed in *aggressive* warfare that they were forbidden. Whatever unction, therefore, he might lay to his soul as to his accumulation of gold, he could hardly think, if he thought at all, that his horses and chariots involved no sin. But they were necessary, he persuaded himself, to the state of so great and puissant a monarch, and he would have them. And so hardened was he, so careless of the commandment, that he actually established a market for horses on his southern frontier and supplied them to neighbouring kings, who presently employed them against the people of the Lord.

And yet, grave as was this disregard of law, it was but a **worm** that was at work in his soul—only self-love and self-confidence (cf. Isa. xxx. 1); only the lust of the eye and the pride of life. He is still the Lord's anointed: his lips distil knowledge; he still offers hecatombs, but his "heart is not right," &c.

And so the years passed by. To all outward appearance his glory and magnificence increased. It is very suggestive to consider how hollow was that prosperity which was the marvel of the world, and how that wisdom which was so renowned was foolishness with God. The court became more splendid, more voluptuous, more dazzling, but the man became year by year poorer and meaner and baser. It only needed one step more—and apparently he was not long in taking that—to complete his defection. The other monarchs of his time had their seraglios. It was necessary that he too should have an establishment of this kind, and he must have it even greater than theirs. He knew that the law forbade the multiplication of wives, but what of that? He had violated the law already: he might just as well do it again. An obsolete precept, he may have argued, suited to primitive times, must not stand in the way of his pomp or his pleasures. And so the Lord's anointed gathered round him in the holy city a thousand strange, immodest women. His fleets and merchants brought him mistresses from every land. And *they* brought with them their foreign rites, and the effeminate king was taken captive by their charms, and they had their way, and nothing would suffice them but he must tolerate their religion, and what he did for one he must do for all, and—and so the end of sin and shame is reached, and the decline becomes a fall, and "the darling of Jehovah," the wisest of men, the representative of Heaven, the builder of the temple, the type of our Lord, builds altars to the "abominations" of Moab and Ammon "in the hill that is before Jerusalem" (ch. xi. 7).

This mournful history is full of admonition and instruction. It must suffice to indicate the following lessons:—

1. *A man may preach to others and yet be a castaway* (1 Cor. ix. 27). Solomon's Prayer (ch. viii.), Psalm (Psa. cxxvii.), and Proverbs should be studied in the light of his fall. "Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" (Rom. ii. 21). Compare vers. 22, 23 with Prov. v.—vii.; and remember the constant references to the "law" in the dedication prayer.

2. "*Nemo repente turpissimus fuit.*" "He that despiseth little things shall fall by little and little."

"It is the little rift within the lute  
That by and by shall make its music mute."

3. "*Out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications,*" &c. (Mark vii. 21). It was not to an assault from without, it was to treachery within that Solomon yielded—Solomon who had said, "Keep thy heart with all diligence," &c.

4. "*The love of money is the root of all evil*" (1 Tim. vi. 10). May we not say, "Behold two kings stood not before him: how then shall we stand?" (2 Kings x. 4). "Children, how hard it is for them that trust in riches," &c. (Mark x. 24). "Take heed, and beware of covetousness" (Luke xii. 15), "which is idolatry" (Col. iii. 5).

5. *The course of sin is downhill. Vires acquirit eundo.* The sinner is on an inclined plane; and the gradient at first is almost imperceptible. Let us learn, too, "the deceitfulness of sin."

6. *Woman, made to be man's helpmeet, too often becomes his snare.* It is seldom that a man is ruined but a woman has had a share in it.

7. *Solomon was old at the time of his fall, &c.* (ch. xi. 4). Hot youth has its dangers and temptations; but mature age has them also. David was not less than fifty when he fell. See p. 225.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER XI. 1—13.

**SOLOMON'S DEFECTION.**—The observant reader will have already remarked in this history some intimations of Solomon's approaching fall. Among these are, first, the repeated warnings which are addressed to him, especially in ch. ix. 6—9, and, second, his repeated transgressions of the law by which he ruled. We have already heard of the multiplication of silver and gold (ch. x. 14—25), in defiance of Deut. xvii. 17, and of the multiplication of horses (ch. x. 27—29), in disregard of ver. 16 of the same chapter. We now read how the ruin of this great prince was completed by the multiplication of wives. The historian obviously had the words of Deut. xvii. in his mind as he wrote. It is remarkable that the chronicler is altogether silent as to Solomon's fall, as he is also as to David's sin.

Ver. 1.—But [Heb. *And*. This chapter is a direct continuation of the preceding. LXX. *καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς κ.τ.λ.* The polygamy was but a part of his worldliness, like the chariots, gold, &c.] king Solomon loved [The LXX. *ἦν φιλογύνης* is misleading. It is perfectly clear that it cannot have been mere sensuality led to this enormous harem. This is evident from (1) his time of life. It was "when he was old"—*i.e.*, when passions are not at their strongest—that his wives turned away his heart. (2) The number—if the numbers are to be trusted—of his wives. A thousand concubines cannot be kept for mere purposes of passion. (3) The large number of *princesses*, which shows that the object of this array of mistresses was to enhance his state and renown. As he exceeded other kings in glory, wisdom, and power, so must he excel them not only in armies, chariots, and horses, but also in the number of his wives. It is clear, therefore, that the "lust of the eye" and "the pride of life" had their part in this huge establishment. "The same consideration of state which leads a Western prince or noble to multiply horses, leads an Eastern prince to multiply wives, with often as

little personal consideration in the one case as in the other" (Kitto)] many [He is blamed for their number. This was against Deut. xvii. 17] strange [not merely *foreign*, though that is the primary meaning of the word, but strange as opposed to a lawful wife. Cf. Prov. v. 20; vi. 24; vii. 5, &c. No doubt the harlots in Israel were principally aliens] women, together with [פִּזְלֵי פִּזְלֵינִי] *i.e.*, *praeter filiam Ph.* (Maurer). Pharaoh's daughter is regarded as his lawful wife] the daughter of Pharaoh [see note on ch. iii. 1], women of the Moabites, Ammonites [Heb. *Moabitesses*, &c. Perhaps these two nations are mentioned first because such alliances as these, though not forbidden in terms by the law, would nevertheless, from its spirit and bearing towards these races, be looked upon with especial disfavour. If the Ammonite or Moabite was not to be received into the congregation until the *tenth* generation (Deut. xxiii. 3); if the Israelite was not to seek their peace or prosperity all the days of his life (ver. 6), then the idea of intermarriage with them must have been altogether repugnant to the Hebrew polity, as indeed we may gather from the book of Ruth], Edomites [Favourably distinguished (Deut. xxiii. 7) from the two preceding races. The Edomite was a "brother." His children of the *third* generation might enter into the congregation], Zidonians [Rawlinson thinks this word lends "some countenance to the tradition recorded by Menander (*ap. Clem. Alex.* 'Strom.' i. p. 386), that Solomon married a daughter of Hiram, king of Tyre." But such tradition was sure to arise; the uxorious character of Solomon and his close relations with Hiram are quite sufficient to account for its growth. And a daughter of Hiram would hardly have been passed over without special mention], and Hittites [see on ch. x. 29].

Ver. 2.—Of the nations concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel [Of the nations just enumerated, the law *expressly* forbade marriage with the Hittites alone (Exod. xxxiv. 11—16; Deut. vii. 1—4), though the Zidonians are probably to be included, as being Canaanites (Gen. x. 15). But the *principle* which applied in the case of the seven nations of Canaan applied equally to all other idolaters. "They will

turn away thy son from following me," &c. (Deut. vii. 4). The *spirit* of the law, consequently, was as much violated by an Edomite or Ammonite as by a Hittite alliance], **Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you** [much the same expression Josh. xxiii. 12. The historian does not cite any special Scripture, however, but gives the substance of several warnings], for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods [cf. Exod. xxxiv. 16]: **Solomon clave** [same word Gen. ii. 4] **unto these** [emphatic in Heb. "even to these," instead of cleaving to God (Deut. iv. 4; x. 20; xxx. 20, each of which has the same word as here), and despite the prohibitions of the law, &c.] **in love.**

**Ver. 3.—And he had seven hundred wives, princesses** [These may have been members of royal or princely houses of neighbouring nations. Evidently they enjoyed a distinguished rank], **and three hundred concubines** [Though not committed to a defence of the accuracy of the figures 700 and 300 (which are clearly *round* numbers), it must be said that the reasons alleged for reducing them (as from 700 to 70) are not of much weight. It is hardly correct, *e.g.*, to say (as Rawlinson) that the numbers are given in Cant. vi. 8 as "threescore queens and fourscore concubines," for it is obvious that too much importance must not be attached to an *otiose* statement ("there are threescore," &c.) in a poetical book, too, and one descriptive of Solomon's youth. The view of Ewald and Keil, again, that these numbers represent the sum total of the inmates of the harem at different periods of Solomon's long reign, rather than the number present at any one time—they would see in the numbers of Cant. *l.c.* a statement of the *average strength* of the seraglio—though not to be described as evasive, is certainly not the natural interpretation of the words. And these numbers, when we compare them with the establishments of other Eastern potentates, are not found to be at all incredible. The commentators all remind us that Darius Codomannus, *e.g.*, took with him on his expedition against Alexander 360 *pellices*. Or if ancient history, as Rawlinson affirms, furnishes no strict parallel to these figures, the harems of modern Persia and Turkey at any rate have quite equalled that of Solomon. (See Bähr *in loc.*) It is true that Rehoboam had only 18 wives and 60 concubines (2 Chron. xi. 21), but then Rehoboam was not Solomon. If his harem was but a tithe of his father's, so also were his wealth and his power]: **and his wives turned away his heart.** ["Satan hath found this bait to take so well that he never changed since he crept into Paradise" (Bp. Hall) ]

**Ver. 4.—For it came to pass, when Solomon was old** [As he was but sixty at the time of his death, "old" is here a relative term, and must mean "toward the close of his life," *i.e.*, when he was about 50 or 55], **that his wives turned away his heart after other gods** [The text does not limit Solomon's *polygamy* to the time of old age, but his idolatrous leanings. I say *leanings*, for it is doubtful to what extent Solomon himself took part in actual idolatry. Both Bähr and Keil—the latter in opposition to the views he held in 1846—not to speak of others, deny that he shared the idolatries of his wives, and the former labours hard, and on the whole, it seems to me, successfully, to prove that he was only guilty of *sanctioning* idolatrous worship in the vicinity of Jerusalem. His arguments, briefly stated, are these: (1) It is nowhere said that he "*served*" (עָבַד) other gods—the expression constantly used of the idolatrous kings; cf. xvi. 31; xxii. 53; 2 Kings xvi. 3, &c. (2) Neither the son of Sirach nor the Talmud nor the Rabbins know anything of his personal idolatry. (3) Had he formally worshipped idols, his sin would have been greater than that of Jeroboam—as to which, however, see on ch. xii. 29 sqq. (The "sin of Jeroboam" lay in "making Israel to sin," *i.e.*, in forcing his people into schismatic and unauthorized worship, rather than in any practices of his own.) (4) The expressions "his heart was not perfect," below, and "he went not fully" (ver. 6) are inconsistent with the idea of idolatry. Similarly Ewald says, "There is no evidence from ancient authorities that Solomon, even in advanced life, ever left the religion of Jahveh, and with his own hand sacrificed to heathen gods. All traces of contemporary history extant testify to the contrary" (vol. iii. p. 297). See, however, on ver. 5]: **and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God** [It is instructive to compare with this the words of ch. viii. 61, "Let your heart be perfect," &c. Wordsworth remarks that "the defection even of Solomon from God through the influence of his strange wives is one of the best justifications" of the commands of Exod. xxxiv. 12—16; Deut. vii. 2—4, &c.], **as was the heart of David his father.**

**Ver. 5.—For Solomon went after** [Rawlinson observes that this expression, which is "common in the Pentateuch, always signifies actual idolatry." He cites Deut. xi. 28; xiii. 2; xxviii. 14; but it should be considered that in the two passages last cited the words are added, "*and served them.*" And the true explanation would seem to be that, though "it is not stated that Solomon himself offered sacrifice to these idols," yet

“even the building of altars for idols was a participation in idolatry, which was irreconcilable with true fidelity to the Lord” (Keil). Bähr contends that the words “went after Ashtoreth,” &c., no more involve personal service than the word “built” in ver. 7 involves personal labour; but both expressions show that he regarded these idolatries not only without disfavour, but with positive approval and practical encouragement. “It is not likely he could be so insensate as to adore such deities, but so far was the uxorious king blinded with affection, that he gave not passage only to the idolatry of his heathenish wives, but furtherance” (Bp. Hall). And the distinction, so far as the *sin* is concerned, between this and actual idolatry is a fine one. It is not implied, however, that Solomon ever discarded the worship of Jehovah. To the end of his reign he would seem to have offered his solemn sacrifices on the great altar thrice a year. But his heart was elsewhere (ver. 9.) Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians [תַּרְשִׁישִׁי, *Asarâthi*, probably connected with *âsrîp*, *stella*, and *star*, by some identified with the planet Venus, by others with the moon, is here mentioned for the first time in the singular (*Ashtaroth*, plural, is found in Gen. xiv. 5; Judg. ii. 13; x. 6; 1 Sam. vii. 4; xii. 10, &c.) With Baal, she divided the worship of the Phœnicians, the antiquity of which is evident from Gen. xiv. 5; Num. xxii. 41. It was really an impure cultus of the reproductive powers (see below on xiv. 23). Interesting proof of the existence of a temple of this goddess at Sidon is supplied by an inscription discovered there in 1855 (see Dict. Bib. i. 123)], and after Milcom [In Jer. xlix. 13; Amos i. 15, “Malcam,” *i.e.*, *their king*. According to Gesenius, the same as *Molech* (*i.e.*, *the king*) in ver. 7, though Ewald, Movers, Keil regard them as different deities. But it seems more probable that it was the same deity, worshipped (2 Kings xxiii. 10, 13) under different attributes. This is “the first direct historical allusion” to his worship in the Old Testament. A warning against it is found Levit. xx. 2—5. He was the fire-god, as Baal was the sun-god, and the sacrifices offered to him were those of children, who would seem to have not only “passed through the fire,” but to have been burnt therein. *Psa. cvi. 37, 38; Jer. vii. 31; xix. 5; Ezek. xxiii. 39, &c.* See Dict. Bib. ii. 403] the abomination [*i.e.*, the hateful, detestable idol] of the Ammonites. [It has been suggested (Speaker’s Commentary on Levit. xx. 2) that the children offered to Molech were children of incest or adultery, and we are reminded that Ammon was the child of incest. It must be remembered, however,

that we have no record of Jewish children passing through the fire to Molech before the time of Ahaz (Bähr, Keil).]

Ver. 6.—And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord [cf. Judg. ii. 11; iii. 7, &c.], and went not fully [שָׁלֵל לֹא, *sc.* בְּרָצָה] A pregnant expression found also Num. xiv. 24; xxxii. 11, 12; Deut. i. 36] after the Lord, as did David his father.

Ver. 7.—Then did Solomon build an high place [see on ch. iii. 2] for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab [The meaning of “Chemosh” is uncertain. Gesenius suggests “Vanquisher”—Chemosh was the god of war. The mention of Ashtar-Chemosh on the Moabite stone “connects the Moabite religion with the Phœnician,” where Ashtar is the masculine form of Astarte, and suggests that “Chemosh was connected with the androgynous deities of Phœnicia” (Speaker’s Comm. on Num. xxi. 29). It is probable, in fact, that Chemosh, Baal, Ashtoreth, Molech, &c., were originally so many names of the one supreme God, worshipped under different attributes, and with various rites in different countries], in the hill that is before Jerusalem [see 2 Kings xxiii. 13. The hill is of course the mount of Olives. The altar would seem to have stood on the south peak, which is now known, as it has been for centuries past, as the *Mons Scandali*, or the *Mons Offensionis* (the Vulg. rendering of 2 Kings *l.c.*) See Robinson, i. 565, 566], and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. [Ewald sees in these altars a wise religious tolerance (“Hist. Israel,” iii. pp. 297, 298).]

Ver. 8.—And likewise did he for all [having done it for one, he must needs do it for all. “No hill about Jerusalem was free from a chapel of devils” (Hall)] his strange wives, which burnt [Heb. *burning*, Ewald, 335 a] incense and sacrificed unto their gods. [Observe, as bearing on the question of Solomon’s apostasy, that Solomon built the altars; his wives sacrificed, &c. According to Keil, incense is here mentioned before sacrifice, because vegetable took precedence of animal offerings in the nature-worship of Western Asia (Bähr, Symbolik, ii. pp. 237 sqq.) But it is very doubtful whether this idea was in the mind of the writer.]

Ver. 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. [cf. iii. 5 and ix. 2. The anger arose partly from the exceptional favours which had been shown to him; cf. Amos iii. 2; Luke x. 12—15.]

—Ver. 10.—And had commanded him concerning this thing [ch. ix. 6] that he

should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the Lord commanded.

Ver. 11.—Wherefore the Lord said unto Solomon [probably by a prophet, Ahijah or Iddo. There would hardly be a third appearance], Forasmuch as this is done of thee [Heb. *this was with thee*], and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend [i.e., despite thy great power and magnificence, thy fortifications and munitions of war] the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. [Not merely *subject*, but *officer, employé*. This made the decree the more bitter. A “servant” should be heir to his glory. For a hireling Solomon’s vast treasures had been prepared. This verse should be read in the light of Eccles. ii. 18.]

Ver. 12.—Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it [The threatening had two gracious and merciful limitations, (1) The blow should not fall until after his death (cf. ver. 34; ch. xxi. 29; 2 Kings xxii.

20), and (2) the disruption should be but partial. There should be a “remnant” Rom. ix. 27; xi. 5, &c.] for David thy father’s sake [i.e., because both of David’s piety and God’s promise to him (2 Sam. vii. 13)]: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son.

Ver. 13.—Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe [viz., Judah (ch. xii. 20, “the tribe of Judah only”). “Even the reservation of one tribe is called a gift” (Wordsworth) to thy son for David my servant’s sake, and for Jerusalem’s sake which I have chosen. [But for this provision, Jerusalem would have ceased to be the religious capital. When the sceptre departed from Judah, we may be sure that the “envy of Ephraim” would have demanded that the city of their solemnities should be placed elsewhere—at Shiloh, which for 400 years had been God’s “bright sanctuary,” or at Bethel, which from far earlier times had been a holy place. See on ch. xii. 29, 32.]

## HOMILETICS.

Vers. 4—8.—*The Sin of Solomon.* Three questions will suffice to bring this subject before us. First, what was this sin? secondly, by whom was it committed? thirdly, when, and under what circumstances?

But first, it is well we should understand what this sin was *not*. (1) *It was not actual idolatry.* True, Solomon built the altars, but he built them for his wives (vers. 7, 8). The wisest of men never stooped so low as to “project his person” to dumb idols (note on ver. 4). To him, an idol was “nothing in the world” (1 Cor. viii. 4). That, of all things, was “vanity of vanities;” (2) *Nor was it the outcome of simple sensuality.* The wives who “turned away his heart,” and to whom he “clave in love”—it was not passion but pride had collected them in such numbers under his palace roof. “His crowded seraglio was but one instance more of the sort of ambition which made him seek to surpass all men in his gardening, his agriculture, his treasures of gold,” &c. (Keble). See on ver. 1. But when he had them, he must humour them, even in their idolatries. He was very far, we may be sure, from thinking that all religions were alike, which has been “the disease of some great wits;” but he flattered himself that he was tolerant and liberal, and as he claimed liberty of conscience, so he must concede it to others.

We see, then, that the essence of this sin was that having permitted himself, or purposes of state and pride and ostentation, the love of many strange women, he permitted them, and possibly some of his subjects also, to worship their false gods. And by so doing—

1. *He gave a direct sanction to superstition.* He may have argued, like some in later times and some who bear the Christian name, that these things, though nothing in themselves, were all very well for women, that the ignorant must have material objects of worship, &c. But it was not thus that the God of his fathers viewed the deed. This philosophic tolerance of other creeds, *He* called the teaching of falsehood. This liberality, in His sight, was “damnable uncharitableness”—the expression is Jeremy Taylor’s—for it was leading poor souls away from the light and changing the truth of God into a lie (Rom. i. 25). It was “making the blind to wander out of the way” (Deut. xxvii. 18) in the worst possible sense of the words.

2. *He encouraged immorality and cruelty.* For it must never be forgotten what the "abominations" of these Semitic divinities were like. The idolatry of the East always involved impurity; hence its powerful hold on a nation like the Jews, for whom the worship of "silver and gold, the works of men's hands," could have had but little charm. Its "vile affections" (Rom. i. 26) were its chief attractions. And Solomon, who knew what the worship of Baal and Ashtoreth meant, who knew how unclean were their rites, and what painful and shameful sacrifices Molech and Chemosh demanded of their votaries, nevertheless gave the word, and presently the hills about Jerusalem were crowned with chapels of devils.

3. *He dishonoured the one true God.* For if "Polytheism is not exclusive," Monotheism, in the very nature of things, is and must be. Its basis, its fundamental conception, is that there are *not* "gods many and lords many." Its keynote is the *Shema Israel* (Deut. vi. 4), "the Lord our God is one Lord." It proclaims a "jealous God" who will not give His glory to another, nor His praise to graven images (Isa. xlii. 8). But Solomon robbed Him of His rights; of the exclusive sovereignty and the undivided authority which belonged to Him alone. By building idol altars he claimed homage for idol deities; before the eyes of the Lord's people, he thrust rivals and pretenders on to the Lord's throne, and degraded "the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man." (Rom. i. 23).

4. *He defied the Holy One of Israel.* For these altars of lust and cruelty were not built in a corner. They did not shrink from the light as in a past age; they were not frequented by *pagan*. They rose "on the hill that is before Jerusalem;" they fronted the altar of Jehovah; their priests were visible to the priests in the temple court; their smoke ascended to the sky along with the smoke of the daily sacrifice. If insult had been *designed*, it could hardly have been more open or obtrusive.

II. And by **WHOSE** permission, at whose bidding were these shrines of infamy erected? They were built by—

1. *The wisest of men.* In science (ch. iv. 33), in philosophy (*ib.* vers. 29—32), in self-knowledge (see Homiletics, pp. 78, 79). Cf. ch. iii. 12, 28.

2. *The most favoured and enlightened of men.* The Lord "appeared unto him twice" (ver. 9). His was "abundance of revelations" (cf. 2 Cor. xii. 7). To him it was said, "Ask what I shall give thee" (ch. iii. 5). This was *Jedidiah*. "There was no king like Solomon, who was beloved of his God, yet even him did outlandish women cause to sin" (Neh. xiii. 26).

3. *The builder of the temple.* To him had been granted the high honour which was denied to pious David. He had "found a place for the Lord, a habitation for the mighty God of Jacob" (Psa. cxxxii. 5). The golden altar, the brazen altar; he had planned and reared them both. And now he builds altars to "horrors" (see note on ch. xv. 13). "He that burneth incense, he blessed an idol" (Isa. lxvi. 3, Heb.)

4. *The teacher of the Church.* He was "that deep sea of wisdom which God ordained to send forth rivers and fountains of all Divine and human knowledge to all nations, to all ages;" he was "one of those select secretaries whose hand it pleased the Almighty to employ in three pieces of the Divine monuments of sacred Scriptures" (Bp. Hall). He is fallen, but his writings stand. He still preaches to others, though himself a castaway. There have been authors whose pestilent writings go on corrupting and destroying souls for ages after they have ceased to speak. But Solomon's is in some respects a sadder case than theirs. His writings have taught and blessed the world for nigh three thousand years after he himself fell into "utter wretchedness of most unclean living."

5. *A man who warned others.* It is only when we study his fall in the light of his prayer and proverbs, with their many admonitions, that we realize how great a wreck he became and how appalling is the lesson of his fall. "Since the first man, Adam, the world hath not yielded either so great an example of wisdom or so fearful an example of apostasy, as Solomon" (Hall).

III. But **WHEN** was it, let us now ask, that Solomon fell into this deadly sin? **At**

what period of his reign, and under what circumstances, did he sink to such depths of degradation? Observe—

1. *It was not after sudden or special temptation* (see Homiletics, p. 216). We may truly say of him, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man." No Delilah, no Bathsheba wrought his ruin. It is instructive to compare ch. iv. 20—24 with the account of our Lord's temptation (Matt. iv. 3—11). Solomon was not tempted by hunger; his "provision for one day was," &c. The enemy could not offer him "the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them:" he had them already (ch. iv. 21, 24; ch. x. *passim*); he could only use the common weapon of presumption, of spiritual pride, and it was by this that Solomon was slain.

2. *It was not after great trials or adversity.* His career, how unlike David's! "Rest on every side." "Neither adversary nor evil occurrence" (ch. v. 4). "Eating, drinking, and making merry" (ch. iv. 20). Compare 1 Sam. chs. xviii.—xxx. And yet David stood and Solomon fell. What we call adversity (compare Jacob's "all these things are against me," Gen. xlii. 36) is often spiritual prosperity. "Tribulation" is a significant word. The *tribulum* was the threshing-sledge which separated the chaff from the grain. It is said by some that war is necessary for nations to preserve them from corruption and decay; it is certain that peace is not always good for princes. The man of peace and rest, who was "not plagued like other men," has furnished the world with the most terrible example of apostasy. Well may the apostle bid us to "rejoice in tribulation also," to "count it all joy when," &c. (James i. 2).

3. *It was "when he was old."* St. Paul speaks of "youthful lusts," but old age has its special dangers and temptations. It was in the time of mature experience, when the hot blood of youth should have cooled, when he should have known the world and his wisdom should have been ripest, that his wives turned away his heart. Perhaps he presumed upon his exalted gifts and revelations. With age came self-confidence. It is thus that many strong cities have been taken. "*Praeruptum coque neglectum*" discloses the secret of their fall.

4. *It was when his riches had increased.* The greater his store, the leaner his soul. "It is easier for a camel," &c. (Matt. xix. 24). "The deceitfulness of riches" choked the word (Matt. xiii. 22). The Latin proverb which says that "every rich man is either a knave or the son of a knave" has some truth in it. Happy are those who have "neither poverty nor riches" (Prov. xxx. 8); happiest those who can say, "My riches consist, not in the abundance of my possessions, but in the fewness of my wants."

5. *It was when his prosperity was at its highest.* It was when he "waxed fat" that "Jeshurun kicked." It is when men "have eaten and are full" that they most need to "beware that they forget not the Lord their God" (Deut. viii. 10, 11). Observe, it was not until he had reached the very pinnacle of greatness and felicity that Solomon fell. "His prosperity, which even wise men find a constant wear and trial to the spirit, did him more harm than even his wisdom did him good" (Augustine). How appropriate that prayer, "In all time of our *wealth*, . . . good Lord, deliver us." "The food convenient which Agur prayed for is safer than the food abundant which even Solomon was surfeited with" (M. Henry).

6. *It was after his wives were multiplied.* Polygamy has ever been a snare to rulers. It is said that Scripture nowhere condemns it. If the letter does not, the spirit does. Scripture tells of the misery it has occasioned. Witness the families of Abraham, Jacob, Elkanah, and David. It was the immediate cause of Solomon's ruin. There are few partnerships which are so lightly entered into as the one which lasts for all life. And yet how completely is a man's honour, prosperity, and peace in his wife's keeping. "How many have we known whose heads have been broken by their own rib" (Bp. Hall). It is a quaint but true saying, "If a man would thrive, he must ask his wife." How strange that he who knew the priceless value of one true woman's love (Prov. xxxi. 10—31) should surrender himself to inmodest and forbidden attachments. Can there be a reference to his thousand wives and concubines in those pessimist words of Eccles. vii. 26—28? "If one woman undid

all mankind, what marvel is it if many women undid one?" (Hall.) "Thou didst bow thy loins unto women, and by thy body wast thou brought into subjection" (Ecclus. xlvii. 19).

7. *It was after repeated warnings.* He had had (1) the standing warning of Scripture (Deut. xvii. 16 sqq.), (2) the special warnings of his father David (1 Kings ii. 3, 4, and especially 1 Chron. xxviii. 9), (3) the supernatural warnings of God. (1 Kings iii. 14; vi. 12, 13; ix. 6, 7). And to these may surely be added (4) the repeated and emphatic warnings which he had himself addressed to others. But all these went for nothing. And so it is too probable his own words (Prov. xxix. 1) found a fulfilment in his own person. The saddest consideration of all is that this great preacher has unconsciously predicted his own fall, and passed sentence on himself. "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee," &c. (Luke xix. 22).

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

**Vers. 1—8.—The Fall of a King.** Solomon was a king of men. Not only was he supreme civil ruler of his nation, he was also chief in wisdom and knowledge, and distinguished in the favour of God (Neh. xiii. 26). This moral royalty is open to all. The prize is nobler than that of the most glittering "corruptible crown." From this kingship Solomon fell, though he retained the throne of the nation. The rascal often lurks in the heart that is under an anointed face. Let us consider—

**I. THE OCCASION OF THIS DELINQUENCY.** 1. Solomon had *many wives*. (1) This was an invasion of God's order. That order was exhibited in Eden, when Eve stood singly by the side of Adam. Lamech was the first polygamist (Gen. iv. 19). He was, ominously, the fifth in descent from the fratricide Cain. (2) Moses tolerated polygamy, as he also suffered divorcements, not with approval of these customs, but rather in judgment upon the people for the hardness of their hearts (see Matt. xix. 8—9). (3) This principle will explain many Mosaic ordinations the observance of which was a burdensome yoke, and from which, by the mercy of Christ, we are happily released (Acts xv. 10, 11). Note: God's order cannot be invaded with impunity. It is our duty carefully to ascertain it, and faithfully to keep it. 2. His wives were *strange* women. (1) Not only were they foreigners, they were also idolaters. There is no proof that even Pharaoh's daughter was a proselyte. Solomon could have no spiritual sympathy with these without compromising his loyalty to Jehovah. (2) They were idolaters of those very nations against alliances with which the law of God was express (see ver. 2; Exod. xxxiv. 12—16; Deut. vii. 3, 4). The sin was therefore most flagrant. (3) The spirit of this inhibition still binds (see 1 Cor. vii. 39; 2 Cor. vi. 14). The reason for it is in the nature of things and must abide. Note: Many a man has had his heart pierced and his head broken by his own rib. 3. *David* had too many wives. (1) The example of David may have injuriously influenced Solomon. A large harem may have been a sign of grandeur; but these kings ought to have been superior to such fashions (see Deut. xvii. 17). (2) The evils in the examples of good men are especially mischievous, for they are liable to be condoned into harmlessness; the more readily so when to follow them is agreeable to natural inclination. (3) They are liable to be carried farther. If David had many wives, Solomon had very many. David's wives were chiefly daughters of Israel, but Solomon's were daughters of foreign idolaters. Amongst his 700 wives and 300 concubines, not one was good (see Eccles. vii. 28). Note: Good men should be especially watchful over their influence—parents, ministers, Sunday-school teachers, professors of religion.

**II. THE PROGRESS OF THE EVIL.** 1. *First the heart is set against the head.* (1) The earliest record here is that Solomon's *heart* was turned away. His head at first seems to have been clear, as Adam's also was, who, though in the transgression, yet was "not deceived" (1 Tim. ii. 14). But his heart, like that of Adam, was fatally susceptible to female influence. (2) It is a foolish thing in a wise man to trust his head when he gives his heart to evil. "Man at his best is vanity."

2. *Then the heart rules the head.* (1) This is the next stage and inevitable. This may be disputed long, but will assert itself in time. Observe well that when Solomon was "old" he so far yielded to the influence of his wives as to encourage and join in their idolatry. (2) Probably his vices made him prematurely old. Calmet supposes him to have been *eighteen* years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned *forty* years (ver. 42). Thus he could be only *fifty-eight* at his death. 3. *Finally the wise man becomes a fool.* (1) Behold this wisest of men trying to solve the impossible problem of serving Jehovah and Ashtaroth! He went not fully after the Lord his God as did David his father. (2) David indeed fell into grievous sin, but his offence was more directly against man; indirectly against God. Even then the offence *as against God* was the venom of his crimes (Psa. li. 4). But the sin of Solomon was against God directly. Note: Offences against society are denounced without mercy by men, while the mental rebellion of the unbeliever against God is even glorified as "honest doubt!" but the Bible is explicit that "He that believeth not shall be damned." (3) Behold this wise man further building a temple to Molech, the murderer, the devil, on the Mount of Olives, over against the temple of the Lord, the glorious work of his royal youth! Could folly go farther? (4) The mischief of Solomon's idolatry remained to the times of Josiah (see 2 Kings xxiii. 13). Who can say that it terminated even then? Eternity will declare.—M.

Vers. 9—13.—*The Anger of God.* This is the inevitable consequence of sin. Had God expressed no displeasure against Solomon, what mischief might not his example have wrought? The terrible judgments of the great day will have a most salutary effect upon the order and stability of the whole moral universe. If men sufficiently considered these things they would hesitate before they plunged into vices. Let us be admonished from this history as to—

I. HOW THE ANGER OF GOD IS PROVOKED. It is provoked—1. *By the turning away of the heart from Him.* (1) And justly so, for to do this is to outrage the highest propriety. God is everything that should engage the affections of an intelligent creature—"the perfection of beauty;" "the altogether lovely." (2) For to do this is the straight road to the deepest demoralization. Man is made in the image of God expressly that his nature may have its perfection in union and communion with Him. To turn away from God must lead to depravation evermore. This, in other words, is everlasting damnation. (3) Then let us keep our hearts (Prov. iv. 23). No diligence should be spared. Our life is in it. 2. *By doing this wantonly.* (1) It was an aggravation of Solomon's sin that *God had appeared* to him. Review the circumstances of the vision he witnessed before he set about the building of the temple (see ch. iii. 5—15). He could not have been wholly ignorant of the glorious character of God. (2) It was a further aggravation that God had appeared to him *twice* (ver. 9). Review the circumstances of the vision after the work of the temple was finished (see ch. ix. 1—9). Note: Privileges imply corresponding responsibilities. Note further: God keeps account of His favours conferred upon us, though we may forget them. He will remind us of them all in the great day of judgment. (3) It was an additional aggravation that he had been forewarned of the very evils into which he fell. And the promises of God to him had been so remarkably verified that he had the best reason to accept the truth of His admonitions. How slow of heart are the men to believe the inflexibility of Divine justice! (4) A *king* who exacts obedience from subjects, or a *master* who claims the obedience of servants, should be the last to forget his duty to God. Consider—

II. HOW THE ANGER OF GOD IS EXPRESSED. It is expressed—1. *In the severity of justice.* (1) The kingdom of Solomon was now doomed to be rent. He had divided his affections (between Jehovah and Molech), so are the affections of his subjects now to be divided. (2) A considerable portion of his kingdom is to be turned over to one of his servants. What a fitness there is in this judgment also! Solomon, the servant of God, rebelled against God; Jeroboam, the servant of Solomon, rebels against Solomon. (3) What a melancholy reversal! Time was

when God loved Solomon (see 2 Sam. xii. 24; 1 Kings x. 9; Neh. xiii. 26). Severe is the fall from the height of a throne. From a vastly greater elevation is the fall of one cast from the bosom of God. (4) Behold how sin works ruin! It ruins individuals, families, nations. The anger of God is expressed—2. *With the mitigations of mercy.* (1) For the sake of David his father these judgments were not to come upon Solomon in his day. We little know the benefits or the evils entailed upon us by our forefathers. We should see that we entail not evils but benefits upon our descendants. (2) "For David's sake!" David, the beloved, was a type of Christ, for whose sake the entail of infinite mischief is cut off from his sons, and they are made heirs of inestimable blessings. (3) Even Rehoboam was to reap the benefit of the faithfulness of David. One tribe, the most important, was to be retained to him. The promises respecting the true son of David must be fulfilled. (4) "For Jerusalem's sake," also, mercy must rejoice upon judgment (ver. 13). The temple was there. The shechinah was there. Kingdoms are spared the severity of judgments in respect to the interests of religion in many ways little dreamed of by statesmen and rulers.—M.

Vers. 1—8.—*Solomon's Sin.* I. **THE SIN.** 1. *Its nature.* He not only aided his wives to continue their idolatrous worship, he himself participated in it. He went after strange gods, seeking their favour and observing their ordinances. The worship of Jehovah was not discarded, but delight in the true God was gone, and the flame of that loving zeal for God's commandments died away: his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God. The worship now offered in the temple was the lingering tradition of a brighter past, a thing of custom and outward necessity, and the heart was given to baser worships, sensuous and sensual. The soul had ceased to drink at the fountain of living waters, and was drinking at the fountain of death. Is our heart perfect with the Lord, our delight in His love, our hunger after His righteousness as deep as in the past? Do we offer a cold and formal worship to Him, while our heart warms into living interest and strong desire only at the world's shrines? 2. *Its guilt.* (1) God had given Solomon unparalleled wisdom, wealth, and power, and all were now turned against his Benefactor. All that fame and influence were used to glorify idolatry and lessen zeal for God's service. How often are God's gifts thus turned against Him! (2) The sin of Solomon became the sin of Israel (ver. 33). The responsibility of parents in regard to their children's attitude toward God—the responsibility of the leaders of thought and of society, of all of us, as to how we influence men in their attitude toward the things unseen and eternal. 3. *Its sadness.* It was his last work, the sin not of youth but of old age. The light which God had kindled did not flame out into eternal glory, but went out in eternal night. The seeds of sin and disaster were sown among his people, his life a wreck, his memory not a star to guide the wanderer in the darkness, but a warning beacon on the waste of death! The story of many a life besides: will it be the story of thine?

II. **WHAT LED TO IT.** 1. *Unregulated affections.* The wisdom of marrying only in the Lord. The danger of worldly alliances and worldly friendships. 2. *The despising of God's commandments* (see ver. 2, and Deut. xvii. 16, 17). The counsels of God were lightly esteemed. Many commands of God are to-day held to be antiquated and are quietly ignored. The directions of Scripture in regard to what are deemed minor things are set aside. The spirit of unbelief is there. For individuals and for churches it must prove a seed of sin and spiritual disaster. 3. *The human love displaced the Divine.* The spirit of disloyalty needed only a strong enough inducement to go further, and it found it here. To please his wives, altars to their gods were built on Mount Olivet, and then his own soul was taken in the snare of their abominations. The testimony which we are called to lift up in the face of all life away from God is safety for our own soul. It is hard to do it, but there is life in it for ourselves and, it may be, for others also.—U.

Vers. 9—13.—*God's Anger.* I. **SINS ARE SET IN THE LIGHT OF PAST MERCIES.**  
1. *Solomon's idolatry is contrasted with the advantages conferred upon him.*

The Lord had appeared to him twice. The reality of God's existence and His personality had been engraven upon Solomon's soul. 2. *With the commandment given.* The Lord "had commanded him concerning this thing." The rebellion and ingratitude are both marked. Our sins are judged not only in themselves and their effects, but also in the light of what God has done and said to us. There is a baseness and an enmity in sin that will yet crush the sinful heart. Do we weigh sins in this way? Does our repentance read them thus? God's judgment will: "Forasmuch as this is done of thee," &c.

II. THE DIVINE JUDGMENT. 1. *Hopes frustrated.* Solomon may have excused his sin to himself because it conciliated neighbouring princes and nations and so strengthened his kingdom. But while he fancied himself building up, he was in reality casting down. Forgetfulness of God is forgetfulness of one's own good. 2. *Pride abased.* The dominion is given to a servant. There is not only loss but shame. There are first that will be last, and last first. 3. *Punishment reflects sin.* Solomon's rebellion and ingratitude are punished by rebellion and ingratitude. The kingdom is rent from him by a subject, and by one whom he had trusted and advanced (ver. 28). "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." As the wicked have shut out God, God will shut out them.

III. THE DIVINE MERCY. In God's chastisements there is ever a gateway of kindness through which we may pass up into His forgiveness and love. 1. *The judgment is delayed.* It was a heavy judgment that the kingdom should be rent from his son, but it would have been an added bitterness had his own day set in disaster and shame. 2. *The whole will not be taken even from his son.* His seed will still reign in Jerusalem. 3. *There is humbling even in the mercy.* It is done for David's sake and for Jerusalem's sake. Pride is crushed beneath God's mercy as well as beneath His judgment. We are pardoned for Christ's sake and His name's sake. In the midst of rebuke for iniquity there is mercy and life for lowly faith.—U.

Vers. 9, 10.—*The Downfall of Solomon.* The fall of Solomon has appeared to some commentators incredible. As to the fact itself, however, there can be no doubt. Nor is his fall so exceptional as many suppose. Others beside this king have had pious parentage, a religious education, a promising youth, extraordinary intellectual endowments, frequent warnings of their danger, and yet have failed and come short of the glory of God. Give examples. It is noteworthy that God saw Solomon's danger and warned him of it on the evening of that day upon which his religious devotion appeared most intense. The dedication of the temple was at once the zenith of the nation's glory, and of their king's highest attainments. Describe the Feast of Dedication; the song of the people—"Lift up your heads, O ye gates, &c.; the prayer of Solomon that this might be so; and the manifestation of the Divine Presence. Contrast this scene with the silence of the following night, in which the message of the Lord came, bidding him beware lest the emotion and resolve of the day should be evanescent (ix. 2). Our times of religious excitement are not our safest hours. Enthusiasm has its perils as well as its powers. Refer to Peter's eager protestation, and the Lord's word of caution, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have," &c. (Luke xxii. 31). The sins which constituted Solomon's decadence—against which, through him, we are warned—appear to have been these:

I. SENSUALITY. His base self-indulgence grew upon him, as it does on any man. The life he lived was degrading to his manhood. Love became debased to lust, because it was divorced from purity. Physically, as well as morally, he became a wreck, and though not 60 years of age when he died, he was already weary, broken, and old (ver. 4). Some light may be thrown upon his downward progress by the books which bear his name, and which, if not written by him, were declarations of the experience he knew. If the Song of Solomon represents his bright youth, when love, though passionate, was undefiled, the book of Ecclesiastes is the outcry of his age, when all seemed "vanity and vexation of spirit," and when he tried once more painfully to lay the old foundation of the shattered fabric of his life

(Eccles. xii. 13). Compare him with Samson; show how the indulgence of passion destroys kingliness. Even such sin was not beyond pardon. It would have been well for Solomon had he returned to God, as his father had done (see Psa. li.)

II. EVIL COMPANIONSHIP (ver. 2). The Israelites were often warned against marriage with the heathen. At times ordinary international intercourse was forbidden. Instances are given in which disobedience to this law of severance brought terrible effects. Some companionship is essential to man. The hermit must be a very imperfect Christian. John the Baptist was in the wilderness, but Christ, whom we follow, was ever found in the haunts and homes of men. Yet under the new dispensation the wise choice of companionship is insisted on, and provided for. The twelve apostles were associated together, as well as separated from others; and in their work they went forth by two and two. The Apostolic Church presents a beautiful picture of fellowship (Acts ii.) It is amongst the wise-hearted and devout that we are to find our friends. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." The importance of this to the young, whose characters are not yet formed. Hence responsibility rests on parents, who can encourage or hinder acquaintances, and on young people themselves. He must have something of Christ's wisdom and strength, and must be animated by His motives, who, like Him, would be safe and useful amongst "the publicans and sinners."

III. EXTRAVAGANCE. The wealth of Solomon was enormous. The treasure saved for him by David seemed inexhaustible, and the tribute from other peoples (x. 25), the monopolies granted by the king (x. 28, 29), the importation of gold from Ophir (ix. 28), &c., brought immense revenues. The king was proportionately extravagant. See the account given of his palaces, his gardens, and his retinue. No country could long bear such a strain. Increased taxation was necessary, and this was one of the causes of the break-up of the kingdom under Rehoboam. Show in modern life the temptations to extravagance and ostentation; the injury caused by these sins to a nation; the moral perils to which the extravagant are exposed; the diminution of help to God's cause and to God's poor.

IV. OPPRESSION. He appears to have copied the Pharaohs not only in magnificence, but in disregard for human suffering. The Canaanites were reduced to the position of helots; multitudes were torn from their homes to fell timber in the forests, or hew stone in the quarries. Even the Israelites had to do forced labour. Kings have responsibility to their people, as well as the people to their kings. God's laws were violated by Solomon (Exod. xxii. 21; xxiii. 9). Show from history the Nemesis of oppression. Indicate manifestations of the spirit of tyranny in business, in homes, schools, &c.

V. IDOLATRY. Solomon erected temples to Ashtoreth, Milcom, and Chemosh. Describe the idolatries specified. All idolatry sternly forbidden. The cultus of these deities hideously cruel, dark, impure. Heathenism degrades man and dishonours God. Show the steps which led Solomon to the commission of such egregious sin. (1) *He was broad in his views*, far advanced from the traditional knowledge of the age, and often conversed with wise men of other creeds. Slowly he lost his sense of the pre-eminence of the truth revealed to him. He saw what was true in other systems, but meantime lost his horror at what was false in them. This one of the special perils of our age; point it out. (2) *He wished all that was connected with him to reflect his own magnificence*. It was not enough that his wives and concubines should be at liberty to worship their idols; they must do it splendidly, if at all, for his glory was concerned in their acts. (3) *He would please and attract surrounding nations*. This partly for commercial ends, chiefly for personal glory. Base motives lead to false policy, and false policy prepares for national ruin.

CONCLUSION.—1. *The possibility of ruin to those whose religious advantages are greatest.*

2. *The retribution heavier in proportion as the offence is aggravated by neglected warning.*—A. R.

Vers. 9—18.—*Solomon's Fall*. The dark omen that marred the brightness of

Solomon's second vision (ch. ix. 6) has come to be fulfilled. He was forewarned of danger and yet has fallen into it. The splendour of royal circumstance remained the same, but how completely has his true glory departed! "How is the gold become dim and the fine gold changed!" The smile of God that rested as glad sunshine on his head, has turned to "anger." The cause of the change is in the secrecy of his own soul. The Scripture narrative is silent about the course of his inner life, the phases of thought and feeling through which he may have passed; so that this sudden note of discord in the midst of the harmony strikes us with something of sad surprise. Enough, however, is said to show that it was a moral change in the man himself. The Lord God of Israel had not changed in His purpose or method; it is Solomon whose "heart is turned from him." How far this was a fatal change, a real apostasy, we know not. We need not attempt to solve the purely speculative question as to whether he ever recovered from his fall; his later writings suggest at least the hope that it was so. Enough for us now to note the facts, to trace the causes, and learn the lessons. Certain broad principles of moral life are here strikingly illustrated.

I. THE TREACHERY OF HUMAN NATURE. Beneath the fairest exterior there may be latent germs of evil that only need outward incentives to develop themselves into disastrous issues. Even the inspirations of the highest wisdom and the raptures of religious emotion may have underlying them tendencies to the grossest forms of folly and the lowest depths of sin and shame. Solomon was sincere enough in his earlier piety, but too little alive to the slumbering forces of evil that he bore within him. His moral history confirmed the truth of his own proverb: "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool" (Prov. xxviii. 26). An Arab tradition says that in the staff on which he leaned there was a worm which was secretly gnawing it asunder. That worm was the hidden corruption of his moral nature. It is a solemn lesson: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." We can look upon no form of wrong-doing in others without being reminded that there is something akin to it in ourselves. Concealed in our own bosoms there is that which might possibly develop into similar issues. Our only security lies in the triumph of that gracious Divine power that can thoroughly purge the fountain of the heart, and destroy there the very germs of evil.

II. THE BASE USES TO WHICH THE HIGHEST ADVANTAGES OF LIFE MAY BE PERVERTED BY THE WAYWARD HEART. Solomon's greatness became the occasion and aggravation of his fall. His royal magnificence fostered "the lust of the eye and the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life." His consciousness of power degenerated into tyranny (1 Kings xii. 4; 1 Sam. viii. 11). The wealth of his emotional nature took the form of illicit love and boundless self-indulgence. His studious interest in Nature induced the dream of occult mysterious powers in material things, and the practice of magic arts. His intercourse with men of other nations led to his catching the infection of their idolatries, until at last the rival temples of Moloch, Chemosh, and Ashtaroah, with all their cruel and abominable rites, frowned darkly upon Olivet, over against the glorious house of the Lord on Mount Moriah. So fatally may the noblest personal endowments and the richest advantages of life foster the evil tendencies of the heart when once it has surrendered itself to their control. If it be true that "there is a soul of goodness in things evil," it is equally true that nothing is so good but that the spirit of evil may transform it into an instrument of moral injury. The fascinations of outward life are full of danger when that spirit lurks within. The wealth of a man's intellectual resources, the multitude of his possessions, the range of his influence, do but put into his hands the more abundant means of wrong-doing when his heart is not loyal to the good and true.

"The fairest things below the sky  
Give but a flattering light;  
We must suspect some danger nigh,  
Where we possess delight."

This idea is not to be carried too far. Life would be intolerable on the principle of universal suspicion and distrust. The great Father of all would have His children

use and enjoy freely the good of every kind that falls to their lot. But let them beware lest the spirit of evil, in some form of outward charm, through some secret avenue of soul or sense, should gain an entrance to the citadel of their heart, and "turn it away" from Him.

III. THE CERTAINTY OF DIVINE RETRIBUTIONS. Solomon cannot sin with impunity. His personal defection involves the throne in dishonour and the whole nation in discord and sorrow. He had been forewarned that it should be so, and the threatenings of God are as sure as His promises. What is God's "anger" but just the reverse side of that faithfulness that secures the purposes of His grace? What are His judgments but the severer methods of His holy love? An inexorable Nemesis tracks the path of the transgressor; not a mere blind fate—not a mere impersonal law of moral sequence—but a Divine will and power, pledged to vindicate the cause of eternal righteousness. It may follow him slowly, as with "leaden foot," but sooner or later it overtakes him. "Whatsoever a man soweth," &c. (Gal. vi. 7, 8). And though one only may sow the evil seed, how many, often, are the reapers! "The sins of the fathers are visited on the children," &c. No man can "perish alone in his iniquity." According to the range of his social relations so is the mischief his wrong-doing works. When the king falls, how many fall with him! The laws of God

"must work their will,  
Whatever human heart may bleed;  
And more than they who do the ill  
Must suffer for the evil deed."

IV. THE MERCY THAT TEMPERS DIVINE JUDGMENTS. The execution of the sentence is both delayed and modified. Not in Solomon's own reign shall the thing be done; "nor shall the kingdom be wholly torn from his house" (vers. 12, 13). This is partly from tender regard for the sacred memory of David his father, and partly, we may believe, in mercy to himself, that space may be given him for repentance (see Psa. lxxxix. 30—37). We have here a type and example of the general method of God's ways. "In wrath he remembers mercy." Something of gracious forbearance is seen in the severest of His judgments. His chastisements are fatherly. And beneath the darkest providences and the sternest retributions there is the steady flow of a loving-kindness that endures throughout all generations, the strength of a covenant that shall never be broken.—W.

Vers. 9—13.—After the consecration of the temple Solomon reached the culminating point of his reign, both in a spiritual and temporal point of view. His fame and his dominion continued to increase. The Queen of Sheba came from the far East to pay him homage. From this summit of glory he had a sudden and shameful fall, and became all but an apostate. This son of David, whose high honour it was to have built and consecrated the temple of Jehovah, this heir of the promises on which hung the salvation of mankind, sank into idolatry. The causes of his fall were—1st, PRIDE: he forgot to give glory to God. 2nd, LUST: strange women enticed him after strange gods (ch. xi. 3). The fall of Solomon repeats in a manner the features of the first transgression. It began in the desire to be as God, and was consummated in the gratification of the flesh. Its emphatic warning to all God's people is, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. x. 12). Chastisement from God is the consequence of this fall. God had already warned Solomon that His most glorious promises were contingent on obedience to His commands. "If thou walk in my ways," &c. (ch. iii. 13, 14). God chastens Solomon because He loves him, and does not altogether take His mercy from him, since He still leaves the kingdom of Judah to his descendants. The book of Ecclesiastes, with its blending of bitterness and repentance, is perhaps the ripening fruit of this merciful severity.—E. de P.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XI. 14—43.

**SOLOMON'S ADVERSARIES.**—As the historian has collected together in chs. vi., vii., viii. all the information he can convey respecting the *temple*, and in chs. ix., x. all the scattered notices respecting Solomon's *power and greatness*, so here he arranges in one section the history of Solomon's *adversaries*. It must not be supposed that the following records stand in due chronological order. The enmities here mentioned did not date from the delivery of the message of which we have just heard; on the contrary, the hatred and opposition of Hadad and Rezon began at an early period, though not the earliest (ch. v. 4), of Solomon's reign. It was only in his later life, however, that they materially affected his position and rule; hence it is that they are brought before us at this stage of the history, and also because they are manifestly regarded as chastisements for Solomon's sin.

Ver. 14.—And the Lord stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad [In ver. 17 written Adad, אָדָד]. Apparently this, like Pharaoh, was a title rather than a name. And, like Pharaoh, it is said to mean *the sun*. It was borne by a king of Edom in very early times, Gen. xxv. 15; xxxvi. 35, 39 (in the latter verse, as in ch. xxv. 15, Hadar is probably a clerical error for Hadad, as the name stands in 1 Chron. i. 30, 50, 7 and 7 being so very much alike. Gesenius, however, contends that Hadar is the true reading), and was also a favourite name with the kings of Syria, especially in the forms Benhadad, Hadadezer] the Edomite: he was of the king's seed in Edom.

Ver. 15.—For it came to pass, when David was in Edom [2 Sam. viii. 14. But the text is peculiar. Instead of "in Edom" we have "with Edom," אֶת־עֲדָמָה, unless we take אֶת to be the mark of the accusative, which, however, there is no verb to govern. Keil interprets, "When David had to do with Edom." Bähr refers to 1 Chron. xx. 5, and Gen. xix. 4, but they are not strictly parallel, and it is possible that the text is slightly corrupt, as the LXX., Syr., and Arab. must have had אֶת־עֲדָמָה instead of אֶת־עֲדָמָה before them "when David smote Edom." The LXX., e.g., reads ἐν τῷ ἔξολοθῆναι. κ. τ. λ. It was only vicariously, however, that David smote Edom, or

was in Edom. According to 1 Chron. xviii. 12, Abishai slew 18,000 Edomites, while Psa. lx. (title) represents Joab as having slain 12,000 at the same time and place. The two brothers were both in high command, or Abishai may have been detailed by Joab to this service], and Joab the captain of the host was gone up to bury the slain [The commentators generally are agreed that these are the Israelites slain by the Edomites during an invasion of Israel, and not either the Edomites or Israelites slain in the valley of Salt], after he had smitten [rather, *that he smote*. This is the apodosis] every male in Edom. [This is, of course, hyperbolic (cf. "all Israel" below). It is clear that the whole Edomite nation did *not* perish. The words point to a terrible slaughter (cf. 1 Chron. xviii. 13) among the men of war. Possibly the cruelties of the Edomites (compare Psa. cxxxvii. 7; Obad. 10—14) had provoked this act of retribution, as to which see Deut. xx. 13.]

Ver. 16.—For six months did Joab remain there with all Israel [*i.e.*, the entire army, as in ch. xvi. 16, 17], until he had cut off every male in Edom.

Ver. 17.—That Hadad fled [This word excludes the idea that he was carried off in infancy by servants, something like Joash, 2 Kings xi. 2], he and certain Edomites of his father's servants with him, to go into Egypt [cf. Matt. ii. 13]; Hadad being yet a little child. [The words used of Solomon oh. iii. 7.]

Ver. 18.—And they arose out of Midian [a name of wide and somewhat varied significance. Midian embraces the eastern portion of the peninsula of Sinai (Exod. ii. 15, 21; iii. 1), and stretches along the eastern border of Palestine. The term has been compared with our "Arabia." And the indefiniteness arises in both instances from the same cause, viz., that the country was almost entirely desert. Midian would thus extend along the back or east of Edom. There is no need, consequently (with Thenius), to read מִדְיָן *i.e.*, their dwelling. It is noticeable, however, that the LXX. reads ἐκ τῆς πόλεως Μαδῖαμ, and some of the geographers do mention a city of that name on the eastern shore of the Eleanitic gulf], and came to Paran [Elsewhere Mount Paran, Hab. iii. 3; Deut. xxxiii. 2; a desert and mountainous tract lying between Arabia Petræa, Palestine, and Idumæa (see Num. x. 12; xiii. 3, 27; 1 Sam. xxv. 1; Deut. i. 1), and comprehending the desert of Et Tih. It is difficult to identify it with greater precision,

but it has been connected with the beautiful *Wâdy Feiran*, near Mount Serbal, in the Sinaitic range, which would agree fairly well with our narrative]: and they took men with them out of Paran [as guides through the desert, and possibly as a protection also], and came to Egypt [The direct route from Edom to Egypt would be across the desert of Et Tih—practically the route of the caravan of pilgrims from Mecca. But this does not settle the position of Paran, as the text seems to hint that the fugitives did not proceed direct from Edom. They may have taken refuge in the first instance amongst the tribes of Midian; or they may have diverged from the straight course through fear], unto Pharaoh king of Egypt [This cannot have been the Pharaoh who was Solomon's father-in-law, for in the first place, the flight was in the time of David, and secondly, a prince who had aided and abetted these fugitives would hardly be likely to form an alliance with their great enemy. It may have been Psusennes II.]; which gave him an house, and appointed him victuals [*i.e.*, certain cities or officers were charged with his maintenance, though, as his relations with the royal family were so extremely intimate (vers. 19—22), he may have been fed from the royal table], and gave him land.

Ver. 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 [LXX. *θεκεμινα*. “No name that has any near resemblance to either Tahpenes or Thekemina has yet been found among those of the period” (Poole, Dict. Bib. iii. 1431). Rawlinson adds that the monuments of that age are extremely scanty] the queen. [Heb. *בַּיְתָא*: the word generally used of the queen *mother* (as in ch. xv. 13). Here, and in 2 Kings x. 13, however, it is used of the queen consort.]

Ver. 20.—And the sister of Tahpenes bare him Genubath his son [otherwise unknown], whom Tahpenes weaned in Pharaoh's house [A significant token of his adoption into the royal family. The weaning, which generally took place in the second, sometimes third, (2 Macc. vii. 27) year, was clearly a much more marked occasion in the ancient East than it is among ourselves (Gen. xxi. 8; 1 Sam. i. 24)]: and Genubath was in Pharaoh's household among the sons of Pharaoh. [*i.e.* he was brought up in the Egyptian harem.]

Ver. 21.—And when Hadad heard in Egypt that David slept with his fathers, and that Joab the captain of the host was dead [It comes out very significantly here what a name of terror Joab's had been in Edom, and how deep was the impression which his bloody vengeance of a quarter of a century before had made] Hadad said to Pharaoh,

Let me depart [Heb. *send me away*], that I may go to mine own country. [Rawlinson cites Herod. iii. 132—137; v. 25, 35, 106, 107, to show that refugees at Oriental courts must obtain permission to leave them.]

Ver. 22.—Then Pharaoh said unto him, But what hast thou lacked with me, that, behold, thou seekest to go to thine own country? [The natural inquiry of Eastern courtesy.] And he answered, Nothing: howbeit let me go in any wise. [Heb. *thou shalt surely send me away*. Rawlinson says, “There is a remarkable abruptness in this termination.” But we must remember how unfinished, to our eyes, Scripture narratives constantly seem. There is no need, consequently, to suspect any accidental omission from the Hebrew text. The LXX., it is true, adds, “and Ader departed,” &c., but this may be inferred from vers. 14, 25. And Hadad's persistent desire to depart, for which he assigns no reason, is suggestive of the thoughts which were stirring in his soul. “The keen remembrance of his native land, his lost kingdom, and the slaughter of all his house, gathered strength within him; and all the ease and princely honour which he enjoyed in Egypt availed not against the claims of ambition, vengeance, and patriotism” (Kitto).]

Ver. 23.—And God stirred him up another adversary [almost identical with ver. 14], Rezon the son of Eliadah [Often identified with the Hezion of ch. xv. 18, but on insufficient grounds. Whether he was a usurper, who had dethroned Hadad (see Jos., Ant., vi. 5. 2), or an officer of Hadadezer's who escaped either before or after the battle of 2 Sam. viii. 3—5, is uncertain. The following words agree equally well with either supposition], which fled from his lord Hadadezer king of Zobah.

Ver. 24.—And he gathered men unto him, and became captain over a band [either of rebels before or of fugitives after the defeat], when David slew them of Zobah [Of Zobah, not in Heb. “Them” must mean the Syrian army]: and they went to Damascus, and dwelt therein [As David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus (2 Sam. viii. 6), this must have been some time after the defeat of the Syrians. But Keil argues that it cannot have been in the middle or later part of Solomon's reign, inasmuch as Solomon must have been lord of Damascus, or he could not have built Palmyra. But it is not so incontrovertibly settled that Solomon did build Palmyra (see on ch. ix. 18) as to make this argument of much weight. And even if it were, we might still fix the reign of Rezon at an earlier period of Solomon's sway. See below], and reigned. [*i.e.*, the band or troop

of Rezon, either in the confusion of the defeat, or in some subsequent time of anarchy, took possession of Damascus, and he, it would seem, usurped the crown. The word "reigned," however (plural), is somewhat remarkable. It may perhaps be accounted for by the plurals which precede it. The insertion of one "yod" (יִמְלִיכֶךָ for יִמְלִיכֶךָ) gives the sense "they made him king," which would certainly be preferable, if the emendation were not purely conjectural.

Ver. 25.—And he was an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon [We are not compelled, however, to believe that his reign lasted "all the days of Solomon." This last expression is to be taken with considerable latitude. It is an Orientalism. At the time of ch. v. 4, neither Hadad nor Rezon was giving Solomon any trouble], beside the mischief which Hadad did [Heb. omits *did*. The construction of the Hebrew (see Ewald, 277*d* (2), 292*b*, note) is difficult. Literally, "and with the evil which Hadad," &c. (comp. ver. 1 of this chapter, "and with the daughter," &c., with Exod. i. 14, Heb.) The LXX. reconstructs the text, making the following words, "and he abhorred," &c., apply to Hadad; and altering Syria (סַרְיָא) into Edom (אֲדוֹם) to suit. But it is far better to understand עָשָׂה (with our Authorized Version); *i.e.*, beside the mischief which Hadad *did* (or, "beside the mischief of Hadad," Ewald). "And he (Rezon) abhorred," &c. Hadad's enmity has already been described (vers. 17—22), and the historian has passed on to the case of Rezon. It is extremely unlikely that he should now suddenly recur exclusively to Hadad. It is very natural for him, on the other hand, in his account of Rezon, to remind us that all this was in addition to the mischief wrought by Hadad; and he abhorred [Heb. *loathed*] Israel, and reigned over Syria.

Ver. 26.—And Jeroboam [Viewed in the light of their history, the names *Jeroboam* and *Rehoboam* are both instructive. The first means, "Whose people are many;" the second, "Enlarger of the people." The latter might almost have been bestowed in irony, the former by way of parody] the son of Nebat [The case of Jeroboam is now related at much greater length, not so much because of the importance of the rebellion at the time, as because of its bearing on the later history of Israel. It led to the disruption of the kingdom and the schism in the Church. It was the first great symptom of the decadence of the power of Solomon; of his decline in *piety* we have had many indications. We see in it an indication that the Hebrew commonwealth has passed its

zenith], an Ephrathite [*i.e.*, Ephraimite; cf. Judg. xii. 5; 1 Sam. i. 1. Ephraim was the ancient rival of Judah, and by reason of its numbers, position, &c., might well aspire to the headship of the tribes (Gen. xlix. 26; xlviii. 19; Deut. xxxiii. 17; Josh. xvii. 17)] of Zereda [Mentioned here only, unless it is identical with Zeredathah (2 Chron. iv. 17) or Zarthan (Josh. iii. 16; 1 Kings iv. 12) in the Jordan valley. That this place was apparently situate in the tribe of Manasseh, is no argument against the identification (Bähr), for an Ephrathite might surely be born out of Ephraim. It is, however, observable that Zereda has the definite article (similarly ἡ Σαφίρα in the LXX., but this place is located in Mount Ephraim), which Zarthan, &c., have not. Hence it is probably the same as the *Zererath* of Judg. vii. 22. In fact, some MSS. read זְרֵרָה there instead of זְרֵדָה and ז and ר are not only etymologically interchangeable, but are also extremely liable to be confused (see above on ver. 14)], Solomon's servant [*i.e.*, officer; cf. ver. 28], whose mother's name was Zeruah [*i.e.*, leprous. His mother's name is recorded, probably because his father, having died early, was comparatively unknown. But it is not impossible that the similarity either with *Zeruiah* (cf. ch. i. 7) or *Zererah* had something to do with its preservation. The people would not readily forget that Solomon's other great adversary was the son of Zeruiah. And we have many proofs how much the Jews affected the jingle of similar words], even he lifted up his [Heb. א] hand [*i.e.*, rebelled. Synonymous expression 2 Sam. xviii. 28; xx. 21. Observe, we have no history or account of this rebellion except in the LXX., but merely of the circumstances which led to it] against the king.

Ver. 27.—And this was the cause [or, *this is the account*; this is how it came about. Same words Josh. v. 4, and ch. ix. 15. We have here a long parenthesis, explaining the origin, &c., of Jeroboam's disaffection] that he lifted up his hand [Heb. *a hand*] against the king. Solomon built Millo [see on ch. ix. 15], and repaired the breaches [These words convey the impression that Solomon renewed the decayed or destroyed parts of the wall. But (1) קִנְרֵי does not mean *repair*, except indirectly. It means *he closed, shut*. And (2) קִנְרֵי sing, refers to *one* breach or opening. Moreover (3) it was not so long since the wall was built (2 Sam. v. 9). It could hardly, therefore, have decayed, and there had been no siege to cause a breach. We must understand the word, consequently, not of a part broken down, but

of a portion unbuilt. We have elsewhere suggested that this was the breach in the line of circumvallation, caused by the Tyropeon valley, and that the *Millo* was the bank, or rampart which closed it. And to this view the words of the text lend some confirmation] of the city of David his father. [As *Millo* was built about the 25th year of Solomon's reign (ch. ix. 15), we are enabled to fix approximately the date of Jeroboam's rebellion. It was apparently about ten or twelve years before Solomon's death.

Ver. 28.—And the man Jeroboam was a mighty man of valour [same expression Judg. vi. 12; xi. 1; 1 Sam. ix. 1; 2 Kings xv. 20. In Ruth ii. 1 it hardly seems to imply valour so much as wealth (as A. V.): and Solomon seeing the young man that he was industrious [Heb. *doing work*], he made him ruler over all the charge [Heb. *appointed him to all the burden*] of the house of Joseph. [The tribe of Ephraim, with its constant envy of Judah, must have been mortified to find themselves employed—though it was but in the modified service of Israelites—on the fortifications of Jerusalem. Their murmurings revealed to Jeroboam the unpopularity of Solomon, and perhaps suggested thoughts of overt rebellion to his mind.]

Ver. 29.—And it came to pass at that time [a general expression = “when he was thus employed”] when [Heb. *that*] Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem that [Heb. *and*], the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite [*i.e.*, of Shiloh, as is expressed ch. xiv. 2—4, where see notes. He too, therefore, was an Ephraimite (Josh. xvi. 5). This portion of the history is probably derived from his writings (2 Chron. ix. 29)]. We may be pretty sure that Nathan was now dead] found him in the way; and he [*i.e.*, Ahijah. Ewald understands Jeroboam to be meant, and would see in the new garment his “splendid robe of office”] had clad himself with a new garment [חֵטֶם *same word as* חֵטֶם] such transpositions of letters being common. The *simlah* was the outer garment (Gen. ix. 23; 1 Sam. xxi. 10, &c.), which served at night as a covering (Deut. xxii. 17). It was probably identical in shape, &c., with the camel's-hair *burnous*, or *abba*, worn by the Arabs at the present day (cf. Conder, pp. 318, 342), and being almost a square would lend itself well to division into twelve parts; and they two were alone in the field [*i.e.*, open country].

Ver. 30.—And Ahijah caught [This English word almost implies that it was Jeroboam's garment (cf. Gen. xxxix. 12); but the original simply means “laid hold

of.”] the new garment that was on him, and rent [same word as in vers. 11, 12, 13] it in twelve pieces. [The first instance of an “acted parable” (Rawlinson).]

Ver. 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 [Keil insists that “ten” is here mentioned merely as the number of completeness; that, in fact, it is to be understood symbolically and not arithmetically. He further states that in point of fact the kingdom of Jeroboam only consisted of nine tribes, that of Simeon being practically surrounded by the territory of Judah, and so becoming incorporated in the southern kingdom. But surely, if that had been the idea in the prophet's mind, it would have been better expressed had he torn off one piece from the garment and given the rest, undivided, to Jeroboam (Bähr). And the reference to the number of the tribes is unmistakable. As to Simeon, we have no means of knowing what part that tribe, if it still existed, took at the division of the kingdom. See on ch. xix. 3. Its members had long been scattered (Gen. xlix. 7), and it gradually dwindled away, and has already disappeared from the history. But even if it had a corporate existence and *did* follow the lead of Judah, still that is not conclusive on the question, for we know not only that the historian uses round numbers, but also that we are not to look for exact statements, as the next verse proves] to thee.

Ver. 32.—But he shall have one tribe [LXX. *ἓνα σκιπτρα*. Some would understand “one tribe, in addition to Judah,” but compare ch. xii. 20, “tribe of Judah only,” and see note on ver. 13. Possibly neither Judah nor Benjamin is here to be thought of separately. In ch. xii. 21, and 2 Chron. xi. 3, 23, they are *both* reckoned to Rehoboam. They might be regarded as in some sense one, inasmuch as they enclosed the Holy City (Seb. Schmidt), the line of division passing right through the temple platform. But it is perhaps safer, in view of ch. xii. 20, to understand the term of Judah, compared with which large and influential tribe “little Benjamin” was hardly deserving of separate mention) for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake [see on vers. 12, 13], the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel.

Ver. 33.—Because that they [The LXX. has the singular throughout, and so have all the translations, except the Chaldee. But the plural is to be retained, the import being that Solomon was not alone in his idolatrous leanings; or it may turn our

thoughts to the actual idolaters—his wives—whose guilt he shared. The singular looks as if an alteration had been made to bring the words into harmony with the context, and especially with the concluding words of this verse, "David his father."] have forsaken me, and have worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians [צַדְוֹנִיָּה אֲשֶׁת־צִדּוֹן a Chaldee form. But many MSS. read צַדְוֹנִיָּה, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom [the LXX. has "their king the abomination," &c., καὶ τῷ βασιλεὶ αὐτῶν. See note on ver. 5], 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.

Ver. 34.—Howbeit I will not take the whole kingdom [Rawlinson says the context requires "aught of the kingdom," and affirms that the Hebrew will bear this rendering. But he surely forgets that the Hebrew has the def. art. הַמְּמַלְכָה "the kingdom," can only represent "all the kingdom, τὴν βασιλείαν ὅλην (LXX.) See Gesen., Thesau. s.v. מַלְכָּה. It would certainly seem as if this verse should speak of Solomon's retaining the sceptre during his lifetime, and not of his retaining a part of the empire. But we may not go against the grammar] 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. ["If Solomon break his covenant with God, God will not break his covenant with the father of Solomon" (Hall).]

Ver. 35.—But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand, and will give it unto thee, even ten tribes.

Ver. 36.—And unto his son will I give one tribe [cf. ver. 32, note], that David my servant may have a light always before me [The same expression is found in ch. xv. 4; 2 Kings viii. 19; 2 Chron. xxi. 7; and compare Psa. cxxxiii. 17. Keil would explain it by 2 Sam. xxi. 17; but 2 Sam. xiv. 7, "my coal which is left," appears to be a closer parallel. The idea is not that of a home (Rawlinson), but family, issue. We speak of the extinction of a family (Bähr) in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen me to put my name there.

Ver. 37.—And I will take thee, and thou shalt reign according to all that thy soul desireth [We are not justified in concluding from these words that Jeroboam then had ambitious designs upon the throne (Keil). They rather mean, "as king, all thy desires shall be gratified" (cf. Dent. xii. 20; xiv.

26; 1 Sam. ii. 16; 2 Sam. iii. 21). Bähr paraphrases "thou shalt have the dominion thou now strivest for," but we have absolutely no proof that Jeroboam at that time had ever meditated rebellion. It is quite possible that the idea was inspired by this interview], and shalt be king over Israel.

Ver. 38.—And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee [cf. ch. iii. 14; vi. 12; ix. 4], 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 [cf. ch. i. 37, note], and build thee a sure house [cf. 2 Sam. vii. 11, 16; i.e., a family, perhaps dynasty. Observe, however, there was no promise to Jeroboam, as there was to David, of an enduring kingdom. It was not God's design to take away the kingdom from David in perpetuity (ver. 39)], as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee.

Ver. 39.—And I will for this [i.e., the defection just described] afflict the seed of David, but not for ever [Heb. all the days. Cf. Psa. lxxxix. 28, 33, 36. This limitation, "not for ever," would seem to apply to the kingdom, for it was through the loss of their kingdom that the seed of David was afflicted. And if so, it promises, if not a restoration of the kingdom to the house of David, at any rate a renewal or continuance of God's favour. We may perhaps regard the promise as fulfilled in the subsequent history of the kings of Judah. Not only did the kingdom last for nearly 500 years, but the royal house of David maintained its position to the time of Zerubbabel. Nor is it to be overlooked that He "of whose kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke i. 33) was the son of David].

Ver. 40.—Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam. [It is often assumed that Solomon's attempt on Jeroboam's life was the result of the prophecy of Ahijah. And our translation with its "therefore" favours this view. The Heb., however, has simply "and Solomon sought," &c. And these words connect themselves with ver. 26, "even he lifted up his hand," &c. With ver. 27 a parenthesis begins, explaining how it came about that Jeroboam rebelled. It is implied distinctly that it was because of Ahijah's prophecy. That prophecy, however, was in no sense a justification of treason or attack on Jeroboam's part. The fact that God had revealed His purposes was no reason why Jeroboam should forestall them. David knew and others knew that he was destined to be king, but he piously left it for God, in His own time and way, to place him on the throne. And Jeroboam's rebellion is the more inexcusable, because

Ahijah had expressly stated that Solomon was to retain the kingdom during his lifetime. However, "he lifted up his hand;" there was some overt act of rebellion, and Solomon, because of this, and not because of the prophecy (of which, indeed, he may never have heard), sought to slay him. Nor was the king without justification in so doing. Treason must be promptly suppressed, and treason against a benefactor (see ver. 28) is doubly hateful.] And Jeroboam arose, and fled into Egypt [cf. verse 17, and Matt. ii. 13. It was the natural place of refuge], unto Shishak, king of Egypt [Shishak is beyond doubt the Shesbonk I. of the monuments, and is the first of the Pharaohs who can be identified with certainty (see Dict. Bib. iii. p. 1288). The date of his accession appears to be somewhere between 988 and 980 B.C. As to his invasion of Palestine, see on ch. xiv. 25. His reception of Jeroboam almost proves that there has been a change of dynasty, and that the new Pharaoh was no friend to Solomon], and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon. [Compare again Matt. ii. 15.]

Ver. 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? [The sources of this history are mentioned more specifically in 2 Chron. ix. 29.]

Ver. 42.—And the time [Heb. *days*] that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years. [Josephus, here as elsewhere, doubles the figure, making his reign to have lasted *eighty* years. It is somewhat remarkable, but affords no just ground for suspicion, that each of the first three kings of Israel should have reigned just forty years. "Such numerical coincidences occur in exact history. Saosduchinius, Chinildanus, and Nabopolassar, three consecutive kings of Babylon, reigned each twenty-one years" (Rawlinson).]

Ver. 43.—And Solomon slept with his fathers [see note on ch. ii. 10. For the later and often mythical accounts of Solomon, see Ewald, iii. pp. 318, 319. The question of his repentance is discussed by Keble, "Occasional Papers," pp. 416—434], and was buried in the city of David his father; and Rehoboam his son [So far as appears his only son. "Solomon hath but one son, and he no miracle of wisdom." "Many a poor man hath a houseful of children by one wife, whilst this great king hath but one son by any housefuls of wives" (Bp. Hall). It is worth remembering in this connection that Psa. cxvii., which speaks of children as God's reward (ver. 3), is with good reason ascribed to Solomon] reigned in his stead.

### HOMILETICS.

Vers. 81—85.—*The Punishment of Solomon's Sin.* We have lately traced the gradual declension in piety of this most puissant prince; we have seen him steadily sowing to the wind. The next thing Scripture records concerning him is the retribution which befel him. It is now for us to see him reaping to the whirlwind.

But in considering the recompenses of his sin, it is essential to remember—1. That we can only speak, because we only know, of the *temporal* punishment which attended him. It may be that was all. Possibly the flesh was destroyed that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord (1 Cor. vi. 5). It may be that, foully as he fell, he did not fall finally, but of this no man can be certain. There is every reason to think that the question has been "left in designed obscurity" (Keble, "Occasional Papers," pp. 392—434, where the subject is discussed at considerable length), that no one might presume. It may be, therefore, that he still awaits the just recompense of wrath in the day of wrath (Rom. ii. 5). 2. That if this temporal punishment does not strike us as severe—considering the enormity of his sin and the greatness of the gifts and privileges he had abused—it is partly because the temporal punishment was mitigated for his father's sake. The avenging hand could not smite Solomon without at the same time hurting David. We are expressly told that Solomon was maintained on the throne all his life, and that one tribe was given—the word implies that the gift was unmerited—to his son, for David's sake (vers. 84—86). If, therefore, we are tempted to think that the punishment was not exemplary, let us see in it an instance of God's "showing mercy unto thousands" (*sc.*, of generations, Exod. xx. 6)—a proof of the Infinite Love which "remembered David and all his afflictions" (Psa. cxxxiii. 1). But such as it was, it was sufficient to teach us these two lessons at least. 1. "Be sure your sin will find you out" (Num. xxxii. 23). 2. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. vi. 7).

For this retribution was of two kinds. There was—I. THAT WHICH SOLOMON SUFFERED IN HIS OWN PERSON; and, II. THAT WHICH HE SUFFERED IN HIS FAMILY AND KINGDOM. Under the first of these categories the following penalties are to be ranked:

1. *His life was shortened.* Probably by the operation of natural laws. It is not suggested that he was directly smitten of God; it is quite possible that his rank voluptuousness destroyed his energies and induced premature decay. But all the same his days were cut short. Not only was long life the principal sanction of the dispensation under which he lived, but it had been expressly promised him as the reward of piety (ch. iii. 14). But his sun went down while it was yet noon. He was not sixty when the mandate went forth, "Remove the diadem, and take off the crown" (Ezek. xxi. 26). And if it be true, what Dr. Johnson said to David Garrick when the latter showed him his elegant house at Richmond, that great and rare earthly possessions "make deathbeds miserable," it must have cost Solomon a sharp pang to leave so soon his cedar palace and his chryselephantine throne.

2. *His life was embittered.* If, as is most probable, we have in the book of Ecclesiastes a chapter of his autobiography, it is clear that his glory brought him little satisfaction (ch. iii. *passim*; v. 13; vi. 12; vii. 26); there was a worm at the root of all his pleasures. Of what avail were his houses, his gardens, his pools of water, &c., so long as he had not the heart to enjoy them?

"It is the mind that maketh good or ill,  
That maketh wretch'd or happy, rich or poor,  
For some, that hath abundance at his will,  
Hath not enough, but seeks a greater store."

He knew nothing of "the royalty of inward happiness." How different St. Paul, "Having nothing, yet possessing all things," &c. (2 Cor. vi. 10). What a commentary on the "confessions" of Solomon, as they have been called, with their everlasting refrain, their *vanitas vanitatum*, is that confession of a man who suffered one long martyrdom of pain—the Baptist minister, Robert Hall—"I enjoy everything."

3. *He was tortured by remorse.* This is not expressly stated, but surely it may with good reason be inferred. For the wisest of men could not be so insensate, when he heard the message of doom (ch. xii. 2), as not to reflect how different his end was to be from his beginning; how fair the flower, and how bitter the fruit. Surely the cry he has put into others' lips would often rise from his own, "How have I hated instruction," &c. (Prov. v. 12).

4. *He was haunted by forebodings.* "This great Babylon" which he had builded, how soon should it be destroyed. The empire which he had consolidated should barely last his life. "One tribe"—how those words would ring in his ears! Then he had good reason, too, to fear that his son was one of the class he had himself described (Prov. x. 1; xv. 20; xvii. 25; xix. 13. Cf. Eccles. ii. 19), and no match for Jeroboam, of whose designs upon the throne he cannot have been ignorant (1 Kings xi. 26, 27). He had the mortification of knowing that his "servant" would enter into his labours. And to the prospect of dissensions within, was added the certainty of disaffection without. Hadad and Rezon were already on his border, and were only biding their time. The political horizon was indeed black and lowering.

5. *He was harassed by adversaries.* For it is clear from verses 14, 23, 26, that Solomon's enemies were not content to wait for his death. Damascus was a thorn in his side. Egypt was a hotbed of intrigues. The profound peace which he once enjoyed he had lost. The clouds of war were not only gathering, but some of them had burst. His throne of ivory and gold can have been but an insecure and uncomfortable seat for some time before he vacated it.

II. But men like Solomon think of posterity and of posthumous fame as much as of themselves. If every father has "given hostages to fortune," how much more vulnerable is a king in the person of his successor. Let us now trace the calamities which befel Solomon's house and kingdom.

1. *In the infatuation of his son.* Was there ever a political crisis so woefully mismanaged as that which marked Rehoboam's accession? A few pacific words, a graceful concession, and all would have gone well. But his brutal *non possumus* precipitated his downfall. It was enough to make Solomon turn in his grave. But it is for us to remember that "his mother's name was Naamah, an Ammonitess" (ch. xiv. 21, 31). And this is the result of multiplying *wives*.

2. *In the dismemberment of his kingdom.* The vast empire which Solomon had founded with so much care and pains, how short a time sufficed to tear it asunder. What a contrast between the "one tribe" with its barren territory, and the description of ch. iv. 20, 21. How had he spent his strength for naught, or rather for his slave Jeroboam, who inherited all the fairest and wealthiest portions of the realm. And this was the end of his land-hunger—that he was left with the desert of Judah.

3. *In the invasion of Shishak.* For he had not long slept with his fathers when the vast treasures which he had lavished on the palace of the Lord and his own palaces were carried away to Egypt. All the precious metals which David had accumulated, all the acquisitions of Solomon's fleets, all the royal offerings of the queen of Sheba and of tributary kings—gone to the sons of the stranger, to the swart children of Ham. He had amassed prodigious wealth, but it was for aliens and enemies. Not only the shields and drinking vessels, but the candlesticks, bowls, and the very *laminae* which had glorified the sanctuary, all fell to the invader. What a case of *Sic vos non vobis*! What would Solomon have said could he have foreseen Rehoboam's "Brummagem" shields, and the punctilious ceremony with which they were paraded and preserved? And this was the end of multiplying *silver and gold* to himself. He had put it all into a bag with holes (Haggai i. 6).

4. *In the demoralization of his people.* For the idolatries of Judah, the images, the groves, the Sodomites (ch. xiv. 23), were but the continuation and development of the idolatries which Solomon had inaugurated. His son did but reap the crop which himself had sown. Nay, so exact is the *lex talionis* that we presently find a queen of Judah erecting a "horror" for the most shameful of rites (see note on ch. xv. 13). And this was the result of building altars for his queens and princesses "on the hill that is before Jerusalem," that within a few years the Lord's people, whose was the law and the temple, &c., built them high places, &c., "on every high hill and under every green tree" (ch. xiv. 23).

5. *In the captivity of the nation.* For the dispersion and enslavement of the Jewish people, though only consummated some four centuries later, and though it was the retribution of a long series of sins, was nevertheless, in a sense, the result of Solomon's sin. That is to say, his sin was (as ch. ix. vers. 6, 7 show) the first beginning of that ever-deepening apostasy from the Lord, of which the captivity was, from the first, denounced as the punishment. Other princes no doubt followed in his steps and filled up the measure of iniquity, but the *Grand Monarque* of their race had first showed them the way. And so the people who had held sway even to the Euphrates were carried beyond the Euphrates, and those who had seen subject kings in their land became subjects in a foreign land (cf. Jer. v. 19). How full of instruction and warning is it that the captivity which Solomon foretold (ch. viii. 46) he should have done so much to precipitate. He predicted, *i.e.*, both his own and his nation's downfall.

6. But the *multiplication of horses*, that too, like the other sins, seems to have brought its own peculiar *Nemesis*. For whence, let us ask, came the army that pillaged Jerusalem, and carried off the treasures of the temple? It came in the footprints of the horses. First, the invasion of Solomon, and then the invasion of Shishak, "with twelve hundred chariots and *threescore thousand horsemen*" (2 Chron. xii. 3). And what came of the horses supplied to the Tyrians and Hittites? See ch. xx. 1 ("horses and chariots;" cf. ver. 25); ch. xxii. 31; 2 Kings vi. 15; vii. 8, &c. It is extremely probable that the cavalry he supplied to foreign kings became an instrument in their hands to scourge his own people. Nor is it wholly unworthy of notice that the murderer Zimri was "captain of *half the chariots*" (ch. xvi. 9). Assuredly, that unhalloed trade did not go unpunished.

Such, then, is the principal moral of this history: "Their sorrows shall be mul-

tiplied that hasten after another god" (Psa. xvi. 4). And among the additional lessons which this subject teaches are these: (1) That where much is given, much will be required; (2) That judgment begins at the house of God; (3) "He that knew his lord's will and did it not shall be beaten with many stripes;" (4) "Every transgression and disobedience shall receive its just recompense of reward;" (5) "If God spared not the natural branches," &c.

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 14—25.—*Premonitions of Wrath.* Though the full weight of the judgment of God upon the sin of Solomon was not to come upon him in his lifetime, yet did he not, in this world, go altogether without punishment. The foreknowledge of the evils to come upon his family and people was in itself a heavy affliction. But in addition to this, the evening of his days was doomed to be disturbed. To this end—

I. GOD STIRRED UP ADVERSARIES AGAINST HIM. 1. *In themselves these were inconsiderable.* (1) Hadad the Edomite! What can he do? He is indeed of the seed royal of Edom, but then Edom is tributary to Solomon, and Hadad is an exile in Egypt. (2) Rezon the Syrian! What can he do? He was only a captain under Hadadezer, king of Zobah, whom David defeated, and who fled with his men, over whom he seems to have acted as a chief of banditti. 2. *But they have been quietly acquiring influence.* (1) Hadad, who was a lad when he fled from David, has now attained to man's estate; is in high favour with Pharaoh, and has become brother-in-law to the monarch of the Nile. (2) Rezon also, taking advantage of the apathy of Solomon, who is too much engaged in the seraglio to pay close attention to the affairs of his distant provinces, is already in Damascus and on the throne of Syria. 3. *With God behind them they are now formidable.* (1) The fly is a feeble creature, but let God send it forth as a plague, and Egypt is in agony. So Hadad, again amongst his Edomites, is by a competent Providence enabled to work "mischief" even to Solomon! (2) Rezon also is in a position to gratify his abhorrence of Israel "all the days of Solomon," or to the end of those days. (3) Let us see the hand of God in all the events of life. Let the discernment of symptoms of His displeasure lead us to repentance and reformation. Let us never despise the day of small things, for the great hand of God may be in it. It is difficult to distinguish the trifling from the momentous.

II. HE STIRRED UP THOSE ADVERSARIES BY MEANS. 1. *They were reminded of the sufferings of their people.* (1) When David conquered Edom there was a fearful carnage. For six months Joab was engaged in cutting off all the males, until, no natives surviving, Israel had to bury the slain (vers. 15, 16). This slaughter was sufficiently dreadful, though it may only have extended to those old enough to bear arms. Hadad was not an infant then, but (נַרְצָא) a little boy—of sufficient age to see what was going on and make his escape with the servants. Rezon was of an age and in a position to estimate the miseries which the Syrians suffered when "David slew" them, which sufficiently accounts for the manner in which he "abhorred Israel." Wars are the cradles of resentments. (2) These terrible massacres have their justification in the sins of the people who suffered them. In executing the wrath of God upon Edom, David fulfilled the famous prophecy of Balaam (see Num. xxiv. 17—19). But in this David was the type of Christ, the true Star of Jacob and Prince of Israel, whose anger will sweep His enemies to extermination. 2. *They were persuaded that the opportunity was ripe for revenge.* (1) They heard that the warriors were dead (ver. 21). They were no longer paralyzed by the sound of the once terrible names of David and Joab. (2) As for Solomon, he never was a warrior. And now he is stupefied by idolatry, and enervated in the harem. (3) Consequently they put on a bold front, and from different points harassed and distracted Solomon, apparently with impunity. For the king of Israel knew that God was angry, and "conscience makes cowards of us all."

Who can afford to have God for his enemy? Solomon could not afford it. Can we? Who would not make peace with such an antagonist? He proposes His own terms. Why do we not repent and believe the gospel?—M.

Vers. 26—28.—*Jeroboam*. The words before us are interesting as the earliest notice of a character who made a considerable figure in Hebrew history. They bring before us—

I. THE OBSCURITY OF HIS ORIGIN. 1. He was an *Ephrathite of Zereda*. (1) The tribe of Ephraim was not obscure; on the contrary, it was next in importance to Judah. But that importance was collective—arose from the multitude of its people. An individual Ephrathite would rather be lost in the multitude. (2) As to Zereda, so little was this place among the thousands of Ephraim that it is mentioned only here, and would have been forgotten but for Jeroboam. Note: Places derive notoriety from men. Men are greater than places. 2. He was the *son of Nebat and Zeruah*. (1) Of these persons we should not have heard but for the part their son played in history. How much of our reputation is adventitious! Unenviable is the notoriety gained through relationship with the devil. How truly glorious is that man who rejoices in the imputed righteousness of Christ! (2) Yet Nebat and Zeruah founded the reputation of Jeroboam. They had the moulding of the child which became the father of the man. This is the true reason for the association of their names with his. (3) In this view there is something judicial in this association of the names of parents and child. Their influence, though obscure, was sure, and now finds expression. What an expression will there be of obscure influences when the momentous resultants come out in the disclosures of the great judgment! 3. He was the *son of a widow*. (1) Why is this noted, but to suggest that through the death of Nebat the responsibilities of the home at Zereda early devolved upon Jeroboam? Thus, those executive powers which brought him under the notice of Solomon had early scope. How little we know of the purposes of Providence in the bereavements and afflictions of families! (2) Private afflictions are suffered for public uses. In suffering, let us not murmur, but listen to the voice of God, and pray that the dispensation may be sanctified.

II. HIS ADVANCEMENT TO POWER. 1. He became a *mighty man of valour*. (1) This fact is recorded, but not the stages by which he became so known. Many a struggle occurred which had no other record than in this resultant. The value of circumstances is expressed in resultants. Let us attempt to weave all the circumstances of our lives into a character of goodness that will endure for ever. (2) Jeroboam had an energetic spirit and probably a robust physique. These he inherited. Neither for genius nor good constitutions are we indebted to ourselves. We owe much to our ancestors. (3) But he cultivated his natural parts. Many are richly endowed by nature, but waste their endowments as an idle spendthrift wastes an inheritance. Our very faculties may become obliterated by disuse (Matt. xxv. 28). 2. *His abilities were discerned by Solomon*. (1) This is noted to have occurred in connection with the building of Millo, and the closing of, or to close, the breaches in the city of David (ver. 27). Possibly Jeroboam distinguished himself against Jebusites, or some other malcontents, or in closing those breaches in the face of the enemy. (2) Possibly the industry that attracted the notice of Solomon may have been simply in superintendence of improvements in the buildings at Millo and the fortifications. Providence finds opportunities for those who are ready to enter the opening door (Prov. xxii. 29). 3. *He was promoted to the charge over the house of Joseph*. (1) From an individual once lost in the multitude of this great house, he is now conspicuous before the multitude. His being an Ephrathite is now of importance to him. Let us never quarrel with circumstances, for we never know what may prove of service. (2) Being found diligent in a minor charge he is promoted to a major responsibility. So does God deal with His people (Matt. xiii. 12; xxv. 29). What is worth doing is worth doing well. 4. *Now he lifts his hand against his patron*. (1) Prosperity brings out the character. He is moved by ambition. Much would have more. He aspires to a throne. His success had encouraged this desire before he met Ahijah (see ver. 37). (2) He rebels against the author of his prosperity. Ambition smothers gratitude. How human! Is not this the case with all rebels against God? (3) How plainly we can see baseness when manifested by man toward his fellow; but how slow we are to see this when ingratitude is toward God!

The obscurity of our origin is no bar to our advancement in the religious service of God. "Not many noble are called."—M.

Vers. 29—39.—*The Message of Ahijah.* As Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem with his commission from Solomon to rule as his lieutenant over the house of Joseph, meditating how he might use his fortune to construct a throne, he was met by Ahijah the Shilonite, who accosted him in a manner agreeable to his ambition. In the message of Ahijah we have—

I. A PROPHECY. 1. This was expressed in *sign*. (1) The Shilonite provided himself with a new garment. This was intended to symbolize the kingdom. The same sign had been similarly used before (see 1 Sam. xv. 27; xxiv. 5). Note: His people are the honourable clothing of a prince (see Prov. xiv. 28). (2) The garment was new. The kingdom of Israel was as yet young. Solomon was but the third monarch in succession. The garment was whole. So was the kingdom, as yet, unbroken. Note: The robe of Christ was seamless and woven throughout, which suggests the perfect unity which will appear in the subjects of His heavenly kingdom. Note further: That in His transfiguration, which symbolized His kingdom (see Matt. xvi. 28; xvii. 1), His raiment shined "as no fuller on earth could white it," suggesting the purity and glory in which the subjects of that kingdom are to shine (Matt. xiii. 43). (3) But the robe in the hands of the prophet, the messenger and representative of God, is now rent into twelve pieces, according to the number of tribes composing the kingdom, ten of which were given into the hand of Jeroboam. Note: God disposes. In its militant state the kingdom of Christ is subject to revolutions, but not so in its triumphant and heavenly state. 2. The prophecy also is expressed in *words* (vers. 31—39). (1) Thus the testimony is twofold. It appeals to the eye, also to the ear. (2) History verified the predictions to the letter. What a testimony to the truth of God is the harmony and correspondence of prophecy and history!

II. ITS REASONS. These are expressed and implied. 1. *The sin of Solomon is specified* (vers. 31, 33). (1) Solomon forsook the Lord. God never forsakes us unless we first forsake Him. Let us be admonished. (2) He worshipped idols. Ashtoreth, the impure Venus of the Zidonians; Chemosh, the abomination of the Moabites; and Milcom, or Molech, the devil of the Ammonites, are put into competition with the God of Israel! Whoever is so foolish as to forsake God will surely become the dupe of devils. (3) We notice the plural pronoun, "*they have forsaken Me,*" &c. Not Solomon and his wives, for these heathen women had never known God; but Solomon and the Israelites drawn away by his influence and example. Men seldom sin alone. Accomplices are involved with their leaders in a common retribution. (4) He forgot the good example of his father David. This is mentioned to his discredit. We are accountable to God for our advantages. For godly parents, godly ministers, opportunities. 2. *The piety of David is remembered.* (1) It is remembered in the mind of God. Let sincere Christians who are apt to be discouraged at their failures take comfort from the fact that God is more willing to remember our good endeavours than our failures. David in glory would know the blessedness of this. (2) It is remembered to the advantage of his offspring on the earth. The temporal judgments upon Solomon's sins were mitigated in consequence of David's piety. Would not David, in glory, have satisfaction in this? 3. *The Scriptures must be fulfilled.* (1) David was to have a light always before God in Jerusalem (Psa. cxxxiii. 16, 17). The family of David must be preserved until Messiah comes to be the Light of the Gentiles. (2) As David was a type of Christ, so was Jerusalem, with its temple and shekinah, a type of His Church. Of this Church, Christ is the everlasting Light (see Isa. xxiv. 23; lx. 19, 20; Rev. xxi. 23). 4. *No mention is made of any goodness in Jeroboam.* (1) This omission is significant. It suggests that the Ephrathite was used only as the instrument of Providence for the punishment of sinners; and for this service had the reward of his ambition. Therefore the success of our desires in this world is no certain proof either of our goodness or of God's favour. (2) But in respect to his service God gave Jeroboam a glorious opportunity by goodness to make himself great like

David (see ver. 38). What opportunities does God graciously vouchsafe to us? Let us utilize them to the best possible account.—M.

Vers. 40—43.—*Solomon's End.* There is peculiar interest attaching to the earlier and later days of men who have made a figure in history. Here we have the brief record of the end of a character famed for wisdom above all mere men, upon which we have sadly to meditate that—

I. HE SANK UNDER A DENSE CLOUD. 1. *His morning was very bright.* (1) From his youth he was beloved of God. In token of this he received from God the name Jedidiah (2 Sam. xii. 24, 25). Could any distinction be more glorious? Let the young among us aspire to this distinction. (2) When he came to the throne this name was changed to Solomon, the *Peaceable*. The wars of his father David were everywhere so triumphant, that no adversary now appeared (ch. v. 4). The love of God brings peace. (3) He was zealous and faithful in building the temple of the Lord, which he devoted to God in a noble dedicatory prayer, and had an answer in the descent of the holy fire upon the sacrifices, and in the Shekinah taking possession of the house. Those who are beloved of God and rejoice in His peace are fit agents for the building of the spiritual temple of the Lord. (4) He was blessed by God with extraordinary wisdom, not only in the arts of government, but also in various walks of learning (1 Kings iii. 8—10; iv. 33). The profoundest philosophers have been godly men. The boast of sceptics to the contrary is not sustained by fact. (5) He was inspired by God to contribute books to the sacred Scriptures. The Chaldaisms which occur in the Ecclesiastes are not sufficient to wrest the authorship of that book from Solomon, to whom the Jews have ever ascribed it; for these it may have acquired in passing through the hands of Ezra. 2. *But his evening was very black.* (1) His reign extended over forty years, and a considerable portion of that period he was under bad influences. Pharaoh's daughter is thought to have been a proselyte to Judaism, but of this there is no proof. (2) This foreign marriage was followed by about seven hundred more. These were distinguished as princesses (ver. 3). Not that they were daughters of kings, but wives of Solomon, of the second order, Pharaoh's daughter being queen. Beside these were the three hundred concubines. Such a harem, in its number alone, was a plain violation of the law (Deut. xvii. 17). But he was still further guilty in making alliances with *heathen* women (Exod. xxxiv. 16; Deut. vii. 3, 4). (3) The very evils predicted happened to Solomon, through these he was drawn into the grossest idolatry (vers. 5—8). (4) The last act recorded of him was that of seeking to kill Jeroboam, who to avoid his resentment took refuge with Shishak, king of Egypt. Shishak was brother-in-law to Hadad, the Edomite adversary of Solomon, but not the father of Solomon's wife, as some have supposed. If, as the narrative suggests, this design upon the life of Jeroboam was in consequence of his knowledge of the prophecy of Ahijah, it was an evidence of extreme wickedness, for it was fighting against God. It was the very sin of Saul against his father David. And in this purpose he seems to have persisted to his death; for Jeroboam remained in Egypt until that event. How fearful are the evils of apostasy! How admonitory!

II. BUT IS THERE NO SUNSHINE IN THE CLOUD? Some think they see it—1. *In the promise of God to David.* (1) The promise referred to is recorded 2 Sam. vii. 12—17. But was not Solomon, who was chastened with the rod of men by Hadad, Rezon, and Jeroboam, the subject of the mercy of God, in that his family was continued in the throne of Judah? In this he was distinguished from Saul, whose succession was cut off. (2) Unless this answer can be shown to be insufficient, the Calvinistic argument based upon this text for the infallible final perseverance of the saints is simply a begging of the question. 2. *In the Divine approval of the reign of Solomon.* (1) The passage relied upon in this statement is 2 Chron. xi. 17. But when the commencement of the rule of Rehoboam in Judah, for three years, is commended as according to the example of David and Solomon, the allusion, as far as Solomon is concerned at least, was to the manner in which he commenced his reign. (2) This is sufficient for the consistency of the text. To make it prove more would make it prove too much by committing God to the approval of what He has

elsewhere explicitly condemned. (3) Rehoboam, who as king of Judah, like his father Solomon, began his reign well, fell into the snare of Solomon in multiplying wives (see 2 Chron. xi. 21). 3. *In his authorship of the Ecclesiastes.* (1) The argument is that upon the message of God, by Ahijah, as is supposed (vers. 9—13), Solomon repented, and afterwards wrote this book, in which he confesses the vanity of his past life. (2) But the theory of his repentance upon that occasion ill consorts with the history of his seeking the life of Jeroboam, because he was destined to give effect to the burden of that message. True repentance will bear meet fruit (Matt. iii. 8). (3) The Ecclesiastes was more probably written before than after the apostasy of Solomon. The allusions to his experiences as “king over Israel in Jerusalem” may have been prophetic anticipations, which may explain the past tense, “*was king,*” which is agreeable to the prophetic style. When all has been said that can be alleged to encourage hope in Solomon’s end, the doubt is grave enough to instruct us that we must not presume upon God’s mercy, and sin. Let us rather hope in His mercy, repent, and sin no more. Praise God for the Great Atonement!—M.

Vers. 14—25.—*The Divine Chastisements.* I. CHASTISEMENT IS MERCY. Though the judgment was kept back, Solomon was meanwhile made to feel the rod of correction. We may be forgiven and yet chastised—yea, chastised because we are forgiven. “Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth,” &c. This, too, was mercy, for—1. *It was fitted to lead him to seek God in truth.* It is easier to feel and confess our folly and sin in adversity than when all is well with us, 2. *It revealed to him the kind of harvest he had prepared for his child.* He was now reaping the fruits of his father’s fierce vengeance (see ver. 15). The story recorded on the page of Scripture was then on Israel’s lips and in Solomon’s thoughts. When God visits for sin, the iniquity of the past is remembered. Sins are seeds that produce harvests of trouble for those who come after us; and Solomon’s reaping the fruit of his father’s deeds must have set before him the legacy of judgment he was bequeathing to his own son. And yet Solomon does not seem to have been benefited. Are we reading the lessons of our chastisements?

II. OUR ENEMIES ARE GOD’S INSTRUMENTS. 1. *When they assail us it is of Him.* The Lord stirred them up. They had been adversaries before, but they had hitherto been powerless to harm Israel (see ver. 4). But now in Solomon’s fall the day of their opportunity came. Our foes are held as in a leash by God. Without His permission they can attempt nothing: when they are loosed it is of Him. They serve Him and in the truest sense serve us. In the midst of evil deeds and evil speech let us look past all to Him. 2. *God’s restraining hand is still upon them.* Though Hadad and Rezon attempted more, they were not permitted to succeed. So far as they may serve us they are allowed to go, but no further.—U.

Vers. 26—43.—*The call to Jeroboam.* I. THE UNWEARIED EFFORTS OF GOD TO WIN MEN FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS. This is the beginning of the story of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. 1. *He is met by mercy.* The widow’s son is made king of Israel. 2. *By counsel and promise* (ver. 35). The seed is cast upon the stony ground and among the thorns, as well as upon the good soil. Learn—1. That, like the great husbandman, we should sow the seed of the kingdom everywhere; though men may not hear, God is served and glorified in that offered mercy. 2. It is no proof that all is well with us, that we have been the recipients of God’s goodness, or that His Word has touched and searched our heart: is there any fruit?

II. THE SPIRIT REQUIRED IN ORDER TO REAP LASTING BENEFIT FROM OTHERS’ DISTRESSES. 1. *Sympathy with them in their suffering.* The judgment which is to fall upon Solomon and Israel is laid upon Jeroboam’s heart. He went out clothed with a new garment, he returned with a handful of fragments, the symbol of the new kingdom and the effect of God’s judgment. We cannot rightly enter into blessing springing from another’s loss if we pass in with a light heart. 2. *Recognition of them as still objects of Divine mercy* (vers. 34, 36). The house of David was not

to be utterly cast out. The love that smiles on us is still round them. 3. *Recognition that the gift we receive is from the hand of the same Master.* Blessing and judgment hang for him upon the same issues (vers. 33, 39). Only in lowliness and brotherliness can we rightly receive the gifts God sends us.

III. THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF THWARTING THE DIVINE PURPOSE (ver. 40). 1 *Solomon's attempt to remove the danger by slaying Jeroboam is defeated.* His life is guarded till his work is done. 2. *It only serves the Divine purpose.* Jeroboam's enmity is secured. He is sent down to Egypt and strengthened by alliance with a power unfriendly to Israel. Fighting against God, we only bind our cords the more firmly, we kick against the pricks. To humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God will bring us into the light of mercy: to contend with Him is destruction.—U.

Ver. 28.—*The Successful Man.* Among the "adversaries" of Solomon, Jeroboam was the most active. He raised sedition, or, in the words of Scripture, "lifted up his hand," against the king. He was of humble birth, but belonged to the most powerful tribe—Ephraim. His rise is described here. The fortifications of Millo underneath the citadel of Zion were being erected. Amongst those employed Jeroboam was noticed by the king as strong, skilful, and industrious. Ever on the outlook for talent, and with wisdom to discern it, Solomon made him superintendent of the tribute required in money and service of the tribe of Ephraim; a place of trust and profit. Jeroboam is a good example of **WORLDLY SUCCESS**, the subject for our consideration.

I. THE ELEMENTS OF WORLDLY SUCCESS. 1. *Natural ability.* This belonged to the son of Nebat in large measure, as his subsequent history shows. Shrewdness, courage, self-reliance were his. These, and similar gifts, are unevenly distributed amongst men. Children at school are by no means equal in powers of attainment. In business, one man will make a fortune where another would not suspect a chance. Amongst the advantages of such inequality are these: that the higher and lower grades of work required by the world are alike done; and that room is given for the exercise of generosity, self-conquest, &c., in our social relations.

2. *Personal diligence.* With all Jeroboam's faults he was not idle. He did thoroughly and well what came to hand. This is the secret of success, both in student and business life. It rectifies the balance sometimes between men of unequal ability. The tortoise wins the race against the hare. The student conquers the genius. Where it is added to ability, success in life is certain. "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings: he shall not stand before mean men" (Prov. xxii. 29). "The hand of the diligent shall bear rule" (Prov. xii. 24). Examples: Abraham's servant; Joseph in Egypt, &c. Show how this is true in the higher sphere of the Christian life. "To him that hath to him shall be given," &c. He that is faithful with few things will become ruler over many.

3. *Kindly interest.* "Solomon saw the young man." This added an element of uncertainty to his prospects. It seemed a chance, but was under the rule of God, as the history shows. Diligence and fidelity should be ours, whether or no we have the notice of the earthly master, for the unseen King is ever watching us. We are to work with singleness of heart, as unto the Lord; to serve others "not with eye service as men pleasers," &c. Show the responsibility which rests on employers to develop, and encourage, and put to the best use the gifts of their *employés*. Promotion should follow merit.

II. THE POSSIBILITIES OF WORLDLY SUCCESS. 1. *It is possible to defend others.* Jeroboam was known in future times of danger as the man who "enclosed the city of David." Higher possibilities than that belong to successful men. How they can guard those employed by them from disease, from moral contamination, from ignorance, &c. The responsibilities of landowners, manufacturers, &c.

2. *It is possible to lighten the burdens of others.* As ruler over the tribute, Jeroboam could alleviate or aggravate the burdens of the tribe. Point out what could be done by far-seeing, right-hearted statesmen to lessen the troubles of the poor, the miseries of subject races, the burdens of taxation, &c.

3. *It is possible to become ready for loftier rule.* He who was the overseer of

one tribe became the king of Israel. The discharge of the duties of the former office made those of the latter less arduous. Apply this to the preparation of men for the nobler rule of heaven, by the exercise of powers for God in the earthly sphere.

III. THE PERILS OF WORLDLY SUCCESS. 1. *Ingratitude.* Jeroboam fostered ill-feeling against Solomon in Ephraim till he was expelled the kingdom. Men often kick away the ladder by which they rose to fortune. Give examples. The wish to forget the past in which they wanted help, and to attribute to their own skill what came from the kindness of others, tempts to this. Even poor parents have been left uncared for by prosperous children.

2. *Impatience.* Jeroboam was to have the kingdom, as Ahijah told him, but he could not wait for Solomon's death. His first exaltation and the words of the prophet aroused greed and ambition which would not be stayed. A man who has known nothing but success is more impatient than are others at a disappointment or difficulty. It is harder for him than for one trained in the school of adversity to say, "Not my will, but Thine be done." His is seldom the "meek and quiet spirit" which is, in the sight of God, of great price.

3. *Rebellion against God.* He heard from Ahijah's lips these words of God about Solomon—"I will make him prince all the days of his life;" yet during his life Jeroboam tried to dethrone him. Compare this conduct with that of David towards Saul. The contrast is the more remarkable because of the provocation David received, and because the son of Jesse, unlike the son of Nebat, had been actually anointed king. He had no right to seize what God had promised to give. Jacob learnt this lesson in the house of Laban. In this disregard, or defiance, of God was the germ of Jeroboam's ruin. His rule was (like Solomon's) conditional on obedience to the Divine will (compare ver. 38 with: ix. 4—6). Stability depends on God; the seen on the unseen. No cleverness, no diligence, no human help can bring lasting prosperity to a soul, or to a nation, which forsakes righteousness and forgets God.—A. R.

Vers. 29—36; chs. xiv. 21—81; xvi. 1, 2, 25, 26.—*The judgments of God on Judah and Israel from the death of Solomon to the time of Ahab.* The separation of the people of God into two kingdoms was a punishment for the idolatry of Solomon; but from this punishment God brought forth good, for it was well that the pride of the Jews should not be fostered by unmixed prosperity. It would have formed a far stronger barrier to the gospel in after times if it had not been thus early broken.

After the separation of the two kingdoms, idolatry more or less gross prevailed in both, with brief intervals of return to the worship of the true God. This fearful moral declension is traceable to a great extent to the fall of Solomon. Sin is thus always the parent of after evil. He who rebels against God leaves behind him the influence of his example, and gives fresh force to the current of evil. God made both kingdoms feel, during this period, repeated strokes of His chastising hand. Their history is a history of tears and blood. Every fresh sin, the bitter outgrowth of former transgressions, becomes a source of new calamities. The hard Asiatic tyranny of Rehoboam leads to the rending of the kingdom. The erection of a half-pagan sanctuary entails upon Jeroboam and his race the catastrophes which issue in their ruin.

The history of the Jews during this period, therefore, presents the aspect of one long judgment of God, in which sin brings forth death and thus becomes its own punishment (James i. 15). This is true also in the history of individuals; and we have in this fact one of the strongest evidences that we are under the government of a holy God. Let us never forget that His holiness is at the same time love, and that through all the dark and sorrowful vicissitudes of our life He is carrying out His plan of mercy. In spite of all its falls, its wanderings, and its woes, Israel did fulfil its preparatory mission. If in the end the theocracy tottered to its fall, this failure also entered into the conditions of the Divine plan. Israel was never treated by God, however, as a mere passive instrument. God gave it repeated warnings, as, for example, by the mouth of the unknown prophet who was sent to Jeroboam to declare to him the judgments of God (ch. xiii.)—E. de P.

## EXPOSITION.

## CHAPTER XII. 1—24.

**THE REVOLT OF THE TEN TRIBES.**—With the reign of Rehoboam, on which our historian now enters, we begin the second great period in the history of the Hebrew monarchy, so far as it is related in these Books of Kings. The first, which comprises the Augustan age of Israel, the short-lived maturity of the race in the reign of Solomon, has extended over forty years, from B.C. 1015 to B.C. 975. The second, which is the period of the existence of the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah side by side—that is to say, from the disruption to the carrying away of Israel into captivity—extends over two centuries and a half, viz., from B.C. 975 to B.C. 722, and is, with few exceptions, a period of steady and shameful decline.

And in giving his account of the division of the kingdom, our historian, *more suo*, confines himself to the recital of actual facts, and hardly speaks of their hidden causes. Yet the sixteenth verse of this chapter reveals to us very clearly one of the secret springs of the dissatisfaction which existed at the date of Rehoboam's accession, one of the influences which ultimately led to the disruption of Israel. Jealousy on the part of Ephraim of the powerful tribe of Judah had undoubtedly something to do with the revolution of which we now read. The discontent occasioned by Solomon's levies and the headstrong folly of Rehoboam were the immediate causes, but influences much deeper and of longer standing were also at work. The tribe of Ephraim had clearly never thoroughly acquiesced in the superiority which its rival, the tribe of Judah, by furnishing to the nation its sovereigns, its seat of government, and its sanctuary, had attained. During the two former reigns the envy of Ephraim had been held in check, but it was there, and it only needed an occasion, such as Rehoboam afforded it, to blaze forth. That proud tribe could not forget the glowing words in which both Jacob (Gen. xlix. 22—26, "the strength of my head") and Moses (Deut. xxxiii. 13—17)

had foretold their future eminence. They remembered, too, that their position—in the very centre of the land—was also the richest in all natural advantages. Compared with their picturesque and fertile possessions, the territory of Judah was as a stony wilderness. And for a long time they had enjoyed a certain superiority in the nation. In the time of Joshua we find them fully conscious of their strength and numbers (Josh. xvii. 14), and the leader himself admits their power (ver. 17). When the tabernacle was first set up, it was at Shiloh, in the territory of Ephraim (Josh. xviii. 1), and there the ark remained for more than three hundred years. And the pre-eminence of Ephraim amongst the northern tribes is curiously evidenced by the way in which it twice resented (Judg. viii. 1; xii. 1) campaigns undertaken without its sanction and co-operation. It and its sister tribe of Manasseh had furnished, down to the time of David, the leaders and commanders of the people—Joshua, Deborah, Gideon, Abimelech, and Samuel—and when the kingdom was established it was from the allied tribe of Benjamin that the first monarch was selected. "It was natural that, with such an inheritance of glory, Ephraim always chafed under any rival supremacy" (Stanley, "Jew. Ch." ii. p. 272). It was natural, too, that for seven years it should refuse allegiance to a prince of the rival house of Judah. Even when, at the end of that time, the elders of Israel recognized David as "king over Israel" (2 Sam. v. 3), the fires of jealousy, as the revolt of Sheba and the curses of Shimei alike show, were not wholly extinguished. And the transference of the sanctuary, as well as the *sceptre*, to Judah—for Jerusalem, whilst mainly in the territory of Benjamin, was also on the border of Judah—would occasion fresh heart-burnings. It has been supposed by some that Psa. lxxviii. was penned as a warning to Ephraim against rebellion, and to reconcile them to their loss of place and power; that, if so, it was not effectual, and that the jealousy endured at a much later date Isaiah xi. 13 shows. There had prob-

ably been an attempt on the part of Jeroboam the *Ephraimite* to stir up his and the neighbouring tribes against the ascendancy of Judah in the person of Solomon. That first attempt proved abortive. But now that their magnificent king was dead, now that the reins of government were held by his weak and foolish son, the men of Ephraim resolved, unless they could wrest from him very great concessions, to brook the rule of Judah no longer and to have a king of their own house. (The reader will find a very suggestive chapter on this subject in Prof. Blunt's "Undesigned Coincidences," pp. 162—174.)

Ver. 1.—And Rehoboam [see on ch. xi. 26, and compare the name *Ἐρῴδημος*. The name possibly indicates Solomon's ambitious hopes respecting him. The irony of history alone emphasizes it. *Eccles. ii. 18, 19* would seem to show that Solomon himself had misgivings as to his son's abilities. "As the greatest persons cannot give themselves children, so the wisest cannot give their children wisdom" (Hall). His mother was Naamah, an Ammonitess (ch. xiv. 31). It would appear from ch. xiv. 21, and 2 Chron. xii. 13, that he was 41 years of age at his accession. But this is, to say the least, doubtful. For (1) he is described in 2 Chron. xiii. 7 as being "young (*ἄνωγος*) and tender-hearted." (2) The LXX. addition to 1 Kings xii. 24 says he was *sixteen*; *ὄχις ὃν ἑκαδέκα ἔτων ἐν τῷ βασιλεύειν αὐτὸν*. (3) It is hardly probable that Solomon, who was himself "young and tender" at his father's death, should then have had a son a year old. (4) Rehoboam's counsellors, who had "grown up with him," and were therefore of the same age as himself, are called "lads" (*ἄνωγοι*, LXX. *παῖδαρια*). To these reasons Rawlinson adds a fifth, viz., "that it is hardly likely that David would have permitted his son to marry an Ammonitess, which of course he must have done, if Rehoboam was born in his lifetime. But it should be remembered that David had himself married a foreign princess, Maachah, daughter of Talmi, king of Gesbur (1 Chron. iii. 2). There is greater force in the remark that Solomon's marriages with Ammonite and Moabite women belong apparently to a later period of his life (ch. xi. 1). Altogether the evidence seems to point to a corruption of the text of ch. xiv. 21, &c., and it has been suggested that "forty-one" is there an error of transcription for "twenty-one," a mistake easily

made, if, as is extremely probable, the ancient Hebrews, like the later, used the letters of the alphabet as numerals. Twenty-one would then be *NS*; forty-one *NSL*] went to [This journey was probably made soon after a prior coronation at Jerusalem. According to the LXX. addition, it was at least a year after his accession] Shechem [An old gathering place of the northern tribes (*Josh. xxiv. 1*). Its position, in the very centre of Palestine, fitted it for this purpose. ("Shechem may be considered the natural capital of Palestine," Conder, p. 16.) But it was perhaps primarily selected because it was the capital of Ephraim, not because it was a "national sanctuary of Israel" (Wordsworth), a title to which it has but little claim. It had once before furnished Ephraim with a king (*Judg. ix. 2*). We learn from *Joshua xx. 7* that it was "in Mount Ephraim;" from *Judges ix. 7* that it was under Mount Gerizim. To its position the place was, no doubt, indebted for its name. It is often said to be doubtful whether the place was named after Shechem, the son of Hamor (*Gen. xxxiii. 18*), or whether this prince took his name from the place. The latter is, no doubt, the correct view. For *Shechem* means strictly, not, as it is often translated, the "shoulder," but *dorsi pars superior*, or perhaps the space between the shoulder-blades (as is proved by *Job xxxi. 22*, "Let my shoulder fall," *כַּמְשֵׁךְ*). Hence the word is found only in the singular (see Gesen., *Theo. iii. p. 1407*). Now any one who has seen the vale of Shechem (*Nablús*) will hardly doubt that its name is due to its resemblance to this part of the body (compare "Ezion-geber," ch. ix. 26). The town lies in a valley between the two ridges of Ebal and Gerizim; cf. *Jos., Ant. iv. 8. 44*. "The feet of these mountains where they rise from the town [to the height of 1000 feet] are not more than 500 yards apart." It is consequently one of the most striking and beautiful spots in Palestine, and therefore so as its perennial supply of water clothes it with perpetual verdure. For its history see *Gen. xii. 6*; *xxxiii. 18*; *xxxiv. xlviii. 22*; *Deut. xxvii. 4—12*; *Josh. xx. 7*; *xxi. 20*; *xxiv. 1, 25, 32*; *Judg. ix.*; &c. In the New Testament it has been supposed to appear under the form *Sychar* (*John iv. 5*), and this variation has been universally accounted for as a *paronomasia*, *שָׁכָר* meaning "a lie." But the recent survey has given us good reasons for identifying the place last named with 'Askar, a little village on the slope of Ebal, half a mile from Jacob's well and a little over a mile from Nablús (Conder, pp. 40, 41): for [This word suggests that Rehoboam

had not "selected the capital of Ephraim to be the scene" of his coronation (Rawl.) but that he went thither *because* the northern tribes claimed this concession. They demanded apparently that he should meet them to receive their homage in the territory of Ephraim. It was a recognition of the importance of the tribe, and there they could the better urge their demands] all Israel [That is, not the twelve tribes (Ewald), but the ten, or their representatives. The name of Israel was already identified with the ten, or rather eleven, tribes (see 2 Sam. ii. 9, 10, 17, 28). It is highly probable that the comparative isolation of Judah from the rest of the tribes (see Dict. Bib. vol. i. p. 1157) had led to this result. Indeed, this fact—that the term "Israel" was used of the whole nation, *exclusive* of the tribe of Judah—shows in a very significant way the alienation of Judah from the rest] were come to Shechem to make him king. [It would certainly seem from these words as if the ten tribes had then no settled idea of revolting. Kimchi sees in the very selection of Shechem a proof that they were only "seeking an opportunity for transferring the government to Jeroboam." Similarly Keil. But the glories of Solomon's reign and the traditions of the house of David would surely make them hesitate, even if they had heard of the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite (ch. xi. 29), before they wantonly broke away from Rehoboam. And the text says expressly that they had assembled to "make him king," i.e., to accept him as such, to anoint him (1 Chron. xii. 38 compared with 2 Sam. ii. 4; v. 3 shows that קָיָם הַיְיָ is synonymous with לְקַיֵּם, Keil), after the example of Saul (1 Sam. ii. 15), David (2 Sam. ii. 4; v. 3), and Solomon (ch. i. 39; 1 Chron. xxix. 22). No doubt, as the context shows, they intended to stipulate for an alleviation of burdens, &c., and their selection of Shechem as the place where they would render their allegiance was a "significant hint" (Ewald). "The very place puts Israel in mind of a rebellion," Bp. Hall) to Rehoboam. Their putting forward Jeroboam as their spokesman—presuming for the present that the received text of ver. 3 is to be retained, as to which, however, see below—was a further hint, or rather a plain indication, that they did not mean to be trifled with. It is not a proof, however, as Keil maintains, that they had already determined to make the latter king, for they distinctly said to Rehoboam (ver. 4), "Grant our petition and we will serve thee." (Ewald, who says "they had the fullest intentions of confirming his power as king if their

wishes were granted," points out how this fact makes against the received text, according to which they had already summoned Jeroboam from Egypt.) It is clear from this and the passages cited above that the Jewish people at this period of their history were accustomed, not indeed to choose their king, but to confirm him in his office by public acclamation.]

Ver. 2.—And it came to pass, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat [see on ch. xi. 26], who was yet in Egypt [The usual, and indeed the necessary, interpretation, if we retain our present Hebrew text, is that these words refer, not as the context would lead us to suppose, to the time indicated in vers. 1, 3, &c., but to the time of Solomon's death. But see below], heard of it [The words "of it," though not in the original, are a fair and legitimate interpretation of its meaning. Whether they are retained or not, the natural and grammatical interpretation is that it was the visit to Shechem, just before mentioned, of which Jeroboam heard. But according to our received text, Jeroboam was one of the deputation which met king Rehoboam at Shechem. It has been found necessary, consequently, to understand the words of the death of Solomon, which has been related in ch. xi. 43. So the Vulgate, *Audita morte ejus*. Similarly the LXX. Cod. Vat. inserts the substance of this verse as part of ch. xi. 43. (The Cod. Alex. follows the Hebrew.) But this interpretation is surely strained and unnatural] (for he was fled from the presence of king Solomon, and Jeroboam dwelt in Egypt) [The parallel passage in 2 Chron. x. has here, "And Jeroboam returned from Egypt" (וַיָּשָׁב יֵרֹבֹאָם מִמִּצְרַיִם) instead of וַיָּשָׁב יֵרֹבֹאָם. And as some copies of the LXX. have *καὶ ἐπέστρεψεν Ἰεροβοὰμ ἐξ Αἰγύπτου* and the Vulgate has "*Reversus est de Aegypto*," Dathe, Bähr, *al.* would adopt this reading here. It is true it involves but a slight change, and it may simplify the construction. But no change is really required. Bähr's objection, that in the text, as it stands, we have an unmeaning repetition, "He was still in Egypt . . . and Jeroboam dwelt in Egypt," loses all its force if we understand Jeroboam to have continued his residence in Egypt (as the LXX. says he did) after hearing of Solomon's death, until summoned by the tribes to be their leader. In any case the repetition accords with Hebrew usage.]

Ver. 3.—That [Heb. *and*] they sent and called him. And Jeroboam and all the congregation of Israel came [It has been held that this verse is largely an interpolation. The LXX. Cod. Vat. has simply,

"And the people spake unto king Rehoboam, saying." Of more importance, however, is the fact that it is at direct variance with ver. 20, which places the appearance of Jeroboam on the scene *after* the revolt of the tribes. Indeed, these two verses can only be brought into agreement by the questionable device of understanding the "all Israel" of ver. 20 very differently from the same expression in ver. 1. If, however, we follow in this instance the LXX., which omits the name of Jeroboam both here and in ver. 12 (and which thereby implies that he was not one of the deputation to Rehoboam, but, as ver. 2 states, was at that time still in Egypt), the difficulty vanishes. Ver. 20 then becomes the natural and logical continuation of vers. 2, 3. "And Jeroboam dwelt in Egypt. And they sent and called him [to the country.] . . . And when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was come again [at their summons] they sent and called him unto the congregation," &c. And in favour of the omission of Jeroboam's name is the fact that the Hebrew text, both in ver. 3 and in ver. 12, betrays some little confusion. In ver. 3, the *Cethib* has כְּרִי and כְּרִי in ver. 12, whereas the *Keri* has כְּרִי in both cases. The words look, that is to say, as if a singular nominative had been subsequently introduced, and spake unto Rehoboam, saying.

Ver. 4.—Thy father made our yoke [see for the literal sense of the word, Num. xix. 2; Deut. xxi. 3, &c.; for its tropical use, Levit. xxvi. 13; Deut. xxviii. 48, &c.] grievous [Heb. *heavy*. Was this complaint a just one? It is one which occasions us some surprise, as the reign of Solomon had not only been glorious, but the people had apparently enjoyed the greatest plenty and prosperity (ch. iv. 20, 25; cf. viii. 66). Bishop Hall, Bähr, and other writers, consequently, who see in the fact that the ten tribes had chosen Jeroboam for their mouthpiece a settled determination on their part to revolt, affirm that their grievances were purely factitious. But we must not forget that, despite the unbroken peace (see Hall, "Contempl." ii. 136) and general prosperity and affluence, the people had had one burden at least to bear which is always galling and vexatious, the burden of a conscription. It is by no means certain, though it is constantly assumed, and is not in itself improbable, that the taxes and imposts had been heavy, the passages alleged in support of that view (ch. x. 15, 25; xii. 4, LXX.) being quite inconclusive. But while we have no right to speak of the "enormous exactions of the late king" (Stanley), we may be perfectly sure that

such an establishment as his (ch. iv. 22, 26) and such undertakings (ch. vi. 14, 22; iii. 1; vii.; ix. 26, 17, 18) would be extremely costly, and that their cost was not altogether defrayed by the presents of subject princes (ch. iv. 21; cf. x. 10, 14), the profits of the king's merchants (ch. x. 28), or the imports of the fleet (*ib.*, v. 21). But the people had certainly had to pay a more odious tribute, that of forced labour, of servile work (ch. iv. 6, Heb.; v. 14; cf. ch. ix. 21. כָּרַךְ is almost always used of a tribute rendered by labour, Gesen.) It is quite true that Solomon was not the first to institute this; that David had exacted it before him (2 Sam. xx. 24); that the burden was one with which all subjects of the old-world monarchies, especially in the East, were familiar; and that in this case it had been imposed with peculiar consideration (ch. v. 14). But it is none the less certain, when we consider the magnitude of Solomon's undertakings, and the number of men necessarily employed in executing them, that it must have involved some hardships and created much dissatisfaction; such results are inevitable in all conscriptions. "Forced labour has been amongst the causes leading to insurrection in many ages and countries. It alienated the people of Rome from the last Tarquin; it helped to bring about the French Revolution; and it was for many years one of the principal grievances of the Russian serfs" (Rawlinson). But we may find instances of its working perhaps as more Eastern, more closely illustrative of the text amongst the Fellahin of Egypt. "According to Pliny, 360,000 men had to work 20 years long at one pyramid" (Bähr). In the construction of the great Mahmoudieh canal, by Mehemet Ali, over 300,000 labourers were employed. They worked under the lash, and such were the fatigues and hardships of their life that many thousands died in the space of a few months (cf., too, Exod. i. 11 sqq.; ii. 23): now therefore make thou the grievous [Heb. *hard, heavy*] service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter [lit., "lighten somewhat from," &c.], and we will serve thee. [Their stipulations seem reasonable enough. Bähr, who says, "We cannot admit the complaint of too hard tribute-work to be well founded," and Keil, who maintains that "there cannot have been any well-grounded occasion for complaint," surely forget that both the aged counsellors (ver. 7) and also the writer of this book (vers. 13—15) manifest some degree of sympathy with the complainants.]

Ver. 5.—And he said unto them, Depart yet for three days [so as to afford time for

counsel and deliberation. It has been assumed that both the old and young advisers of Rehoboam had been taken by him, as part of his retinue, to Shechem (Bähr). But it is quite as likely that some of them were summoned from Jerusalem to advise him, and that the three days' delay was in order to give time for their attendance. It is a long day's journey (12 hours) from Nablûs to Jerusalem. Three days, consequently, would just afford sufficient time for the purpose] then come again to me. And the people departed. [The peaceable departure, like the respectful demand, contradicts the idea of a settled purpose to rebel.]

Ver. 6.—And king Rehoboam consulted with the old men [According to Bähr, “the עֲלֵזָבִים are not old people, but the elders.” No doubt the word is constantly used, as in the expressions, “elders of Israel,” “elders of the city,” &c. (cf. *πρεσβυτεροι*, *senatores* (from *senex*), *aldermen* = elder men), without any reference to age; but this is not the case here, as the strong contrast with “young men” (vers. 8, 13, 14) proves] that stood before [see on ch. i. 2] Solomon his father [among them, perhaps, were some of the “princes” of ch. iv. 2 sqq.] while he yet lived, and said, How do ye advise that I may answer this people?

Ver. 7.—And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them [Keil questions the propriety and expediency of this advice. He says, “The king could not become the עֲבָדִים of the people without prejudicing the authority entrusted to him by God.” But they do not propose that he should become their servant, except for one day, and then only in the sense of making reasonable concessions. What they mean is this: “If thou wilt brook for once to accede to their terms instead of dictating thine own,” &c. The form of their answer was probably suggested by the temper of the king. They saw what was passing in his mind, viz., that he would fain play the autocrat, and that he resented it exceedingly that his subjects, just as he had begun to taste the sweets of royalty, should presume to parley with him; and they say in effect, “You think that they are reversing your relations, that they are making you, their sovereign, their servant. Be it so. It is but for one day. Then they will be your slaves for ever”], and answer them [i.e., favourably; grant their request; cf. *Psa.* xxii. 22; *lxv.* 6], and speak good words to them, then will they be thy servants for ever. [“Thy servants,” in oppo-

sition to “a servant” above; “for ever” in opposition to “this day.”]

Ver. 8.—But he forsook the counsel of the old men which they had given [Heb. *counselled*] him [“We can easily imagine that their proposal was not very agreeable to the rash and imperious young king, in whose veins Ammonite blood flowed” (Bähr)], and consulted with the young men [see on ver. 1. “The very change argues weakness. . . Green wood is ever shrinking” (Hall)] that were grown up with him [possibly his companions in the harem], and which stood before him [i.e., as his courtiers and counsellors (cf. ver. 6)]. The old men were the counsellors of *Solomon*; the young men alone are spoken of as the ministers of Rehoboam.

Ver. 9.—And he said unto them, What counsel give ye [emphatic in the original] that we [It is noticeable how Rehoboam identifies these young men with himself. He employs a different expression when addressing the old men (ver. 6)]. The A. V. perhaps gives its force by the translation, “that I may answer,” &c.; lit., “to answer”] may answer this people who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke which thy father did put upon us lighter?

Ver. 10.—And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou speak unto this people [There is a certain amount of contemptuousness in the expression (cf. *St. John* vii. 49)] that spake unto thee [The repetition, “speak, spake,” is probably not undesigned. It suggests the idea of retaliation, or that it was a piece of presumption on their part to have spoken at all], saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it lighter unto us [lit., *from upon us*]; thus shalt thou say unto them [This iteration is expressive of determination and resentment. We may read between the lines, “I would make short work with them, and teach them a lesson they will not forget”], My little finger [“Finger” is not in the original, but the meaning is indisputable] shall be [or *is*, *הָיָה*, strictly, *was thicker*. The LXX. has simply *παχυριον*] thicker than my father's loins. [A figurative and perhaps proverbial expression. The sense is clear. “My hand shall be heavier than my father's, my force greater than his, my weakness even stronger than his strength.” The counsel of the young men is full of flattery, which would be acceptable to a young king.]

Ver. 11.—And now whereas my father did lade you with [or, lay upon you] a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips [It is probable that the expression is not entirely figura-

tive. It is quite possible that the levies of Amorites, Hittites (ch. ix. 20), &c., had been kept at their toils by the lash, but I will chastise you with scorpions. ["The very words have stings" (Hall). It is generally held that there is here "no allusion whatever to the animal, but to some instrument of scourging—unless, indeed, the expression is a mere figure" (Dict. Bib. iii. p. 1161). Perhaps it is safer to understand it as a figure of speech, although the scorpion, unlike the serpent, is little like, or adapted to use as, a lash. Probably it was in the pain the whip caused that the resemblance lay (Rev. ix. 5). All the commentators mention that the later Romans used a whip called a "scorpio," and cite Isidore (Orig. 5. 27) in proof. Gesenius, Keil, *al.* understand "whips with barbed points, like the point of a scorpion's sting;" the Rabbins, *Virgæ spinis instructæ*; others, the thorny stem of the egg-plant, by some called the "scorpion plant." Compare our use of the word "cat." "The yoke and whips go together, and are the signs of labouring service (Ecclus. xxx. 26, or xxxiii. 27)" Bähr.]

Ver. 12.—So Jeroboam and [LXX. omits] all the people came to Rehoboam the third day ["Three days' expectation had warned these smoking Israelites" (Hall)], as the king had appointed, saying, Come to me again the third day.

Ver. 13.—And the king answered the people [the omission of Jeroboam's name, though perhaps it cannot be pressed in argument, is noticeable] roughly, and forsook the old men's counsel that they gave him.

Ver. 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.

Ver. 15.—Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people, for the cause [or course of events; lit., *turn*] was from the Lord ["*Quem Deus vult perdere, prius dementat.*" God did not inspire Rehoboam's proud and despotic reply, but used it for the accomplishment of His purpose, the partition of the kingdom (cf. Exod. xiv. 4; Matt. xxvi. 24). God makes the wrath of man to praise Him], that [Heb. *in order that*] he might perform his saying, which the Lord spake by [Heb. *in the hand of*; cf. ch. xiv. 18; ii. 25, note] Ahijah the Shilonite [see on ch. xi. 1] unto Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

Ver. 16.—So when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered [Heb. *brought back word to*; probably after some consultation amongst themselves] the king, saying,

What portion have we in David? [Same expression as 2 Sam. xx. 1. The words, interpreted by this passage and 2 Sam. xix. 43, mean, "Since we have no kindness or fairness from David's seed, what is his house to us? Why render homage to his son? We receive nought from him, why yield aught to him?"] neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse [*i.e.*, "his tribe is not ours; his interests are not ours." Bähr sees in the expression "son of Jesse" "an allusion to David's humbler descent," but surely without reason. It is simply a periphrasis for the sake of the parallelism. The rhythm almost elevates the words to the rank of poetry]: to your tents, O Israel [lit., *thy tents, or dwellings*; *i.e.*, "Disperse to your homes (see ch. viii. 66; and cf. 2 Sam. xviii. 17; xix. 8; xx. 1), and prepare for war."

וְלִבְיֹתָיִם, which means primarily a "tent," has for its secondary meaning, "habitation," "home." This cry—the *Marseillaise* of Israel—probably had its origin at a time when the people dwelt in tents, viz. in the march through the desert (see Josh. xxii. 4; Num. i. 52; ix. 18; xvi. 26)]. Now see to thine own house, David [*i.e.*, let the seed of David henceforth reign over the tribe of Judah, if it can. It shall govern the other tribes no longer. "It is not a threat of war, but a warning against interference" (Rawlinson). וְאַחֲרָיִם has the meaning of "look after," "care for." "David, the tribe father, is mentioned in place of his family" (Keil)]. So Israel departed unto their [lit., *his*] tents [see note on ch. viii. 66].

Ver. 17.—But as for the children of Israel which dwell in the cities of Judah [*i.e.*, "the Israelites proper or members of other tribes, who happened to be settled within the limits of the land of Judah" (cf. ver. 23). A number of Simeonites were (Rawlinson) certainly among them (Josh. xix. 1—9). The term "children of Israel" is henceforward to be understood in its restricted sense (see on ver. 1). It cannot include the men of Judah], Rehoboam reigned over them.

Ver. 18.—Then king Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the tribute [Probably the same officer as the Adoniram of ch. iv. 6. For "Adoram" the LXX. and other versions read "Adoniram" here. It is curious that a person of the same name, Adoram (LXX. Adoniram), was over David's levy (2 Sam. xx. 24). That there was a relationship, and that the office had descended from father to son, can hardly be doubted, but whether two persons or three are indicated it is impossible to say. It is of course just possible, though hardly likely that one and the same person (Ewald) cau

have been superintendent of servile work under David, Solomon, and Rehoboam. It is generally assumed that the young king sent this officer "to treat with the rebels and to appease them, as Josephus expressly says" (Bähr). It seems quite as likely that he was sent to coerce them, or to collect the taxes, as a summary way of showing that the king meant to enforce his rights and was not moved by their words. For it is hardly probable that such a proud and headstrong prince as Rehoboam would stoop, especially after the confident threats which he had just uttered, to parley with rebels. Such a man, guided by such counsellors, and inflated with a sense of his own power and importance, would naturally think of force rather than of conciliation or concessions. He would be for trying his whips of scorpions. And if conciliation had been his object, it is hardly likely that he would have employed Adoram, the superintendent of the levy, a man who would naturally be obnoxious to the people, to effect it. Moreover the sequel—Adoram's tragical end—also favours the supposition that he was sent, not "to arrange some alleviation of their burdens" (Rawlinson), but to carry out the high-handed policy of the king; and all Israel stoned him with stones ["With one exception, this was a bloodless revolution" (Stanley). It has been remarked that the practice of stoning is first heard of in the stony desert (Arabia Petraea). But in reality it is older than the date of the Exodus, as Exod. viii. 26 shows. And it is an obvious and ready and summary way of despatching obnoxious persons (cf. Exod. xvii. 4; 1 Sam. xxx. 6; 1 Kings xxi. 10). It is to this day a favourite method of the East for testifying hatred and intolerance], that he died. Therefore king Rehoboam made speed [So the LXX., ἐφθασεν. The Hebrew literally means, as margin, "strengthened himself." But the A. V. gives the practical force of the word. He bestirred himself; he lost no time; the death of Adoram showed him the danger of a moment's delay. "He saw those stones were thrown at him in his Adoram" (Hall).] to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem.

Ver. 19.—So Israel rebelled [lit., *fell away* (marg.) The common secondary meaning of the word is to *transgress*. Its use here may perhaps suggest that their rebellion was not without sin] against the house of David unto this day (see on ch. viii. 8).

Ver. 20.—And it came to pass, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was come again [These words are hardly consistent with the idea that Jeroboam had been from the first the spokesman of "all Israel" in their

interviews with Rehoboam. If, however, the received text of vers. 3, 12 is retained (see on ver. 3), then we must understand the "all Israel" in ver. 1 of the *representatives* of the different tribes, and here, of the entire nation who had heard from its representatives, on their return to their homes (ver. 16), of the presence of Jeroboam in the country], that they sent and called him unto the congregation [Where and when this gathering was held we are not informed. Probably it was at Shechem, and soon after Rehoboam's flight. After the open and irreparable breach which they had made (ver. 18), the leaders of the tribes would naturally assemble at once to concert measures for their defence and future government], and made him king [by anointing. Note on ver. 1] over all Israel [This public and formal consecration of Jeroboam completed the secession of the northern tribes. Was this secession sinful? Bähr, Keil, and others, who start from the assumption that secession was determined upon even before Rehoboam came to Shechem, and that the complaints of the people respecting the grievous service to which they had been subjected by Solomon were groundless, naturally conclude that it was altogether treasonable and unjustifiable. But is this conclusion borne out by the facts? We may readily admit that the schism was not accomplished without sin: we cannot but allow that Israel acted with undue precipitation, and that Rehoboam, who was "young and tender-hearted," was entitled, for David's and Solomon's sake, as well as his own, to greater forbearance and consideration, and it is almost certain that both the "envy of Ephraim" and the ambition of Jeroboam largely influenced the result. At the same time, it is to be remembered that the division of the kingdom was ordained of God, and that the people had just cause of complaint, if not, indeed, sufficient warrant for resistance, in the arbitrary and insolent rejection of their petition by the young king. No law of God requires men to yield themselves up without a struggle to such cruel and abject slavery as Rehoboam threatened these men with. They judged—and who shall say unreasonably?—from his words that they had only tyranny and cruelty to expect at his hands, and what wonder if they stood on their defence? They are only to be blamed because they did more. But lawful resistance not uncommonly ripens into unlawful rebellion]; there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only. [This general statement is qualified immediately afterwards (ver. 21). The tribe of Benjamin, "the smallest of the tribes of Israel" (1 Sam. ix. 21), "little

Benjamin" (Psa. lxxviii. 27), is here omitted as of comparatively small account. Exact precision has never characterized Oriental writers. There is no suspicion of untruth: it is the genius of the people to

"disdain the lore,  
Of nicely calculated less and more."

It may be added here that Edom remained under the sway of Judah until the reign of Jehoram (2 Kings viii. 20), just as Moab and other portions of Solomon's empire for a considerable period formed part of the new kingdom of Israel (2 Kings i. 1; iii. 4, 5.)

Ver. 21.—And when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah with [Heb. *and*] the tribe of Benjamin [It is at first sight somewhat surprising that Benjamin, so long the rival of Judah, and which had so long resisted the rule of David, should on this occasion have detached itself from the leadership of Ephraim, its near and powerful neighbour, and a tribe, too, with which it had a sort of hereditary connexion. That a sort of jealousy existed at one time between the tribes of Benjamin and Judah, consequent, no doubt, on the transference of the sceptre from the house of Saul to that of David, is very evident. A thousand men of Benjamin constituted the following of the rebel Shimei, (2 Sam. xix. 17). The rising of Sheba the Benjamite, again (*ib.*, xx. 1), proves that the enmity and discontent were not even then subdued. But when the ten tribes fell away, Benjamin seems never to have faltered in its allegiance. The change is easily accounted for. It was the glory of Benjamin that Jerusalem, the joy of the whole earth, the civil and religious capital of the nation, was largely within its border. "The city of the Jebusite" was in the lot of Benjamin (Josh. xviii. 28). But it was also on the boundary line of Judah. This fact had, no doubt, brought the two tribes into close contact, and had given them interests in common, in fact had "riveted them together as by a cramp" (Blunt, pp. 167, 174, who traces "a gradual tendency of the ten tribes to become confederate under Ephraim," and a growing alliance and community of interests between Judah and Benjamin); and now Benjamin could not fail to see that separation from Judah would mean the loss of Jerusalem (which would be largely peopled by the men of Judah, David's tribe, and would be practically in their hands), while adhesion to Ephraim would not prevent the establishment of another sanctuary further north. The traditions of fifty years, consequently, and the common interest in the capital,

prevailed over hereditary ties and ancient feuds, and decided Benjamin to cast in its lot with Judah; the more so, as the heads of this tribe may have felt, after once furnishing Israel with its king, as jealous of Ephraim as they had once been of Judah. It must not be forgotten, however, that some portions of Benjamin, including Bethel, Gilgal, and Jericho, were incorporated in the northern kingdom (Ewald)], an hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men [the LXX. has *ἐκατὸν καὶ ἑκοστὴ*—120,000, but the larger number need create no astonishment. At the time of David's census, the men of Judah numbered—if the figures can be depended on—500,000, while Abijah could muster some 18 years afterwards an army of 400,000 (2 Chron. xiii. 3)], which were warriors [lit., *making war*], to fight against the house of Israel, to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam, the son of Solomon. [It is characteristic of Rehoboam that he proposes forthwith to subdue the rebellious tribes by force. Probably he had no idea to what extent the tribes would prove disloyal.]

Ver. 22.—But the word of God came unto Shemajah [This part of the history is probably derived from the "book" which this prophet wrote (2 Chron. xii. 15). When Keil describes him as "a prophet who is not mentioned again," he has surely overlooked 2 Chron. xii. 7, 8, where we find him prophesying with reference to the army of Shishak], the man of God [a common expression in the books of Kings. It rarely occurs in the other Scriptures. This designation is not altogether synonymous with "prophet." It is used, for example, of *angels* (Judg. xiii. 6, 8), of *Moses* (Deut. xxxiii. 1), and of *David* (2 Chron. viii. 14), and would embrace any minister or servant of God, while *נָבִי* is restricted to the teaching order. There were *false* prophets, but no false men of God. It is also worth considering whether the name of prophet may not have been practically restricted to, or bestowed by preference on, those who had received a prophetic training, the "sons of the prophets" who had been taught in the schools. Cf. 1 Sam. x. 5—12; xix. 20; Amos vii. 14], saying,

Ver. 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 ["the children of Israel" mentioned in ver. 17, where see note], saying,

Ver. 24.—Thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren [a timely reminder of the unity of the race, notwithstanding the division of the king-

dom] the children of Israel: return every man to his house: for this thing [i.e., the division, rupture] is [lit., was] from me. [A prophet of Judah now confirms what a prophet of Israel had already announced]. They hearkened therefore unto the word of the Lord, and returned [not "because they probably saw that a war with the numerically greater, and just now bitterly excited, ten tribes would bring them into a worse condition still" (Bähr), but because of the "word of the Lord."] It was the remonstrance of the prophet alone restrained them. They knew their numerical inferiority before, but they nevertheless mustered for battle] to depart [a common Hebraism. The phrase in 2 Chron. xi. 4, יָשָׁבוּ כִלְכֵלָתָם, "they returned from going," was probably designed as an explanation], according to the word of the Lord.

At this point the Vat. LXX. inserts a long addition, which differs from, and indeed contradicts, the Hebrew text in some important particulars. Rehoboam is represented as 16 years of age (Heb. 40), as reigning 12 years (Heb. 17); his mother is Naanan (Heb. Naamah), and is the daughter of Ana, son of Nahash, king of Ammon. Jeroboam is described as son of Sarira, a harlot. He is appointed by Solomon superintendent of the levy of Ephraim, and builds for him a city Sarira, and also completes the circumvallation of Jerusalem. He has 300 chariots and aims at royalty. Solomon seeking to slay him, he flees to Shishak, king of Egypt, who treats him with distinction, giving him the sister of his own wife in marriage. Here his son

Abijah is born, when Rehoboam has been something like a year upon the throne. After his birth, Jeroboam asks a second time to be released: he returns to his own country, takes up his abode at Sarira, fortifies it, and gathers the tribe of Ephraim round him. Here Abijah falls sick, and the visit to the prophet, narrated in chap. xiv., takes place. The child dies; there is general mourning, after which Jeroboam goes to Shechem, and collects the tribes. Here the prophet Shemaiah (not Abijah) tears a new garment in twelve pieces, gives him ten, and promises him the dominion over ten tribes. After which follow the events of vers. 5—24 of this chapter.

The great circumstantiality of this narrative has led some scholars—Dean Stanley among them—to prefer it before the Hebrew version. But its details will not bear careful examination, and there is little doubt that it is a compilation of later date. Its untrustworthiness has been well shown among others by Rawlinson, Speaker's Commentary *in loc.* But he omits to notice what is perhaps its strongest condemnation, viz., that this LXX. addition is in conflict with the LXX. (and Heb.) text of chap. xi. The account of Jeroboam's marriage with the sister of the queen, e.g., is manifestly a variation of the history of Hadad (ch. xi. ver. 19; see also ver. 22). Nor does it harmonize with the preceding history of this chapter, as given by the LXX.

#### HOMILETICS.

Vers. 18—15.—*Judicial Infatuation.* It is impossible to read this history of the great rebellion, even at the present day, without a certain feeling of sadness. We see here a young prince, heir to one of the greatest empires of antiquity, the inheritor of an illustrious and unequalled name, with all the advantages which the glory and greatness of his father could give him, reaping the benefits of a long peace, his coffers full of money, his cities filled with all manner of store, his fleets ploughing the sea, his army guarding his frontier; we see him wantonly flinging these singular advantages away from him, and absolutely courting his own destruction and the dismemberment of his kingdom. We see a position which has had but few, if any, parallels recklessly sacrificed for the lack of a few conciliatory words. It needed but the slenderest modicum of common sense and all would have gone well. He had but to stoop for one day in order to conquer for ever (ver. 7). But no; we hear him instead hurling opprobrious words at the spokesmen of the ten tribes, and forthwith the land is ablaze with insurrection. He madly talks of the might of his little finger, of whips and scorpions, and from that hour

his kingdom is divided; the holy people are ranged under hostile banners, and the way is opened for the schism in the Church. We talk sometimes of men who dance on the edge of a volcano, and we have read of Nero fiddling while Rome was burning, but it may be questioned whether history affords a more pitiable instance of folly and infatuation than this. And it was such infatuation that we can hardly resist the conclusion that it was, somehow, retributive and judicial. "Who would not have looked any whither for the cause of this evil, rather than to heaven? Yet the holy God challenges it to Himself" (Bp. Hall). "The cause was from the Lord."

It is well that we should understand, however, that this gross infatuation was only one out of many factors which produced the disruption. The division of the kingdom—the first act in the long drama of retribution for the sin of Solomon—was to a large extent the natural result of the rule and policy of Solomon. No doubt of all the causes of revolt the prophecy of Ahijah was the most influential. It was that "beginning" which, as Aristotle sagely remarks, is often the larger half. Possibly but for that, Israel's "winter of discontent" would have been "made glorious by the summer sun" of the accession of a young prince. Probably but for that, Jeroboam would never have "lifted up his hand against the king." But we must not shut our eyes to the fact that the people had had a "heavy yoke" to bear. Rehoboam himself confessed to this (ver. 14). It is idle to say that their demands betray a foregone conclusion to revolt. The contrary is distinctly implied in verses 4, 7. Nor is it the fact that the rebellion was wholly due to the jealousy of Ephraim, for that proud tribe had readily acquiesced in the supremacy of Judah during the reign of David. Indeed, the rebellion is almost inexplicable, except on the supposition that the people had suffered real hardships, and carried heavy burdens during Solomon's reign. Men do not soon forget the glories of such an empire as his, and do not wantonly tear it asunder, and reduce it to impotence, unless they have had substantial grievances. But in this case, so many were their grounds of disaffection that, remembering that Jeroboam, who no doubt appeared to them in the light of a champion and tribune of the people, was in reserve, should they need his services, it only needed the infatuation of Rehoboam to kindle the smouldering embers of discontent into a flame.

And when we see in this inconceivable infatuation the *immediate* cause of the disruption, we must still remember how it was that Rehoboam came to be capable of such egregious folly. Are we to suppose that he was expressly blinded for the occasion? Is it implied that, like Saul, an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him, or that, like Ahab, he was the victim of heaven-sent delusions? Is it not rather enough to believe that he was simply left to himself, to be the sport of his own folly and pride? His infatuation would still be judicial, if we saw in it, not the strange perversity of a moment, but the spontaneous outcome of his birth and education. Indeed, in that case, it would be still more conspicuously the just and appropriate retribution for his father's sin. It was because of Solomon's foreign wives, and the idolatries which, with his sanction, they practised, that Solomon's empire was to be torn from his son (chap. xi. 33). And now we find that the dismemberment of this empire was brought about by the son of one of these strange women—the child of an unregenerate Ammonitess. It has been said that "every great man is the son of his mother."\* The same remark might be made of every great fool. It was probably because Naamah was what she was that Rehoboam was what he was. "The two worst men in my parish," said a clergyman, "are what their mothers have made them." We could not expect much character, not to speak of wisdom, in Solomon's mistresses, who were chosen for their charms, and whose cloistered life, amid the intrigues, and follies, and pettinesses of the harem, did not fit them to be the mothers of kings. What knowledge of the world or of men, what honour, what common sense could we hope to find in one brought up under such influences? The bearing of Rehoboam is precisely the bearing we should expect as the result of the training of an Eastern harem. It appears, consequently, that we may justly regard his infatuation as judicial, not so much in the sense of being inspired

\* "Règle générale, à laquelle du moms je n'ai guère vu d'exceptions, les hommes supérieurs sont tous les fils de leur mère."—*Michellet*.

for the moment, but as being the natural consequence of his parents' folly and sin. But let us now consider what shape this same infatuation took: let us separate it into its constituent parts, that we may the better understand Rehoboam's character, and see the workings of his mind. Observe—

I. HIS ENTIRE UNCONSCIOUSNESS OF DANGER. There were not wanting, to those who could read the signs of the times, many indications of peril. It was a "significant hint" that Shechem had been selected for his coronation; that the tribes insisted on a conference; that instead of acclamations he was met with stipulations. It was a presage of danger that their first words to Solomon's son, to David's grandson, were of a "heavy yoke" and a grievous burden. It was still more ominous that Jeroboam had already raised the standard of revolt, and that this arch-rebel—according to the received text, but see on vers. 3, 20—was present among the malcontents. Even if he had not at that time been recalled from Egypt, still Rehoboam knew full well that he was there, and ready to rebel again if opportunity offered. All these were mutterings of the coming storm, and no one who was not a fool could have failed to perceive their import.

II. HIS VACILLATION AND IRRESOLUTION. Bishop Hall observes that his stipulating for three days in which to consider their demand was the only word he spoke which argued wisdom. Matthew Henry, on the other hand, thinks that it was "impolitic to take time to consider," and it may well be doubted whether this was not really a false and dangerous move. Had he bluntly refused all concessions and laid hands on the ringleaders, it is very probable that such a display of energy would have quelled the spirit of insurrection. Or had he graciously and instantly promised a redress of their grievances, he would have preserved his crown. But this delay was dangerous. It set them a-thinking what they would do in case of a refusal. A Fabian policy has saved some states, no doubt; but how many has it destroyed? And if, as has been suggested (on ver. 5), the object of the three days' delay was that he might summon his young companions to his side, its unwisdom is still more apparent.

III. HIS PRIDE AND OBSTINACY. It was pride, not mental incapacity, led him to reject the counsel of the old men and seek for further advice. It was because it went against the grain to be a "servant," even for one day. That they should have presumed to ask concessions, or to parley with him at all, was an offence in his eyes. It is easy to read his vexation between the lines. With his high-flown notions of Divine right, with the characteristic contempt of an autocrat for the masses, it was mortifying to find his subjects bandying words with him. We may be pretty sure that, had the old men advised "whips of scorpions," &c., we should have heard of no further consultation. The pride of Solomon and the pretensions of Naamah reappear in their son.

IV. HIS FOLLY. This, which is conspicuous all the way through, is especially manifest in (1) his turning to the young men for advice, and (2) in his taking it in preference to that of the old men. We might also instance the threats to which he stooped, and the mission of Adoram, but these come more appropriately under—

V. HIS INSOLENCE AND DEFIANCE. Had he wished to provoke a rebellion, he could not have taken more effectual means to secure the end. "I will add to your yoke." "I will chastise you with scorpions." What cry could he possibly expect in return, except a war-cry, such as he presently heard? If he had meant to punish, he should surely have held his tongue and used his hands. To boast of what he would do is like the Chinese warrior, who thinks to disperse his enemies by a ferocious shout. And to send Adoram, not to make overtures of peace—Rehoboam's folly would hardly go so far as to select *him* for such a mission—but, as it would seem, to collect tribute or to make a show of his authority, why, if he had *designed* to make the breach irreparable, and to stamp out the last faint hope of reconciliation, he could not have done more. It was the act of a spoilt child, it was the coming out in the flesh of what was bred in the bone.

Amongst the lessons this history teaches are these: (1) The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children, and that by the operation of so-called natural laws. (2) That God uses the folly, as well as the wrath, of man to praise Him. (3) That

if a fool be brayed in a mortar with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him. (4) That the mother has the marring or the making of her child in her hands. (5) That,

“A pebble in the streamlet’s source,  
Hath turned the course of many a river;  
A dewdrop on the baby plant,  
Hath warped the giant oak for ever.”

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

**Vers. 1—5.—The Dead and the Living.** “The king is dead; long live the king!” This paradox expresses an important truth. Bathsheba recognized it when David on his deathbed promised her that Solomon, her son, should succeed him on the throne, and she said, “Let my lord king David live for ever” (ch. i. 31).

**I. SOLOMON IS DEAD.** 1. *His active form is no longer seen.* (1) He “slept with his fathers” (ch. xi. 43). He has stiffened into a corpse. Perfectly passive now! What a moral! The doom of all. Work while it is day. (2) He was “buried in the city of David his father.” He had a royal funeral. But all this state was simply to *bury him*—to put him out of sight. Much wisdom is *buried alive* in state display. (3) Jeroboam may now return from Egypt. The protection of Shishak is no longer needed. Human wrath has its limitations. Not so Divine wrath (see Matt. x. 28). 2. *Where is the disembodied spirit?* (1) Not extinct. Not in stupor. The term “sleep” relates to the body. It anticipates for it an *awaking*—a resurrection. (2) Stirring in the world of spirits as it stirred when embodied in this world of matter. (3) What a world is that! How populous! How darkly veiled! yet how interesting to us who are on our way thither!

**II. BUT HE SURVIVES IN REHOBOAM.** This fact is the ground of—1. *Rehoboam’s claim to the throne.* (1) He is Solomon’s representative. This is more than a law phrase. Had he not been the son of Solomon he would not have been invited to Shechem. We inherit responsibilities. (2) Solomon lives in Rehoboam with a potency to move “all Israel.” See the nation from Dan to Beersheba, under this influence, streaming down to Shechem. 2. *The nation’s suit to the claimant.* (1) In this *they* recognise the claim of Solomon’s representative to the crown. (2) Also that he may likewise oppress them as Solomon had done (see ch. iv. 7, 22; ix. 15). From Solomon’s oppressions they seek of Solomon, in Rehoboam, relief. (3) How history verifies prophecy (see 1 Sam. viii. 10—18).

**III. SO SURVIVING, HIS INFLUENCE IS MODIFIED.** 1. *A new individual appears.* (1) Rehoboam is not the facsimile of Solomon. He is indeed the son of a wise man; but the son, not of his wisdom, but of his folly. His mother was an Ammonitess. This fact is emphasised, according to the Hebrew style, by being stated and restated (ch. xiv. 21, 31). (2) His character is the resultant of the influences of Solomon, of Naamah, and of those which also flowed into the current of his life during the apostasy of his father. He became the impersonation of these various moral forces. (3) The influence of Solomon in Rehoboam, therefore, is considerably modified. Parents are to a large extent responsible not only for their own direct influence upon the character of their children, but also for the contemporary influences to which they allow them to be exposed. 2. *New relationships have therefore to be formed.* (1) The people suffered the imposts of Solomon while he lived. They grew upon them by degrees, and brought with them a system of vested interests. The whole system became so crystallized around the person of the king that it was difficult to obtain relief. (2) Now Solomon is dead all this is loosened, and the opportunity is given for the nation to remonstrate. They are prompt to improve it. (3) Jeroboam is not only present now, which he would not have been had Solomon lived, but is made the spokesman of the people. (4) Rehoboam confesses the force of these altered circumstances in listening to the suit, and taking time to deliberate upon the nature of his reply. The value of influences is a most profitable subject for Christian consideration; present—posthumous (see 2 Peter i. 15).—M.

**Ver. 6—11.—Israel's Magna Charta.** The question submitted to Rehoboam at Shechem concerned the constitution of the monarchy. Hitherto there had been no constitution defining the rights of the people and limiting the power of the crown. Rehoboam took three days to deliberate upon the people's Bill of Rights, and in that interval took counsel. The old men who stood before Solomon advised concession, while the young ones, who had grown up with him, recommended resistance. Wisdom was with the ancients.

**I. LIMITED MONARCHY IS BEST FOR THE PEOPLE.** 1. *Because it recognises their rights.* (1) The people do not exist for the king. They may be governed as a republic without a king. (2) But the king exists for the people. Where no people are there can be no king. (3) For a king, therefore, to use the people simply for his own aggrandisement and ignore their rights is preposterous (Jer. ii. 14). 2. *It respects their happiness.* (1) Since the people collectively are of more importance than an individual monarch, the haughty bearing of a monarch is out of place. So the sages counselled Rehoboam to "serve" the people and "speak good words to them." (2) The interests of a good king will be bound up with the happiness of his subjects, and he cannot reasonably object to a constitution that will recognise this community of interests.

**II. IT IS BEST ALSO FOR THE PRINCE.** 1. *It encourages his virtues.* (1) It does this by limiting his extravagance. Solomon would have been far happier had his people been saved the charge of building palaces for, and sustaining in state, seven hundred princesses and three hundred concubines. (2) For what would be necessary to sustain his rank a constitutional king might trust the good sense of his people. At Shechem they did not seek exemption from taxation, but relief from its excesses. They knew that it would not be to the credit of a great people to pauperise their prince. 2. *It gives stability to his throne.* (1) "They will be thy servants for ever." Such was the manner in which this was expressed by the sages. It will be their interest to be so. *Gratitude* also will bind them. The loyalty of love is stronger and more enduring than that of fear. This is the loyalty which the gospel claims, and the constancy of the subjects of the kingdom of Christ is witnessed in a million martyrdoms. (2) Who rules over a loving people may be tranquil. He need not fear the poniard of the assassin. (This is the paradise of tyrants!) He will have the joy of ruling over a happy nation. The typical constitutional monarch is the father of his people.

**III. ADVOCATES OF TYRANNY SCORN TO REASON.** 1. *The young counsellors give no reasons.* (1) This method they leave to the ancients. For reasons they substitute smart speech. "Thus shalt thou say unto them, My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins." Pertness too often has displaced reason. (2) Why should reasons be given by one who claims a Divine right to act as he pleases? 2. *But may there not be a benevolent autocracy?* (1) Certainly. And if this can be guaranteed, together with competent wisdom, then there is no better government. For is not this the very idea of the government of God? (2) But who can guarantee this in human kingdoms? The people certainly are as likely to know what is for their welfare as the majority of their kings. (3) What if the autocrat should prove a fool? What if he should prove a devil? Would not a kingdom in this case be a hell upon earth? (4) Rehoboam seems to have combined the satanic and the foolish. Lost the greater part of his kingdom; reigned over the remnant wickedly. Christians should pray for their rulers. They should bless God for their liberties.—M.

**Vers. 12—15.—Infatuation.** "Whom the gods mean to destroy they first infatuate." Such was the observation of a heathen philosopher; and it is true, only that the infatuators are devils, and God permits. The text furnishes a case in point. What but infatuation could have prompted Rehoboam to have acted so insanely? It is seen—

**I. IN HIS REFUSAL TO HEarken TO THE PEOPLE.** 1. *They assembled to honour him.* (1) He was invited to Shechem to meet them that they might crown him. (2) They promised to serve him as they had served his father. They had a reserva-

tion, but—2. *Their reservation was not unreasonable.* (1) They had suffered what they called a “grievous yoke” of taxation and servitude, of which they desired a relaxation. Had they not a right to demand this? Did the people exist to be the slaves of their kings? (2) They did not ask to be released from all taxation and service. They acknowledged the duty of sustaining the legitimate burdens of the state. Why, then, did he not hearken?

II. IN THE ANSWER HE GAVE THEM. 1. *Respecting his father's administration.* (1) He owned that his father had ruled with rigour; that he had made their yoke heavy. He put it even stronger than the complainants; that he had “chastised them with whips.” (2) Might he not rather have softened it to them? He could have reminded them that Solomon had created their commerce; that their commerce had so enriched them that they might bear the taxes; that his wisdom had made the nation great and respected; that he had built their temple; that they had something for their taxes in great public works. (3) But he lacked, not only the wisdom of his father, but also the feelings of a good son. 2. *Respecting his own.* (1) He declares that he will rule them more oppressively than his father did; that he will increase their burdens and sting them with “scorpions”—knotted whips armed with iron points. (2) These rough and hard words were paraded and rendered more offensive by the rough and hard manner (ver. 13). (3) How gratuitous was this insolence! What but infatuation could have prompted it? It is seen—

III. IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES ATTENDING THE ANSWER. 1. *It was deliberately given.* (1) It could not claim the excuse of being uttered thoughtlessly in haste, for he had taken three days to consider it. (2) In taking these three days the tyrant betrayed the fool. It gave the people time to confer and agree upon a policy. 2. *It was advisedly given.* (1) He did not speak without counsel. He had taken the advice of the wits with whom he had been brought up. (2) He had also consulted the sages who had been schooled in the wisdom of Solomon, and he might have acted upon it but did not. (3) He left God out of his counsels, though his Shechinah was still in the temple. 3. *He trusted in his fortune.* (1) He was the son of Solomon. Probably the only son. We read of no other; had there been one he would probably have been mentioned as a rival who would keep the nation united. (Note: population is not increased by polygamy. Hosea iv. 10.) Rehoboam, therefore, presumed upon the strength of his claim to the throne. (2) Even the presence of Jeroboam at the head of the remonstrants did not shake his confidence in his fortune. He could scarcely have been ignorant of the message of God to his father, and the corresponding prophecy of Ahijah. But what are the words of Jehovah to this son of Naamah the Ammonitess, whose national god was Molech? (3) But the Providence he ignored is seen in the infatuation that ignored it. The cause, the (כרה) *revolution*, was from the Lord (ver. 15.) “They that lose the kingdom of heaven throw it away as Rehoboam did his, by their own wilfulness and folly” (Matthew Henry). Miserable is the infatuation that imperils the salvation of the soul.—M.

Vers. 16—20.—*The Revolution.* The unconciliatory, insulting, insane conduct of Rehoboam in rejecting the Bill of Rights of the people of Israel provoked a revolution in the state. This is recorded in the text, in which we learn that—

I. IT COMMENCED WITH THE REJECTION OF THE KING. 1. *This act was done in haste.* (1) By his hesitation at such a time, under such circumstances, to listen to their grievances, the people saw that Rehoboam was a tyrant. They accordingly availed themselves of the three days he took to consider his reply, to concert their measures, and were therefore ready for action. (2) They soon “saw that the king hearkened not.” He left them in no doubt, for he took high ground at once. And they were as prompt in their resolution. 2. *It was done in anger.* (1) This is seen in the manner in which the leaders of the people mingle their advice to their constituents with their answer to the king (ver. 16). (2) Also in the promptness with which the people acted upon the advice. “So Israel departed unto their tents.” 3. *But their anger carried them too far.* (1) Why include David in their resentment? Had they no inheritance in the son of Jesse? Would

they have said so when David delivered them from the hand of Goliath? How fitful is the passion of the multitude! How soon are good men forgotten! (2) In rejecting David did they not forsake the Lord who gave them David and his seed for ever by a covenant of salt? (2 Chron. xiii. 5—8.) (3) In rejecting David, in whom was the promise of Messiah, did they not go far towards rejecting Christ? See Stephen's argument, Acts vii. (4) Were they not impolitic in this? In so rejecting David they alienated from their cause the great tribe of Judah. Wrong is never truly politic. (5) In their hot haste they do not consult God, either by urim or by prophet (Hosea viii. 4).

II. IT WAS COMPLETED IN THE CROWNING OF JEROBOAM. 1. *Between these acts there was an interval.* (1) While in their tents the Israelites were still open to consider. They were as yet committed to no policy for the future. Time and reflection might have shown them that their anger had been carried too far. (2) Wise counsel now might have brought before them the evils of a division in the nation. Thus they would be weakened in the presence of the heathen. And in case of differences with Judah difficulties might arise in respect to their religious duties. For their temple was in the dominion of Judah. They may, therefore, be liable to temptations to irreligion, if not to idolatry. (3) While in their tents they were likewise still open to negotiations. Reasonable concessions now from Rehoboam might bring them back to their allegiance. 2. *But Rehoboam's folly hastened the sequel.* (1) He sent among them "Adoram, who was over the tribute." Adoram, from his office, was odious to them, for the taxes he had collected were the very ground of their complaint. Thus the infatuation of the king was as conspicuous in his choice of an ambassador as in that of his counsellors. (2) The haste with which this was done aggravated the evil. It was done while he was yet in Shechem, before his return to Jerusalem. If Adoram was commissioned then to collect taxes, Rehoboam lost no time in producing his scorpion. (3) Irritated as they were, this act roused their resentment to fury, and "all Israel stoned" Adoram to death. 3. *They now completed the revolution.* (1) Rehoboam, in terror of his life, mounted his chariot, and fled to Jerusalem. So ignominiously ended his threatening words! (Prov. xi. 2; xvi. 18; xvii. 19; xviii. 12.) (2) Israel, now free from the embarrassment of the monarch's presence proceeded at once to crown Jeroboam. (3) But in all this there is no consultation with the Lord; yet to the letter are the predictions of Ahijah verified. There is a Providence in human affairs. Prophecy makes this evident. Wicked men are, in their very waywardness, unconsciously made the instruments of that Providence in bringing punishment upon themselves.—M.

Vers. 21—24.—*The Message of Shemaiah.* In the order of Providence the words of the prophet Ahijah became so far translated into history, that ten of the tribes of Israel had revolted from the son of Solomon and had made the son of Nebat their king. Rehoboam, unwilling to lose so important a portion of his kingdom, was now mustering a formidable army to reduce them to submission. At this juncture the word of the Lord came to Shemaiah. Let us consider—

I. THE MESSAGE. 1. *It was the word of Jehovah.* (1) So it is worthy of all respect. It is the word of Infinite Wisdom and Knowledge. It is the word of the Supreme Arbitrator. (2) God does not speak immediately to men upon ordinary occasions. Indirectly He speaks to us evermore and in a million voices. (3) Happy is that people among whom the voice of God is heard. This was eminently the happiness of Israel. It was a sad day in Israel when there was "no operation" (1 Sam. iii. 1). 2. *It came by the hand of Shemaiah.* (1) God spake "in divers manners." By audible voice, as from Sinai; by urim, as in the temple; by dream; and by prophet, as in the present case. (2) Ahijah was a man of God. Such in general were the prophets. But sometimes it pleased God to use persons of equivocal character;—Balaam, Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Caiaphas (John xi. 49—52). 3. *It came to the whole community.* (1) To Rehoboam. He was first mentioned as the head. Also because he was the principal cause of the mischief which he now sought to repair. (2) To Judah and Benjamin. These tribes were

so united as to be viewed as "one tribe," and are unitedly called "Judah." The temple was actually within Benjamin's boundary. (3) To the remnant of the people. These consisted of priests and Levites, and godly people out of all the tribes who were unwilling to separate themselves from the house of David (2 Chron. xi. 13—16). 4. *It commanded peace.* (1) They were not to fight with their brethren. The case must be extreme that can justify a civil war. What miseries must have ensued if 180,000 warriors of Judah had encountered a corresponding army of Israel! (2) They were to submit to a revolution which was from the Lord. Not that God was the author of it, but permitted to be brought about by the king and his people for the punishment of their wickedness. "What is brought about in the course of God's providence is considered and spoken of as done by Him as a general would say that he drew the enemy into a snare, which he had only laid in his way" (Julius Bate).

II. ITS RECEPTION. 1. *They hearkened to the word.* (1) They recognized it as the word of God. Shemaiah was known to be a "man of God." His message also agreed to that of Ahijah, the fulfilment of a part of which pledged the fulfilment of the remainder. (2) To resist now would be to fight against God. This would be a hopeless business. But is not this the attitude of every sinner? 2. *They returned to their houses.* (1) The remnant of Israel were naturally glad to be spared the horrors of a war with their brethren. (2) So were the people of Judah and Benjamin. People are generally averse to war unless stirred up to it by their rulers. What a responsibility rests with war-makers! (3) Rehoboam is powerless without the people. He is now thoroughly cowed. The discipline was good for him. This was seen in the next three years of his reign. It were well if all men recognised God's word when it comes to them. We have God's word written in the Scriptures of truth. Do we take it home to guide and control our conduct? —M.

Vers. 12—16.—*The rending of the kingdom.* The name of Rehoboam is remarkable as seen in the light of the facts of his history. The "enlarger of the kingdom" becomes the chief instrument in its disruption. The one strong nation, the throne of which he inherited from his father, is changed by his folly into two comparatively weak and distracted kingdoms, which maintain towards each other an attitude of perpetual jealousy and strife. The revolt of the ten tribes was a calamity from the ill effects of which the land never recovered. Both politically and religiously the unity of the chosen people was hopelessly broken, and the career of each separate division became henceforth one of ever deepening corruption. The northern kingdom was governed for two hundred and fifty years by a succession of men who followed only too closely in the steps of "Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." Their reigns were little else than a story of crime and bloodshed and confusion. And though the history of Judah was not quite so dark, it tells very much the same tale. Few of its kings were wholly free from the prevalent wickedness. The efforts of the noblest of them, aided by all the moral influence of a long line of inspired prophets, were powerless to arrest the downfall of the state; till at last, after three hundred and eighty years, it sunk into the shame and misery of the Captivity. How can it be said of all this, that "The cause was from the Lord"? Look (1) at the human element, (2) at the Divine element, in this transaction. It is full of meaning for every age.

I. THE HUMAN ELEMENT. The rending of the kingdom was not a sudden event that came without warning. As in all such cases, a variety of circumstances prepared the way for it. There were slumbering sources of mischief, certain conditions of thought and feeling, specially old jealousies between the tribes of Ephraim and Judah, that made it inevitable. But having regard to the nearer occasions, note—(1) How the seed of evil sown in one generation bears deadly fruit in the next. Trace the calamity back to the time when Solomon's heart first began to turn from the Lord. The root of it lay in his idolatry, and in the oppressions into which his luxury led him. That idolatry undermined the deepest foundation of the nation's unity in its loyalty to Jehovah, the Great Invisible King; that tyranny violated the

public sense of righteousness, which is the strength of every nation, and kindled a smouldering fire of discontent, which was sure, when occasion served, to burst into a flame. So true is it that the evil, as well as the good, men do "lives after them." Through the subtle relations that exist between man and man, generation and generation, the possible influence of any form of wrong-doing can never be measured. It spreads in widening circles. As in the line of individual history every man reaps what he sows—

"Our deeds still travel with us from afar,  
And what we have been makes us what we are"—

so in the line of succeeding generations. Germs of evil sown by the fathers spring up among their children. There is a conservation of moral forces as of material. Let a corrupting power be once set in motion, and, though hidden for awhile, it is sure to appear again in some riper and more extended form. The nation retains its visible unity under Solomon, but when the charm of his personal reign is over, the disintegrating work that has been going on beneath the surface is made manifest. (2) The danger there is in following the prompting of foolish inexperience and headstrong self-will. Rehoboam was wise in taking counsel of his advisers in this emergency. His folly lay in listening to those who flattered his vanity, rather than those whose prudence was a safer guide; and in supposing that, whether the discontent that urged the plea of oppression was reasonable or not, heavier oppression would cure it. It is a familiar picture of human life that we have here. "Days should speak, and multitude of years teach wisdom" (Job xxxii. 7); but how often is the counsel of youthful incompetence followed because it is more agreeable. There is a time to resist as well as to yield; but experience shows that the pride that refuses all reasonable concession, and perhaps adds insult to wrong, defeats its own end. To stoop is often to conquer. To humble one's self is the way to be exalted. Imperious self-will rushes blindly to its own ruin. Kindly human sympathy and generous self-abandonment win honour and power. "He that would be great among you," &c. (Matt. xx. 26, 27).

II. THE DIVINE ELEMENT. This is seen in two respects. (1) So far as these events were the result of the wrong-doing of men, God ordains the laws by virtue of which that result comes to pass. All sin is a defiance of the Divine Authority. But the sovereignty of God is proclaimed in the very disasters that follow it and avenge it. What is the punishment of sin but an assertion, in a form that cannot be avoided, of the authority against which it is a rebellion? We can no more avert the penalty that treads on the heels of transgression than we can escape from our own shadow, or change the course of nature, and that because we cannot get beyond the reach of God. The law that governs it is backed by all the forces of Omnipotence. It is but a phrase of the Will that is "holy and just and good." Learn to look through all the wayward and uncertain forms of human action to the majesty of that Eternal Righteousness that "cannot be mocked," but will vindicate itself in unfailling sequences of reward and punishment. (2) Evil as these events and doings may be, God works out through them His own all-wise purposes. The principle involved in this may be profoundly mysterious to us, but the fact is too manifest to be denied. Jeroboam may have been utterly wrong in the spirit that moved him, taking advantage of tribal jealousy for the purposes of his own ambition; and yet he did but fulfil the Divine decree expressed through Ahijah the Shilonite (ch. xi. 29 seq.), and even through the prediction of the patriarch Jacob, which gave to Joseph the ascendancy and declared that the seed of Ephraim should "become a multitude of nations." Rehoboam's high-handed policy was without excuse, and yet he and his foolish counsellors were but ministers of the Divine purpose, maintaining God's choice of the house of David, and helping to fulfil the prophecy that the "sceptre should not depart from Judah until Shiloh come." All history is full of illustrations of the way in which God makes the evil of the world, in itself essentially at variance with His will, to serve Him. All streams of human folly and wrong, wandering and tortuous as they may be,

become tributary to the great river of His purpose, "He maketh the wrath of man to praise Him." The highest example is the sacrifice of Jesus, man's iniquity working out the world's redemption. "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands," &c. (Acts ii. 23). The final verification of this truth belongs to the time when, out of all the sin and strife and sorrow of the ages, God shall bring forth the glorious triumph of His gracious sovereignty, the "gathering together into one of all things in Christ."—W.

Vers. 13, 14.—*Rehoboam's Folly.* Such madness is scarcely credible in the son of Solomon. These two kings present a remarkable contrast. Solomon at twenty years of age is the wisest man of his times, Rehoboam his son, at forty, is unfit to rule himself or his people. Wisdom is not by descent, but is the gift of God. Describe the scene in the chapter: the visit of Rehoboam to Shechem, probably with a view to conciliate the ten tribes; the complaint of the people; the two councils of the king; the maddening effect of his reply. The study of small and foolish men is advantageous, as well as the study of the great and wise, that by their follies we may be warned. Rehoboam's faults lie on the surface, as would be natural in so shallow a character as his. A careful study of the chapter reveals to us the following.

I. REHOBAM'S FEEBLENESS OF CHARACTER. We should expect of one who succeeded to the throne in the prime of his life some clear notions of the policy he would pursue. Brought up in a court to which the rulers of other peoples came (ch. x. 24), over which the wisest king of that age ruled, he was rich in natural advantages. He could also have discovered for himself the condition of the people, their causes of complaint, &c. Had he given himself to such thought he would have been prepared for prompt and resolute action on his accession. Instead of this he seems helpless; turns now to these and now to those for counsel, and has not even enough wisdom to weigh the value of advice when it is given. "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel," is a law of far-reaching application. Amongst the virtues we should inculcate in our children is that of sober self-reliance. It may be fostered in the home with safety and advantage. Trust a child with something which he is free to use or abuse, in order to test him, and develop in him this grace. Probably Rehoboam had been brought up in the harem, and so had the heart of a child, with the years of a man. All gifts must be exercised to increase their value. "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways," and an example of this lies before us.

II. REHOBAM'S CONTEMPT OF EXPERIENCE. He consulted the old advisers of Solomon, it is true, but clearly for the look of the thing only. Directly after speaking with "the responsible ministers of the crown," he turned to the courtiers, who were far less able to advise in such a crisis. Job says, "With the ancients is wisdom; and in length of days understanding." This is not always true. A man may be old without being wise, he may go through many experiences without being experienced. Still, other things being equal, a long study of affairs gives knowledge and discretion. It would clearly be so, with men chosen by the wise Solomon. Besides, those who have already won their honours are more disinterested than those who are ambitiously seeking to win them; and those whose reputations are high are more careful to guard themselves against folly than those who have no reputation to lose. [Found on such principles the duties of submission to authority, of reverence to age, &c., which are the essentials of a happy home and of a peaceful society.]

III. REHOBAM'S RESORT TO THE FOOLISH. The answer of the young men showed their folly. That such a spirit should exist is a proof that in the later years of Solomon the people about him had sadly deteriorated. (1) These were the boon companions of Rehoboam, and knowing his haughty temper they flattered him to the top of his bent. (2) They were courtiers brought up amid the luxuries of the splendid reign just ended, and knew little or nothing of the condition of the people. For these and other reasons they were of all others the most unfit to give counsel

in this crisis. [Give examples from history of kings ruined by their favourites.] We should always suspect those who gratify our vanity, or seek to further our lower pleasures. Show the evils which arise, especially to weak characters, from foolish associates. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." "Forsake the foolish, and live." "Blessed is he that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful."

IV. REHOBOAM'S BOASTFULNESS OF HIS POWER. "My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins." A proverbial expression to denote that his power was greater than his father's. Such bragging is no sign of courage. At the first outbreak of rebellion, this boaster "made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem." A strong character expresses itself not in great words, but in great deeds. The boastful Peter fails, the silent John stands firm. The Pharisee is rejected, the publican justified. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted, and he that exalteth himself shall be abased."

V. REHOBOAM'S ABUSE OF HIS AUTHORITY. "My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke," &c. This was not the speech of one who felt himself to be a shepherd of God's flock, but of one who assumed despotic authority. This was never permitted to a king of Israel, nor is it intended by God that any man should thus rule. It would be an evil to the ruler himself as well as to his people. Least of all is it to be tolerated in the Christian Church. The highest in ecclesiastical office are forbidden to be "lords over God's heritage," but are to be "examples to the flock." Christ said, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them . . . but ye shall not be so" (Luke xxii. 24—29).

VI. REHOBOAM'S NEGLECT OF PRAYER. How differently he began his reign from his father! Solomon went first to God; Rehoboam went hither and thither for counsel, but never turned to God at all. How often we act thus in our temporal perplexities, in our theological difficulties, &c. How sadly we forget the words, "If any of you lack wisdom let him ask of God," &c. (Jas. i. 5—8). Throw the lurid light of this story on Proverbs i., and make personal application of the warning given there.—A. R.

Ver. 16.—*The Revolt.* This was the song of the insurrection. It is the *Marseillaise* of Israelitish history. We heard it first after the revolt of Absalom (2 Sam. xx. 1). It appears to have originated with "Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjaminite." The revolt described in our text was more serious, beginning as it did the ruin of Solomon's splendid kingdom. All such national events (the wars of the Roses, the civil war of the sixteenth century, the revolution of 1688, the French Revolution of the last century, &c.) are worthy of study. Moral causes lie at the root of them all, and the hand of God is over them all. The moral and Divine are more clearly revealed in Old Testament history; hence in part its value. In tracing this great revolution to its causes, we do not forget, though we do not dwell upon, two factors to which our attention is called by Scripture—(1) the design of God, and (2) the ambition of Jeroboam. We must remember, however, in regard to the former that God expressly declared that He would base future events on the king's obedience or disobedience to His law. And as to the ambitious designs of Jeroboam, they would all have been futile if (as God had foreseen) there had not been popular discontent, combined with princely folly. What, then, were the ultimate causes of the event described?

I. TRIBAL JEALOUSY. This had always existed. Ephraim and Judah had specially displayed it. The jealousy of Ephraim had asserted itself both against Gideon and Jephthah (Judg. viii. 1; xii. 1). The pride of this tribe was fostered by such facts as these: Joshua sprung from it, Samuel was born within its borders, Saul was of Benjamin, hereditary with Joseph; its geographical position gave it power, &c. Hence, till David's time, the leadership of the nation was practically in the hands of Ephraim. He reigned seven years over Judah before he could obtain supremacy over the other tribes. —He dealt wisely with those who belonged to Ephraim, selecting some of them for special favour, &c. Solomon, however,

aggravated the discontent by his oppression towards the close of his reign, so that Rehoboam had no easy task before him. All was ripe for revolt. 1. *National strength is impossible without national unity.* Clans must lose their jealousies if they would become a strong people. The severance of the rich from the poor, the hostility between capital and labour, the disaffection of any section of the people must be a source of weakness, a sign of decadence. 2. *The Church's power is sapped by sectarian hostility.* There may be diversity in modes of work and worship, but amongst all Christians should be unity of spirit. "There are diversities of operations, but the same spirit." Each tribe may march through the wilderness with its own banner, but all must find their one centre in the Divine presence, and seek their one Canaan as a land of rest. Isaiah foretells the day when "Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim" (ch. xi. 13).

II. **HEAVY TAXATION.** It affected the people's wealth, and still more painfully their personal labour. A more foolish step than that which Rehoboam took could scarcely be imagined. He sent to appease the people "Adoram, who was over the tribute;" the very man who represented the oppression they resented! *Quem Deus vult perdere, prius dementat.* Show how extravagance, disregard of the rights of others, unjust demands, carelessness of the interests of dependants, lead to disaster—in homes, in business, in national and ecclesiastical affairs. Illustrate this from history; the decline and fall of the Roman Empire; the dissolution of the formerly vast dependencies of Spain, &c. So if a *Church* demands too much, as Rome does, she loses all. **The intelligent men of Roman Catholic countries are sceptics.**

III. **RELIGIOUS INDIFFERENCE.** That this existed is evident from the ease with which Solomon set up the worship of Ashtoreth, Milcom, and Chemosh; and from the fact that Jeroboam, directly after the revolt, erected the calves at Bethel and Dan. J. D. Michaelis and others have sought to justify the people in their rebellion, but there can be no doubt that so far as they were concerned the revolt was criminal. Neither in this nor in any other act of man does higher causality affect the morality of an act. They were anxious about the decrease of taxation, but not about the removal of idolatry. To them it mattered little whether Jehovah were worshipped or not. But it was to represent Him, to fulfil His purpose, to preserve His truth, that the kingdom existed. Indifference to God is destructive of the stability of human hopes, of the kingliness of human character, of the peace and security of human kingdoms. Christ has come into the world to arouse it from indifference, that all men may go out to greet Him as "King of kings, and Lord of lords." If you lose the kingdom of heaven it is because, like Rehoboam, you throw it away. The lost opportunity never came to him again. He was forbidden to try to recover by force what he sacrificed by folly (ver. 24). Over him and over many a man the lament may be heard, "Oh that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes."—A. R.

Vers. 1—20.—*The accomplishment of the predicted judgment.* I. **DANGERS OFTEN COME DISGUISED.** 1. *It was a time of joyous expectation.* Nothing betokened the nearness of rebellion and disaster. All Israel had come to Shechem to make him king. There was no dispute about the succession, and no unwillingness to own the sway of the house of David. All was hopeful. Danger may lurk in joy like a venomous insect in a flower. 2. *The people's request was reasonable.* Rehoboam could shield himself under no plea of Divine right. David was appointed to shepherd Israel, and the people had a right to protest against their burdens. 3. *Their demand seems to have been urged with moderation.* There was as yet no determination to rebel. The issue lay with the king. It was to bear the stamp of his mind as well as theirs. There are moments that face us with a sudden demand to manifest the spirit that is in us and to make or mar our future. Should the demand come to thee to-day, what mark would be left, what work would be done?

II. **A DANGER WISELY MET.** 1. *The importance of the juncture was felt and*

*owned*. He took time for consideration. A good decision is nothing the worse of a calm review: a bad one needs it. 2. *He sought counsel*. We are helped by the light of others' judgment, but above all we need the direction of God.

III. THE BEGINNING OF DISASTER. 1. *A grave defect*. Among all that is said of these three days there is no mention of his inquiring of the Lord, or lifting up one cry for guidance. There is pride and passion in us which only God can subdue: these retained are worse than all our foes; they can only harm us through the enemies we harbour within our breast. 2. *The counsels of wisdom are rejected* (vers. 7, 8). 3. *The counsels of folly accepted* (vers. 8—11). He was seeking for the reflection of his own proud, vengeful thought, and he now found it in the advice of those who were like-minded. What we need is not the strengthening of our own judgment, but its correction by the utterance of love and righteousness and truth.

IV. FOLLY'S HARVEST. 1. *The shame of rejection and desertion* (ver. 16). 2. *His last attempt to assert his authority defeated* (ver. 18). 3. *His ignominious flight*. He who might have won a kingdom has to flee for his life. 4. *The separation of the ten tribes completed* (vers. 19, 20). If Rehoboam had fled from the evil which was in himself, he would not have required to flee from his people. We give birth to the terrors which pursue us. There is but one flight possible from loss and death—the flight from sin.—U.

Vers. 21—33. I. AN ERROR THAT COULD NOT BE REPAIRED (vers. 21—24). Rehoboam had zeal and strength behind him in his attempt to bring back the tribes by force. One hundred and eighty thousand men responded to his call; but all were dispersed at the lifting up of God's hand. The attempt was forbidden, 1. *Because of the ties of kindred*. These were forgotten by Rehoboam when he threatened the people with a heavier yoke. Tyranny is possible only in the denial of the brotherhood of man. It was forgotten now as he gathered his hosts together. Wars are impossible in the recognition of the brotherhood of man. This is God's word to the nations, to England as to the rest: "Ye shall not . . . fight against your brethren." 2. *Because the loss was of God*. "This thing is from Me." These two thoughts assuage anger and beget repentance; they who are against us are our brethren, and the blow is from our Father's hand. Our mistakes are permitted, and we eat their bitter fruit in God's righteous judgment. Keep the way of love and lowly dependence on God. Every other is full of mistake and irreparable loss.

II. THE BLINDNESS OF WORLDLY POLICY (vers. 25—33). Judged from a merely human standpoint, Jeroboam showed commendable foresight, and took effectual precautions against a great and possible danger. Yet he did not look far enough or high enough. The range of his vision did not embrace the mightiest of all forces. It shut out God, and every step he took ensured the destruction of the power he sought to guard. 1. *His fear was unbelief*. There did seem to be a danger in the recourse of the tribes to Jerusalem, but he had God's promise that He would build him a sure house if he would do that which was right in God's sight (xi. 38). Do not our fears go right in the face of the promises of God? 2. *It was base forgetfulness of God's mercy*. The Lord had fulfilled part of what He had said. The very circumstances in which the fear arose (the possession of the kingdom) were thus its answer. Our fears not only deny God's promises, but also the testimony of the past. Unbelief and ingratitude are the first steps in the path of sin (Rom. i. 21). 3. *His defiance of God*. When unbelief has shut Him out of the heart, His commandments are lightly esteemed. To suit the exigencies of state, God's ordinances were overturned, other holy places were set up, the commandment against image-worship broken, the priesthood and the feast-time changed, Jeroboam's sin lives still in our statecraft, in the conduct of our business, &c. God's purpose regarding us and the world is nothing! His commandments are the only things that with safety can be disregarded! 4. *His misdirected ingenuity*. He cleverly takes advantage (1) of the jealousy of the tribes. Why should Jerusalem be the only holy place, or Levi the one servant of God?

(2) He only repeats the sin, and quotes the words, of Aaron, and the fathers (Exod. xxxii. 4). (3) He uses places already consecrated, Bethel by Jacob's vision and altar, and Dan, the shrine of Micah's image (Judg. xviii. 30). (4) He hides zeal for his own safety under the plea of care for the people's convenience (ver. 28). Misused ability cannot shield from God's judgment. In every step he took he was the more surely sealing his own doom, and ensuring the final extinction of his people. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked."—U.

## EXPOSITION.

## CHAPTER XII. 25—33.

## THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL, AND THE SCHISM IN THE CHURCH.—

The historian, after describing the great rebellion of the Jewish people, proceeds, in the rest of this chapter, to relate the measures which the new king took to secure his position. These were both external and internal. The external means were the erection of fortresses; the internal, the provision of new sanctuaries, priests, and ordinances.

Ver. 25.—Then Jeroboam built [*i.e.*, rebuilt or fortified, *בָּנָה* naturally has both meanings] Shechem [see on ver. 1 and on ch. xiv. 1] in Mount Ephraim [The *Har-Ephraim*, or mountain district of Ephraim (in Josh. xi. 16 called the "Mountain of Israel;" cf. Josh xvii. 15—18; Judg. iv. 5; x. 1; 1 Sam. i. 1), is "the central mass of the hills of Palestine, nearly equidistant from the northern and southern boundary of the whole country" (Stanley, S. and P., p. 229), and the richest and most beautiful part of the land. "The tower of Shechem had been burnt down by Abimelech and the tower of Penuel had been destroyed by Gideon, Judg. viii. 17" (Keil). The city of Shechem had been destroyed at the same time as the tower, but had no doubt been rebuilt, at least in part, otherwise it could hardly have been selected for Rehoboam's coronation. It was naturally Jeroboam's first care to strengthen his position by fortifying his capital, and the more so as this city would be particularly obnoxious to Rehoboam as the scene of the revolution; but why he should at the same time have rebuilt Penuel—Ewald thinks the seat of government was placed here—is not at first sight so obvious, as it lay beyond the Jordan (Gen. xxxii. 22, 30; xxxiii. 17) and was therefore presumably outside the circle of hostilities, should such arise. Probably it was because this was the gate to his Trans-Jordanic territory. A tower commanding the fords of the Jordan would

secure Reuben, Gad, &c., against invasion from Judah. It is also not unlikely that Jeroboam, who was the great castle builder of that age, had some fears of "hostile attacks from the north and north-east" (Keil), or thought of "the caravan road which led over Gilead to Damascus" (Wordsworth), and of which he would wish, for the sake of his revenue, to retain the control, and dwelt therein [He made it his first residence and capital]; and went out from thence [*i.e.*, when he had secured one fortified city. He could hardly be certain as yet which side some of the tribes would take. It is also possible that some of the workmen who had built Shechem were afterwards employed on the fortification of Penuel], and built Penuel. [Bähr says, "There is no doubt that he built these fortifications by tribute labour, like Solomon." But is this quite so certain? The people after the revolt would naturally conclude that Rehoboam, of whose proud temper they had had such proof, would want to wreak his vengeance on the city which had rejected him, and the instinct of self-defence would lead them at once to rebuild their walls. And the new-born kingdom would also earnestly desire to possess a suitable capital. Thus their self-interest and enthusiasm alike would obviate the necessity for a conscription.]

Ver. 26.—And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David [It needed much less prescience than Jeroboam seems to have possessed to perceive that fortresses and armies would be of no avail for the defence of his realm, so long as Jerusalem remained the one sanctuary of the land. He clearly foresaw that if the people went up thither, as in time past, three times a year, to keep the feasts, the religious sentiment would in time reassert itself and sweep him and his new dynasty away. With one religion, one sanctuary, one priesthood, there could not long be two kingdoms. People who had so much in common would, sooner or later, complete the unity of their national life under a common sovereign. And we find, indeed, that so powerful were the attrac-

tions of the temple, and the religious system of which it was the centre, that "the priests and Levites that were in all Israel," together with the more devout laity, fell away to Rehoboam (2 Chron. xi. 13, 16), while the speech of Abijah on Mount Zemaraim (2 Chron. xiii. 11), proves that others as well as Jeroboam were well aware that the old religion and the new kingdom could hardly co-exist.]

Ver. 27.—If this people go up to do sacrifice [Heb. *sacrifices*] in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem [as the law of Moses ordained (Deut. xii. 11, 14; xvi. 6, 11)], then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord [The Syriac omits this word. The LXX. has *πρὸς Κύριον καὶ κύριον αὐτῶν*], even unto Rehoboam king of Judah [When Wordsworth remarks that Jeroboam "here acknowledges Rehoboam as the 'lord' of the people," he surely forgets that these are not the actual words of Jeroboam, but the thoughts which the historian supposes him to have had (ver. 26)], and they shall kill me [as they would do, if they wished to return to Rehoboam's rule. Their first offering would be the head of the usurper, 2 Sam. xx. 20, 21; cf. 2 Sam. iv. 7], and go again [lit., *turn again*, same word as above] to Rehoboam king of Judah.

Ver. 28.—Whereupon the king took counsel ["With his counsellors, or the heads of the nation who had helped him to the throne" (Keil). Bähr understands, "he reflected about it alone" (*et excogitato consilio*. Vulgate), alleging that so important a circumstance as the concurrence of the heads of the people in changing the system of worship would not have been passed over in silence. But while the text does not perhaps imply any formal deliberation with the elders, it is reasonable to suppose that Jeroboam, who owed his position to popular election, and who was far too sagacious not to follow the example of Rehoboam (vers. 6, 9), would summon others to advise him as to this critical and momentous step. Wordsworth refers to Isa. xxx. 1, and says that "Jeroboam is the image and pattern of Machiavellian politicians." "Next to Ahi-thophel, I do not find that Israel yielded a craftier head than Jeroboam's" (Hall)], and made two calves [It is generally held that these were in imitation of, or were suggested by, the "golden calf" of Aaron (Exod. xxxii. 2), and the close resemblance of Jeroboam's words (below), in inaugurating this new cultus, to Aaron's have been overlooked to prove it. But surely it has been overlooked that Jeroboam could hardly be so short-sighted and unwise as deliberately to reintroduce a worship which had provoked the "fierce wrath" (ver. 12) of God, and had

nearly resulted in the extermination of the Jewish race. For of course neither Jeroboam nor his people could have forgotten the stern condemnation which Aaron's calf-worship had received. The molten image ground to powder, the ashes mixed in the drink of the people, the slaughter of three thousand worshippers, &c., would assuredly have lived in the memories of the nation. A more impolitic step, consequently—one more certain to precipitate his ruin, by driving the whole nation into the arms of Judah—Jeroboam could not have taken, than to attempt any revival or irritation of the forbidden cultus of the deser. And it is as little likely that the worship of the calves was derived from the worship of Apis, as practised at Memphis, or of "Mnevis, the sacred calf of Heliopolis" (Stanley), though with both of these Jeroboam had recently been in contact. It would have been but a sorry recommendation in the eyes of Israel that the first act of the new king should be to introduce the hateful idolatry of Egypt into the land; and every consideration tends to show that the calf-worship was not, and was not intended to be, idolatry, such as the worship of Egypt undoubtedly was. It is always carefully distinguished from idol-worship by the historians and prophets. And the idea which Jeroboam wished to give his subjects was clearly this—that, so far from introducing new gods or new sanctuaries, he was merely accommodating the old worship to the new state of things. He evidently felt that what he and his house had most to fear was, not the armies of Rehoboam but the ritual and religious associations of Jerusalem. His object, if he were wise, must therefore be to provide a substitute, a counterfeit worship. "I will give you," he virtually says, "at Bethel and Dan, old sanctuaries of our race long before Jerusalem usurped their place, those visible emblems of the heavenly powers such as are now found only in the temple. You too shall possess those mysterious forms which symbolize the Invisible, but you shall have them nearer home and easier of access." There can be little doubt, consequently, that the "calves" were imitations of the colossal cherubim of Solomon's temple, in which the ox or calf was probably the *forma præcipua* (ch. vi. 23.) of gold [Hardy of solid gold. Possibly of wood covered with gold plates, *i.e.*, similar to the cherubim (ch. vi. 23—28); probably of molten brass (see ch. xiv. 9, and cf. Ps. cvi. 19), overlaid with gold; such images, in fact, as are described in Isa. xl. 19], and said unto them, It is too much for you.—[This translation, *puce* Keil, cannot be maintained. Nor can it be said that "the

exact meaning of the original is doubtful" (Rawlinson), for a study of the passages

where this phrase, 𐤀𐤏𐤍𐤁 occurs (see, e.g., Deut. i. 6; ii. 3; iii. 26; and cf. Gen. xlv. 26; Exod. ix. 28; 2 Sam. xxiv. 16; 1 Kings xix. 4) will convince the reader that it must be rendered here, "It is enough"—i.e., "you have gone long enough to a city which only owes its present position to the ambition of the tribe of Judah, and which is a standing testimony to your own inferiority; henceforth, desist." We have an exact parallel in Ezek. xlv. 6; where the Authorized Version renders, "Let it suffice you." The LXX. supports this view by rendering *καὶ ὄσθω ἴσιν* throughout. Vulgate,  *nolite ultra ascendere*, &c.] to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods [rather "god," for Jeroboam had no idea of introducing polytheism. It is true he made two calves because of his two sanctuaries, but each was designed to represent the same object—the one God of Israel. The word is translated "gods" in Exod. xxxii. 1, 4, 8, 23, 31; but as the reference is in every case to the one calf, it should be translated "god" there also. In Nehemiah's citation of the words (ch. ix. 18), the word is unmistakably singular. "This is thy god," &c. The words are not "exactly the same as the people used when setting up the golden calf" (Bähr). Jeroboam says, "Behold," &c.], O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. [It is at first sight somewhat difficult to resist the view, which is generally entertained, that Jeroboam, of set purpose, cited the *ipsissima verba* of the Israelites in the desert (Exod. xxxii. 4). But a little reflection will show that it is much more difficult to believe that a monarch, circumstanced as Jeroboam was, could at the very outset of his career have acted in the teeth of history, and have committed the gross blunder, not to say wanton outrage, of deliberately connecting his new cult with the calf-worship of the desert. He can hardly have dared, that is, to say, "This is no new religion, for this very form of worship our fathers used formerly in the desert, under the guidance of Aaron himself" (Seb. Schmidt, followed by Kell, *al.*) unless both he and his people alike—which is inconceivable—were ignorant of their nation's history recorded in Exod. xxxii. 19—35. It has been argued by some that this action of Jeroboam and the ready compliance of the ten tribes, prove that the Pentateuch cannot then have been written. But, as Hengstenberg (cited by Wordsworth) rejoins, the same argument would lead to the conclusion that the Bible could not have been written in the dark

ages, or, we might add, even at the present day. He can hardly have claimed, that is to say, to be reintroducing the calf-worship, which God had so emphatically reprobated, unless he designed an open defiance of the Most High, and wished to shock all the religious instincts and convictions of his people. It is much more natural, consequently, to suppose, considering the very frequent recurrence, though sometimes in slightly different shapes, of the formula "the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt" (Exod. xx. 2; xxix. 45, 46; Levit. xix. 36; xxiii. 43; xxv. 38; xxvi. 13, 45; Num. xv. 41; xvi. 13; xx. 16; Deut. v. 6, 15; vi. 12; viii. 14; ix. 26; Josh. xxiv. 6, 17; Judg. vi. 8; 1 Sam. viii. 8; x. 18; 1 Kings viii. 21, &c.) that the correspondence is accidental, the more so as Jeroboam does not quote the exact words, and that he has used a phrase which was constantly in their ears, insisting thereby that his calves were emblems of the God of their race, the God whose great glory it was that He had taken their nation out of the midst of another nation, &c. (Deut. iv. 34), and delivered them from a thralldom with which, perhaps, the tyranny of Rehoboam is indirectly compared. Or if there was any reference to the golden calf, it must have been depreciatory, as if to say, "That was rank idolatry, and as such it was punished. That calf was an image of Apis. My calves are cherubic symbols, symbols such as He has Himself appointed, of the Great Deliverer of our race. Behold thy God, which really brought thee up," &c.]

Ver. 29.—And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. [Two considerations seem to have influenced Jeroboam in his choice of these sites. First, both these places were in some sort sanctuaries already. Bethel was already a *makôm*, or holy place, in the days of Abraham; was consecrated by the visions and altar of Jacob (Gen. xxviii. 11—19; xxxi. 13; xxxv. 1, 7, 15), and by the ark having been there (Judg. xx. 26—28, Heb.; cf. Jos., *Ant.*, v. 2. 10). And though Dan (Josh. xix. 47; Judg. xviii. 29; xx. 1) can hardly have had as sacred a character as the "house of God and the gate of heaven" (Gen. xxviii. 17) had, still it had its shrine and its schismatic priesthood. A grandson of Moses (Judg. xviii. 13, true reading) had ministered there, and his sons were the priests of Dan still. Secondly, these localities would suit the convenience of his subjects, being respectively at the southern and northern extremities of the kingdom. And this, no doubt, was one reason why Dan was chosen in preference to other places, such as Shiloh, which, though more sacred,

were less conveniently situated. A sanctuary at Dan would save the northern tribes many tedious journeys. It should be remarked that Bethel properly belonged to Benjamin (Josh. xviii. 13, 22), though it was also on the border of Ephraim; and it has been suggested that it was Jeroboam's selection of this place as a seat of the calf-worship decided the tribe of Benjamin to follow the lead of Judah. But the narrative seems to imply that their choice had been made at an earlier period (ver. 21), and the city would seem to have been long in the possession of the house of Joseph (Judg. i. 22). It is now known as *Beitin*, and is one of the most naked and dreary spots in Palestine. "The place seems, as it were, turned to stone; and we can well imagine that the patriarch found nothing softer than a stone for his pillow." Conder, p. 252, who suggests that from the time of Abraham Bethel was a בֵּיתֶל, a sacred place merely (Gen. xxviii. 11), and distinct from the adjoining city of Luz (ver. 19.)

Ver. 30.—And this thing became a sin [It was in itself sinful, for it both set at nought the express prohibition of the Decalogue (Exod. xx. 4), and also disregarded the one sanctuary of God's choice (Deut. xii. 5). And it led to other sins, e.g., the intrusion of a schismatic and irregular priesthood, and the performance of unauthorized rites, and to "an ever-deepening corruption of the national faith" (Ewald). Cf. Hosea viii. 5; xiii. 2. But the meaning is, it became an occasion of sin to the people ("Quod fuit postea causa gravissimi peccati"—Vatab.) Jeroboam "made Israel to sin" (ch. xiv. 16; xv. 26, &c.) It is difficult to conceive, in the face of these and similar words, how any one can seriously maintain that "the church of Israel was the national church" (Stanley, ii. 264): for the people went to worship before the one even unto Dan. [The people frequented both sanctuaries; why, then, is that at Dan especially mentioned? Some (Rawlinson, e.g.) have suggested that the text is here corrupt, and that we should read, "before the one to Bethel, and before the other to Dan." According to others, "the one" (אֶת־הַאֶחָד) refers to the double אֶת־הַשְּׁנַיִם ("the one," "the other"); cf. ver. 29. They would interpret, that is, "the people went to both, even to the distant Dan" (Bähr, Thénius). Keil would force the text and understand, "the people, even unto Dan," i.e., the people throughout the whole kingdom. Similarly, Wordsworth. Ewald understands "before the one" to mean אֶת־הַאֶחָד i.e., "as one," sc. man. On the whole it is better to take the words as they stand, literally. It is quite conceivable that,

at first, the people resorted almost exclusively to the Danite sanctuary. Having been for long years a seat of worship, and having probably its "house of high places," or temple (see below), already built, it would naturally be in a position to receive worshippers some time before Bethel was prepared for that purpose. Jeroboam's offering in person at Bethel (ver. 32) which marks the inauguration of his new ritual there, may have been partly designed to attract worshippers to a shrine, which, as being nearer Jerusalem, or for some other reason, was neglected. But the verse is patient of another interpretation. It may intend to convey that the rebellious tribes, in their defiant disregard of the old order of things, the order now represented by a hostile kingdom, went *en masse* to the opposite point of the compass, even to the unhallowed and hitherto despised sanctuary of the Danites. The LXX. (Vat.) addition here is noticeable, "And they forsook the house of the Lord."]

Ver. 31.—And he made an house of high places [See on ch. iii. 2. and cf. 2 Kings xvii. 29. It is often assumed (Keil, Rawlinson, *al.* after Josephus) that Jeroboam built two temples for his cherubim, and the statement of the text, that he built one, is explained on the ground that the historian contrasts the "house of high places" with the "house of the Lord." Ewald, too, after 2 Kings xvii. 29, 32, understands the words as plural. But is it not more probable that a chapel or sanctuary already existed at Dan, where an irregular priesthood had ministered for more than four hundred years? This verse would then refer exclusively to Jeroboam's procedure at Bethel (see next verse). There he built a temple and ordained a number of priests, but Dan had both already. We know that the Danite priests carried on the calf-worship to the time of the captivity (Judg. xviii. 30). This "house of high places" has grown in Ewald's pages into "a splendid temple in Canaanite style", and made priests of the lowest of the people [Heb. מִן־הַסְּוֹת "from the ends," i.e., from all classes, *ex universo populo* (Gesén.), and not, as the writer explains presently, from the tribe of Levi alone. Gen. xix. 4, Judg. xviii. 2, Ezek. xxxiii. 2, prove this to be the correct interpretation of the word. Rawlinson, who remarks that "Jeroboam could have no motive for specially selecting persons of low condition," does not thereby dispose of the A. V. rendering, for the historian might mean that some of Jeroboam's priests were of the lowest stamp, because he could find no others, or because he was so little scrupulous as to take them. "Leaden priests are well fitted to golden

deities" (Hall)], which were not of the sons of Levi. [Jeroboam would doubtless have been only too glad to have retained the services of the Levitical priests, but they went over in a body to Rehoboam (2 Chron. xi. 13). The statement of ver. 14, that "Jeroboam and his sons" had "cast them out," suggests that they had refused to take part in his new cult and that thereupon he banished them, and, no doubt, confiscated their possessions. The idea of Stanley, that "following the precedent of the deposition of Abiathar by Solomon, he removed from their places the whole of the sacerdotal order," is a wild conjecture for which Scripture affords not the slightest warrant.]

Ver. 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 [i.e., the Feast of Tabernacles, which was held on the 15th of the seventh month (cf. ch. viii. 2). This was the great feast of the year, and, as the feast of harvest or ingathering, the most joyous. See on ch. viii. 1. Had Jeroboam provided no counter attraction to this great festive gathering in Judah he might have found it a formidable temptation to his subjects. The reason usually given for the alteration of the time—in defiance of the law, which expressly fixed it in the seventh month (Levit. xxiii. 34, 39, 41)—is that the eighth would be more generally convenient in the north, where the harvest or vintage was a month later (Then., Keil), as affording more time for the ingathering. In favour of this view is the consideration that the Jews not unfrequently had to intercalate a month—a second Adar—into their year, because of the season being a late one. Some of the older commentators, e.g., Vatab, think this time was chosen as the anniversary of his accession, but this is pure conjecture, and such an association would be contrary to the genius of the Hebrew people. Keil maintains that Jeroboam's design was to "make the separation, in a religious point of view, as complete as possible." But we can hardly be expected to believe that he altered the month, for the sake of creating a distinction, but "retained the day of the month, the fifteenth, for the sake of the weak who took offence at his innovations" (Keil). The day was retained, as Bähr points out, because, the months being lunar, the fifteenth was the day of the full moon], and he offered [Heb. as marg., "and he went up," i.e., ascended the altar; LXX. ἀνέβη. (Keil contends that  $\text{אָפַר}$  means "and he sacrificed," but this translation is without precedent. Ver. 33, "and he went up to burn incense," is decisive as to the meaning.) The altar was always raised. It was prob-

ably approached by a slope, as Exod. xx. 26 forbade steps, though it is by no means certain that they were not used even in Solomon's temple, and Jeroboam probably would have no scruples on such a minute point of ritual. It has been thought (Kitto, iv. 147) that he was moved to officiate in person by the precedent of the Egyptian kings, who exercised priestly functions; but it is much more probable that he was guided by the example of Solomon at the dedication of the temple] upon [i.e., he stood upon the ledge or platform (called in the A. V. "compass," Exod. xxvii. 5) in the middle of the altar] the altar. So did he in Bethel [i.e., the feast was held at one centre only, and at Bethel alone the king offered in person. But I venture to suggest that instead of  $\text{בֵּית}$ , "so did he," &c., we should read  $\text{בְּ}$ . The LXX. seem to have had this word before them—ἐπι τὸ θυσιαστήριον ὃ ποιεῖται ἐν βεθὴλ. And not only does this slight change bring the Hebrew into harmony with the LXX., but it also simplifies the construction. "He went up upon the altar which he made to sacrifice unto the calves which he made." The very tautology is instructive, as suggesting that altar, calves, and priests were all of Jeroboam's making, not of God's ordaining. The use of  $\text{בְּ}$  as a relative (=  $\text{בְּיָמָיו}$ ) is strictly grammatical], sacrificing [marg., to sacrifice] unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel [Dan being already provided with its priesthood] the priests of the high places [i.e., of "the house of high places" (ver. 31). Or it may be a contemptuous designation of Jeroboam's irregular priests] which he had made.

Ver. 33.—So he offered [Heb. went up, as before. This verse is really the introduction to the history of the next chapter] upon the altar which he had made in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised [Josephus (Ant. viii. 8. 5) seems unaware that this new feast was kept at a different date from the true Feast of Tabernacles. But these words are decisive] of his own heart [The Cethib has  $\text{בְּיָמָיו}$  by which Maurer and Keil understand  $\text{בְּיָמָיו}$  ("seorsum." But qu.) But the Keri  $\text{בְּיָמָיו}$  is every way to be preferred. So LXX., ἀπὸ καρδίας αὐτοῦ. Similarly, Neh. vi. 8]; and ordained [rather, kept, celebrated] a feast unto [Heb. for] the children of Israel: and he offered [went up] upon the altar, and burnt incense [Heb. to burn, &c. The context seems to imply that it was not incense, or not incense only, but the sacrifice, or sacrificial

parts of the victim, that the king burned. See on ch. xiii. 3 (וַיִּבְרַח). And this meaning is justified by Lev. i. 9, 17; 1 Sam. ii. 16; Amos iv. 5 where the same word is used. It cannot be denied, however, that the word is generally used of incense, and it is very probable that both this and sacrifices were offered by Jeroboam on the same altar (cf. ch. xi. 8). We may perhaps see in Jeroboam's ministering in person, not only the design to invest the new ordinance with exceptional interest and splendour, but also

the idea of encouraging his new priests to enter on their unauthorized functions without fear. The history, or even the traditions, of Nadab and Abihu (Lev. x.) and of Korah and his company (Num. xvi. 40), and the threatenings of the law (Num. xviii. 7, 22, cf. 2 Chron. xxvi. 20), may well have made them hesitate. To allay their fears the king undertakes to offer the first of the sacrifices. And that their fears of a Divine interposition were not groundless the sequel shows.]

### HOMILETICS.

**Ver. 30.—The Sin of Jeroboam.** What was this sin, of which, from this time forward, the historian has so much to say? It is mentioned more than twenty times in Scripture. It casts its dark shadow across fifteen reigns of the kings of Israel. Its baleful influences were felt for more than two and a half centuries. It was the prime cause (2 Kings xvii. 21–23) of that captivity from which the ten tribes have never returned. Surely we ought to know what it was. And as one help to a right conclusion, let us first clearly understand what it was *not*.

I. IT WAS NOT THE SIN OF REBELLION. There may have been sin in the way in which the rupture with Judah was brought about (see 2 Chron. xiii. 6, 7), though that is by no means certain (notes on vers. 19, 20). But even if Israel was set upon rebellion, and even if Jeroboam had rudely and wickedly precipitated the revolt, that cannot be “the sin” of which he is here and elsewhere accused. For, in the first place, *later* kings could not be held responsible for Jeroboam's conduct at the time of the disruption, *i.e.*, they could not commit *that* sin of Jeroboam; and, secondly, the disruption itself was ordained of God (ch. xi. 31 sqq.; xii. 15; 2 Chron. xi. 4). Verse 15, too, is decisive. “The cause was from the Lord.” Those who sat on Jeroboam's throne, consequently, no less than the successors of Solomon, reigned *de jure Divino*. The former equally with the latter were the anointed of Heaven (2 Kings ix. 8, 6). It was the Lord “raised up” (ch. xiv. 14) Baasha (ch. xv. 28, 29), Zimri (ch. xvi. 12), Jehu (2 Kings ix. 6), and the rest.

II. IT WAS NOT THE SIN OF GOING AFTER OTHER GODS. If this were the sin referred to here it would probably have been called “the sin of Solomon,” for Solomon is twice charged with that sin (ch. xi. 4, 10), whereas Jeroboam never went after Baal, or Ashtoreth, or Milcom. It is true the calves are once called “other gods” (ch. xiv. 9), but they are only so called in derision, and in ch. xvi. 31 the sin of Jeroboam is expressly distinguished from the worship of other gods. It was probably Jeroboam's boast (see note on ver. 28), not that he was instituting a new religion, or setting up a rival Deity, but that he was worshipping the one true God in a more rational and primitive way. See Jos., Ant. viii. 8. 4. And that the calf-worship was not idolatry, properly so called, is clear from this consideration, that “the sin of Jeroboam” is confined to the kingdom of Israel. Not one of the kings of Judah is ever taxed with it. And yet it was in Judah, and not in Israel, that idolatry prevailed. Of the kings of Israel, only Ahab and his two sons were guilty of idolatry; whereas of the kings of Judah only five set their faces against it. Yet the non-idolatrous kings of Israel are constantly charged with Jeroboam's sin, and the idolatrous kings of Judah never. Polytheism, therefore, it cannot have been.

III. IT WAS NOT THE SIN OF IMAGE WORSHIP. The calves were not made to be worshipped, any more than the cherubim of Solomon's temple. Nor do we read that they received Divine worship. “The people went to worship *before the one*,” &c. The Scripture, it is true, calls them “molten images,” but Jeroboam doubtless said they were symbols of the heavenly powers, designed (like the images of the Roman Communion) to be helps to devotion, and they are nowhere called “idols,”

or "horrors," or "statues." We entirely misconceive Jeroboam's purpose, and discredit his sagacity, if we think that he had the worship of Apis or Mnevis or any similar idol in his mind. The last thing that would occur to him would be to set up a purely pagan system amongst such a people as the Jews. His was not the sin of idol worship. What, then, was it?

I. IT WAS THE SIN OF HERESY. For "heresy" in the original meaning of the word simply implied an arbitrary selection of doctrines or practices—*αἵρεσις* = *a choosing*—instead of dutifully accepting those which God has enjoined. This is precisely what Jeroboam did. Instead of taking and handing down to his successors, whole and undefiled, the "faith once delivered," he presumed to modify it; to adapt it, as he thought, to the new order of things, &c. His heresy was threefold.

1. *He chose his own places of worship.* God had ordained that there should be one sanctuary for the whole nation. Both the law of Moses and the history of Israel alike taught that the religious centre of the nation should be one. From an early age it was predicted that God would choose Himself a place to put His name there (Deut. xii. 13, 14; xiv. 23). And this Divine choice had been recently and unmistakably made. He "chose not the tribe of Ephraim, but chose the tribe of Judah, the Mount Zion which He loved." And He built His "sanctuary," &c. (Psa. lxxviii. 67—69; cf. Psa. cxxxii. 13, 14). At the dedication of this sanctuary this choice had been publicly proclaimed (ch. viii. 10, 11; 2 Chron. vii. 2, 12, 16). The whole nation then understood that God had "chosen Jerusalem to put His name there." And Jeroboam was aware of this, and was also aware that the division of the kingdom was to make no difference as to the oneness or the position of the sanctuary. To prevent misconception he was twice reminded in the message of Ahijah, his charter to the crown, that Jerusalem was "the city which God had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel" (ch. xi. 32, 36). It was to be in the future, as it had been in the past, the one place of incense and sacrifice. And that Jeroboam knew it, his own thoughts (ch. xii. 26, 27) reveal to us. "If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem." He is quite clear, then—indeed, he could not be otherwise—as to the place of God's choice. But that place, he argues, will not do for him. Political considerations demand that he shall find a religious centre elsewhere. So he "takes counsel," and decrees *ex mero arbitrio* that Israel shall have three holy places instead of one, and that Bethel and Dan shall henceforward divide the honours hitherto enjoyed by Jerusalem.

2. *He chose his own modes of worship.* Though the way in which God should be approached had been prescribed, though every detail of the Divine service had been ordered beforehand, and though he had been warned against adding aught to it or diminishing aught from it (Deut. iv. 2; xii. 32), yet he decided otherwise. Perhaps he persuaded himself that he had good reasons for it; but all the same he chose otherwise than God had chosen. Though Exod. xx. 4, &c., forbade the making of graven images, yet he "made molten images" (ch. xiv. 9). Though the law decreed that the sons of Aaron alone should offer sacrifice and burn incense, yet he determined to play the priest himself, and also "made him priests of the lowest of the people." *Sic volo, sic jubeo, &c.*

3. *He chose his own times of worship.* Nothing could have been more positively fixed than the date of the Feast of the Tabernacles. It was to be "the fifteenth day of the seventh month" (Levit. xxiii. 34, 39). But this was not the day of Jeroboam's "choice." He "devised" a month "of his own heart;" he consulted, perhaps he thought, his people's convenience; but was there ever heretic yet that was not full of arguments, when all God asks is obedience?

"In religion  
What dangerous error, but some sober brow  
Will bless it and approve it with a text,  
Hiding the grossness with fair ornament."

II. IT WAS THE SIN OF SCHISM. It is not without reason that in the Litany "heresy and schism" are coupled together, for the latter springs out of the former (Justin Martyr quotes as one of the sayings of our Lord *ἑσθραὶ σχισμάρα καὶ*

*ἀποσπῆς* (cf. 1 Cor xi. 18). Jeroboam's arbitrary choice led to a *division* in the Jewish Church. Let us briefly consider in what way the breach in the national unity, hitherto so close and conspicuous, was effected.

1. *The one centre of unity gave place to three centres of division.* Hitherto, three times a year (cf. ix. 25) all the males of Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, had gathered round one altar. Thither, "the tribes went up, the tribes of the Lord." Now, instead of going, even from Dan, the people went to worship before the calves "even unto Dan." The ten tribes turned their backs on Jerusalem, and sought, some of them, a sanctuary at the opposite point of the compass. Nor did those who worshipped at Bethel afford a less striking proof of disintegration, for that sanctuary was within sight of the temple mount. The two pillars of smoke ascending day by day from rival altars, but twelve miles apart, proclaimed to all that there was a "schism in the body."

2. *The one priesthood of Aaron shared its ministry with the priests of Jeroboam.* No longer were offerings brought exclusively to the sons of Levi, but "whosoever would" might burn the incense and sprinkle the blood. The schism was accentuated by the appointment of a new order of men, with vested interests in the perpetuation of division.

3. *The one ritual of Divine obligation was travestied by rites and ceremonies of human appointment.* If the breach was widened by the intrusive priesthood, it was deepened by the unauthorized and forbidden cultus of the calves. The stranger, who came out of a far country for God's name's sake (ch. viii. 41, 42), to pray toward the house, found himself in the presence of rival systems, each claiming to be primitive and true, but differing so widely that he would go home to his own land, doubting whether both were not false. He would say, as others have said since, that before men compassed sea and land to make proselytes, they had better agree among themselves.

4. *The one Feast of Tabernacles appointed of God was parodied by a Feast devised of man.* That feast, the most joyous of the year, had once been the greatest manifestation of religious unity which Israel afforded. It was the very "dissidence of dissent" when the feast of the seventh month was straightway and ostentatiously followed by a feast of the eighth month, celebrated but a few miles distant. It was the culminating proof of *δύο—σρασία*.

III. THE SIN OF KORAH (Num. xvi.) This has been already twice referred to, as a part of the heresy and as a factor in the schism. But it may well stand by itself as a substantive part of the sin. It was just as great a violation of the Divine law to use the ministry of unauthorized persons as to worship at shrines of man's choosing or with ordinances of man's devising.

This, then, was "the sin of Jeroboam." It was not rebellion, not idolatry, but the worship of the true God in unauthorized places, with unauthorized rites, and by unauthorized ministers. Nor did it make it less a sin that it seemed to prosper. The church of Jeroboam straightway became the church of the majority. At the time of the captivity it could boast of some antiquity (Judg. xviii. 30; 2 Kings xvii. 16). But all the same God put His brand upon it. Three miracles (1 Kings xiii.) were wrought as a testimony against it. The voices of the prophets were raised to condemn it (Hosea, *passim*; Micah vi. 16, &c.) But from year to year and reign to reign it flourished, and bore its baleful fruit, and then, after the schism had lasted two hundred and fifty years, while the kingdom of Judah, despite its idolatries, still retained for 135 years longer its place in the covenant land, the ten tribes were carried away to the cities of the Medes, were "scattered beyond the river," and disappeared from the page of history.

And has this sin no lessons? has its punishment no warnings for ourselves? If, as some seem to think, we may pick and choose our doctrines at pleasure; if the Scripture is of private interpretation; if we are at liberty each one to set up his own dogmas against the *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus* of the Catholic Church; or if there is no such thing as schism: if it is never mentioned or never reprobated in the New Testament; if the Babel of sects—there are over one hundred of them in this England of ours—is according to the plan and purpose of our Lord;

or if, again, the "form of sound words," the *depositum fidei*, the creeds of the undivided Church, have no authority: if they can be added to by the autocrat of Rome, or diminished from by any state, or sect, or teacher; or, finally, if there is no such thing as a "mission" of Christ's ministers; if any man may take this honour to himself; if those who have never been *sent* themselves may nevertheless *send* others—then this history is void of all meaning. But if, on the other hand, Christianity is the child of Judaism, and the Christian Church the inheritor of the principles of the Jewish; if that church is One and Catholic and Apostolic; if the faith was once for all (*ἅπασι*) delivered to the saints; if our Lord Christ sent His apostles even as the Father had sent Him (John xx. 21), if they in turn "ordained elders in every city" (Titus i. 5; cf. 2 Tim. ii. 2), and by laying on of hands (Acts xiii. 3); if the tactual succession is not a mere piece of priestly assumption—then assuredly the history of Jeroboam's sin is full of meaning, and "very necessary for these times." And the prominence accorded to it in Scripture, the twenty references to its working—we can understand it all when we remember that "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning," and that the Spirit that moved the prophets foresaw the manifold heresies and schisms of Christendom.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 25—27.—*Jeroboam's Despondency.* "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." Jeroboam's ambition was to be a king, and God gave him his desire. This was to punish Solomon and his house for their apostasy, and the men of Israel who had been led away in it. The sequel proved that the ambition of Jeroboam also brought its punishment, for he soon found his throne the reverse of a comfortable seat.

I. HIS FAITH IN HIS PEOPLE WAS SHAKEN. 1. *They seem to have become restive under his rule.* (1) This was likely to be the case. Their complaint against the house of David was the pressure of their burdens. But these could not be lightened when two kings had to be maintained instead of one; when a court had to be supported by a greatly diminished constituency. (2) They had to create a capital worthy of the kingdom. So Jeroboam set about building Shechem, which was a ruin; for, two centuries before, it had been demolished by Abimelech (Judg. ix. 45). The cost of this, including that of the palace there, appears to have been so disagreeable, that Jeroboam, for his tranquillity, shifted his court to Penuel, on the east of the Jordan. (3) Penuel now stood in need of improvements. It had suffered at the hands of Gideon nearly three centuries before, when the tower was destroyed (Judg. viii. 17). A second palace here was not likely to ease their burdens. (4) Then their ability to pay taxes was reduced; for their commerce, created in the days of Solomon, seems to have declined. This would not improve their temper. 2. *He therefore became gloomily apprehensive.* (1) He feared that, having now discovered that their burdens were no lighter, they might reflect that they had done wrong in throwing off allegiance to their legitimate sovereign, and that the "kingdom would return to the house of David." (2) Further, that this disposition must be encouraged by their visits to Jerusalem for religious purposes (Deut. xvi. 16, 17). They would then see that neither Shechem nor Penuel, as capitals, could compare with Jerusalem. (3) And he feared that a counter revolution must imperil his life, for Rehoboam would demand this as a condition of their reconciliation. But the true cause of his despondency was that—

II. HE HAD FORGOTTEN TO TRUST IN GOD. 1. *Had he no assurance in the words of Ahijah?* (1) Did not Ahijah give him ten pieces of the rent garment? Did he not accompany the sign with assuring words? (Chron. xi. 37.) Has not this part of the prophecy been fulfilled? (2) Is it not, therefore, in the power of Jeroboam to perpetuate his throne by faithfully serving God? (Chron. xi. 38.) The fulfilment of the former part of the prophecy surely pledges the latter. (3) Ah, but this promise is conditional! So are all God's promises. If we comply not with the conditions

we shall infallibly forfeit the kingdom of heaven. 2. *But he was moved by ambition rather than piety.* (1) Had he complied with the holy conditions, instead of apprehending mischief to his throne from the visits of his subjects to Jerusalem, it would be the other way. For the more they learnt to love and serve God, the more loyal must they be to a godly king. (2) But he felt in his soul that he had not so complied; nor had he any disposition to repent; therefore, instead of seeking help in God, as he should have done, he trusted to his own wicked policy. There is no real happiness without God. The very pinnacle of human ambition is a throne: yet without God is there no happiness here. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"—M.

Ver. 28.—*Jeroboam's Calves.* Unbelief is the root of all mischief. Had the king of Israel believed God, he would have obeyed Him; then he would have been under no temptation to set up a spurious religion to the confusion of his family and people. But what did he mean by these calves?

I. THEY WERE INTENDED TO BE IMAGES OF THE GOD OF ISRAEL. 1. *So he describes them in the text.* (1) "These are thy Elohim, O Israel." Our English Bibles give the word "God" without the capital G, as though the purpose of Jeroboam were to lead the people away from the true God. This, indeed, was the effect, but that it was the design may well be doubted. (2) He further identifies the Elohim represented in them as having brought them up out of the land of Egypt. This expression is equivalent to saying that the Elohim he would remind them of in these figures was the same who wrought all the miracles of the Exodus. (3) We must not be misled by the words, "Behold thy Elohim," or "These *are* thy Elohim," as though he wished to impose these calves upon them as the very Elohim who wrought all the wonders of their miraculous history. For this is a Hebraism for *similitudes* (see Gen. xli. 27; Dan. ii. 38; 1 Cor. x. 4). Note: Romanists impose their monstrous transubstantiation upon those who have not discerned this. 2. *His error was a reproduction of Aaron's.* (1) This will be clear from a comparison of the text with Exod. xxxii. 4. (2) Aaron could not, under the very shadow of the Shekinah, and within hearing of the voice of thunder from Sinai, have intended to substitute his calf for the very Elohim. (3) But that he only intended it as an emblem of the true God is placed very clearly before us in the words following (Exod. xxxii. 5, 6), in which the feast celebrated before his calf is called a "feast of Jehovah." 8. *Yet this was idolatry.* (1) Idolatry may consist of worshipping the creature instead of the Creator. This the Romanist does when he worships the wafer. (2) Or it may be substituting some imagination of his heart for the God who has miraculously revealed Himself, and whose revelations concerning Himself are written in Holy Scripture. Such were the idealizations of the ancient (and also modern) heathen. (3) Or it may consist in attempting to worship the true God through unauthorised images (see Exod. xx. 4). This was the case with Aaron, also with Jeroboam. It is likewise the case with the Romanist, who uses crucifixes, and images and pictures of the Persons of the Trinity.

II. BUT WHY DID HE MAKE CALVES? 1. *He had the cherubim in his mind.* (1) These had the visage of a calf. They had, indeed, also the visages of a lion, of a man, and of an eagle. But the whole figure terminated in the foot of a calf (Ezek. i. 7). (2) Jeroboam's calf probably had also associated with it the other visages of the cherubim; so probably had Aaron's, for they respectively call their image by the plural name Elohim (אלהים). The single image at Bethel is also called calves (עללים) in the plural, which suggests a plurality of visages, though not necessarily visages of calves, for the whole emblem appears to have been designated by this name. 2. *But the cherubim were emblems of the Holy Trinity.* (1) The calf or young bull, which by the ancients was taken for an emblem of fire, stood here for the first Person of the Godhead. (See Bate's "Critica Hebræa," under עלל and כרוב; also his learned "Inquiry into the Occasional and Standing Similitudes of the Lord God in the Old and New Testaments.") (2) The lion was the symbol of light, and stood for the second Person. With the face of the lion that

of the man was constantly associated, foreshadowing the assumption of the manhood into the Godhead by that blessed Person. (3) And the eagle, the emblem of air, stood for the Holy Spirit. (4) These, therefore, are called the *cherubim*, or *similitudes of the Great Ones*, from רבִּים *Great Ones*, and כֹּכָב *like*. 3. *Micah's teraphim were like Jeroboam's calves*. (1) They were a compound or plural image like the cherubim, and used like them (see Judg. xvii. 5, xviii. 5). (2) Michael was a worshipper of the true God, and so was Laban, who also used teraphim (see Gen. xxxi. 19, 30, 37, 49). (3) Compare also 1 Sam. xix. 13; Ezek. xxi. 21; Hosea iii. 4. (4) The *cerberus* of the pagans, with its plurality of heads, was a corruption, and the name of that monster keeps up the sound, of the original Hebrew *cherubim*. How subtle is the spirit of idolatry! We cannot keep too close to God's Word.—M.

Vers. 28—83.—*Jeroboam's Sin*. The king of Israel, moved by personal ambition instead of zeal for God, fearing lest his people, in going to Jerusalem to worship, should see reason to regret having rent the kingdom, took counsel to prevent this. The result was the development of the policy described in the text. It was cunning—

I. IN THE KIND OF WORSHIP IMPOSED. 1. *As to its objects*. (1) It purported to be the worship of the God of Israel. Essentially the same with the worship at Jerusalem. Thus it conciliated favour. Had it been the worship of any god of the nations, opposition would have been provoked. (2) Yet was it idolatry. So in like manner is much of the worship of modern times which passes under the name of Christianity. Satan does not lose his identity by transforming himself into an angel of light. 2. *As to its modes*. (2) Its images were imitations of the cherubim. Such also were the teraphim. And as God was said to *dwell in*, not “between” (כֹּכָב is to *inhabit*), the cherubim, so Jeroboam directed his dupes to seek the God of Israel *in* his calves. (2) With these were associated altars, for sacrifice and incense, like those in the temple; and the victims would be clean animals proper for sacrifice; the incense also would be similar to that burnt in Jerusalem. (3) He had a Feast of Tabernacles, which is described in the text as “like unto the feast that is in Judah.” Only that he altered the date as well as the place from the fifteenth day of the seventh month to the corresponding day of the month following. It is significantly noted, “which he had devised of his own heart” (see Num. xv. 39). He was a forerunner of another character who has not hesitated to “change times and laws” (Dan. vii. 25). 3. *As to its ministers*. (1) His priests were Levites, where he could get them. In this he seems to have succeeded at Dan. For the descendants of Jonathan, who was of the family of Aaron, appear to have fallen in with his designs (see Judg. xviii. 30). (2) But it was different at Bethel. Here the Levites, it is to be hoped, had too much principle to serve his calves. So “he made priests of the lowest of the people.” (3) Amongst these he officiated himself. Morally he was indeed amongst the lowest of the people, notwithstanding his position as king. This, unhappily, was not sufficiently discerned. The wicked do not understand (Dan. xii. 10).

II. IN THE PLACES CHOSEN FOR THAT WORSHIP. 1. *Dan was chosen with sagacity*. (1) This was a city in the north, whose Canaanitish name was Laish, but which, when conquered by the Danites, received the name of their father (Judg. xviii. 29—31). This would be convenient to the people living so distant from Jerusalem. (2) Besides, from its founding, this city was sacred to the worship of God through the medium of teraphim. This was about the time of Joshua's death when Phinehas ministered at the tabernacle at Shiloh (compare Judg. xx. 27, 28). From these very teraphim, when they were in the house of Micah, God gave responses to Jonathan the priest. (3) For the teraphim of Micah, which were carved blocks covered with *silver*, Jeroboam substituted one of his calves, which was covered with *gold*; otherwise there does not appear to have been any material change in the worship there. So the prejudices of the people would not be shocked. 2. *Bethel also was chosen with sagacity*. (1) This was in the southern part of the kingdom, to accommodate those who might otherwise go to

Jerusalem through convenience of distance. How adroitly do the wicked place their snares! (2) This place, too, had a memorable history. It was the scene of the vision of the ladder and renewal of the covenant with Jacob, in token of which the patriarch vowed to the Lord, anointed a pillar, and built an altar (Gen. xxviii. 19, 20; xxxi. 13; xxxv. 1, 7). It was one of the stations of Samuel, and a place to which, in his days, the people were accustomed to go up to worship (1 Sam. vii. 16; x. 3). (3) Here, accordingly, Jeroboam fixed his head-quarters, and built a pretentious temple, or "house of high places" (ver. 81).

Thus practically did Jeroboam say, with another purpose in his heart, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem." Beware of religion made easy; it may land you in perdition. Beware of imitations of Divine things. Keep rigidly to the Word of God.—M.

Vers. 26—28.—*The Sin of Jeroboam.* This passage describes the act which is so often referred to with horror, in the books of Kings and Chronicles, as "the sin of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat." To an irreligious man like himself, nothing would appear more natural or politic than this conduct. He had been driven into Egypt by Solomon, had there married Pharaoh's daughter, and become familiar with the worship of Apis and Mnevis. Now he had returned, and found himself the ruler of the ten tribes, the first king of the separate "kingdom of Israel." Recognizing as he did the religious tendencies and memories of his people, he saw that the national assemblies for worship in the temple at Jerusalem would, sooner or later, unite the tribes again under one king. Hence his action. Looking at his conduct (1) from the earthward, and (2) from the heavenward side, we see that his policy was at once shrewd and sinful.

I. THE SHREWDNESS OF JEROBOAM'S POLICY. (1) *It was an appeal to tribal independence.* In effect he said, "Why should you men of Ephraim be dependent for your worship on Judah? Why should your tribute go to support their temple? Let us have a place of our own." This argument has been repeated by demagogues in every land and age. Class has been set against class, nation against nation, Church against Church, by this spirit. Show some of the advantages of recognizing our interdependence. (2) *It was an appeal to self-indulgence.* "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem." Point out instances in which religious teachers have condescended to such base suggestions as this; e.g., the theology that declares self-conquest nothing, that makes faith the executioner, instead of the sustainer of morality; the teaching that will offer "indulgences" to those of sinful habit; the worship that pleases a sensuous taste, but demands no intelligent thought, &c. 3. *It was an appeal to former memories.* He made Shechem his capital, a place associated with Abraham and Jacob, and afterwards assigned to the Levites, and made a free city. He erected one of the calves at Bethel, a holy place on the borders of Benjamin and Ephraim (see Gen. xxxiii.). No doubt his design was to conciliate those who were proud of past history. 4. *It was a bold attempt to deceive the devout.* He pretended that it was the old worship re-established; that Jehovah was really represented by the calves: "These be thy gods (the old gods) that brought thee out of the land of Egypt." Not the first or last time in which the prince of darkness has appeared as an angel of light. Shrewd as was the policy, it was not perfectly successful even during his reign. The best people emigrated to Judah (like the Huguenots to England), to enrich another kingdom by work and wealth; and the prophets and many of the priests were roused to hostility. Even had it succeeded, however, such policy deserved to be branded with infamy. Principle must never be sacrificed to expediency. Success never condones wrong-doing with God.

II. THE SINFULNESS OF JEROBOAM'S POLICY. 1. *It revealed his utter distrust of God.* See the promise that had been given him (ch. xi. 38): "I will build thee a sure house." He could not believe it. He would trust his own skill rather than God's favour. So had it been with Saul and Solomon. The path of simple obedience is strait and narrow, and "few there be that find it." "Do My will and trust Me," is the lesson of life, but we are slow to learn it. Many professing

Christians consider religion inappropriate to business competition and to political movements. In this they resemble the son of Nebat. 2. *It violated the fundamental law of the Decalogue.* If the first command was not actually broken, the second was, necessarily. Had these calves merely been the outward symbols of Jehovah, they were amongst the forbidden "images." Jeroboam knew this. He remembered the calf Aaron made, for his words were an echo of those of the first high priest. He knew that only the intercession of Moses then saved the people from destruction, yet again he defiantly disobeyed. Show the peril of allowing images, crucifixes, banners, the elements in the sacrament, &c., to take a false position in Christian worship. Even if the initiated worship God through these, they break (in spirit) the second command; while the more ignorant are with equal certainty led to the violation of the first. 3. *It involved and necessitated other sins.* (1) The people worshipped in the place God had not chosen, as He had chosen the temple. (2) They had no ark of the covenant on which rested, and because of which was promised, the real presence of God. (3) The priests were chosen by the king in opposition to the ordinance of God (vers. 31, &c., *ex universo populo*). (4) The national feast of tabernacles was changed from the seventh month (Levit. xxiii. 34) to the eighth, not only because the harvest was later in the north than in the south of Judah, but to widen insidiously the breach between the kingdoms. So in all ages and in all spheres one sin leads to another. It would be better to die as Abigail (ch. xiv. 13) than to reign as Jeroboam.—A. R.

Vers. 26—30.—*The Golden Calves.* Jeroboam here earns for himself that name of evil repute—"the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." As the leader in the revolt of the ten tribes he was simply fulfilling a Divine purpose. "The thing was from the Lord,"—the ordained penalty of Solomon's transgression (ch. xi. 31, 33). But this setting up of the golden calves, this only too successful attempt to sever the sacred bond that bound the people of the whole land in one common allegiance to the temple and the great invisible King who sat enthroned there, bore a widely different character. This was not "from the Lord." It was wholly evil. "The thing became a sin," and the sin of Jeroboam became the prolific source of sin in Israel through all succeeding generations (see ch. xiv. 7—16). This transaction illustrates—

I. THE FATAL PERVERSITY OF A LAWLESS AMBITION. This was Jeroboam's ruin. God, by the prophet Ahijah, had promised to establish him in the kingdom on certain conditions (ch. xi. 38). There was no wrong in the mere fact of his seeking to verify this prediction. His sin lay in the nature of the means he adopted. He thought it needful in order to his having a "sure house" that the people should be kept from going up to sacrifice at Jerusalem. In other words, he would strengthen his house at the expense of doing deep dishonour to the "*House of the Lord.*" His own petty kingship was more to him than the Infinite Majesty of Jehovah. Thus we see how a carnal ambition (1) is subject to needless fears; (2) trifles with or defies a power that it finds to be infinitely stronger than itself; (3) thinks to secure its ends by means that actually defeat them; (4) is deceived by its seeming successes. History is full of examples of the way in which men have sought power for themselves, either by the abuse or the degradation of things sacred, or have thought to serve ends right in themselves by unrighteous means. This was one form of Satanic temptation to which our blessed Lord was subject. "All these things will I give thee," &c. (Matt. iv. 8, 9), and his professed followers have too often fallen before it.

II. THE ARTIFICE OF A WICKED PURPOSE. This is seen in the way in which Jeroboam practised craftily upon the religious sentiment of the people in the service of his own ambitious designs. (1) He pandered to their idolatrous propensities. The "golden calves" may have been intended as a memorial rather than a representation of the Deity. But they were too suggestive of the base, sensuous worship of Egypt, and violated the second commandment if not the first. (2) He made pretence of consulting their ease and convenience. "It is too much for you," &c. (3)

He took advantage of the sacred associations of Bethel and Dan, as if the place would hallow the proceeding. (4) He instituted a priestly order as a substitute for the Levites. (5) He ordained festivals that should rival those of Judah and Jerusalem. In all this, while affecting to do honour to the traditions of religion, he struck a fatal blow at the religious unity and integrity of the nation, turning the highest sanctities of its life into an occasion of sin. How forcibly are we reminded that iniquity assumes its most hateful form when it prostitutes to its own ends things sacred and Divine. Satan is never so Satanic as when he wears the garb of "an angel of light." The most detestable of all vices is hypocrisy. More deadly injury has been done to the cause of religion by its false friends than its bitterest enemies could ever inflict.

III. THE DISASTROUS EFFECTS OF WICKEDNESS IN HIGH PLACES. Jeroboam's wicked policy perpetuated and multiplied in Israel the evils of which the rending of the kingdom at first had been the penalty. With few exceptions all the kings that followed him "did evil in the sight of the Lord," and the record of their reigns is little else than a story of crime and bloodshed and misery. Moreover, the leprosy of idolatry spread from the throne down through all classes of the people until the kingdom of Israel was completely overthrown and the ten tribes were carried captive into Assyria. Such are the woes that fall on a land when its princes are corrupt and reprobate. So true is it that "they that sow to the wind shall reap the whirlwind."—W.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER XIII. 1—10.

THE TESTIMONY OF GOD AGAINST THE CALF WORSHIP.—We have in this chapter, which some commentators consider to be derived from a different source from the narratives which precede and follow it—the expression of ver. 32, "the cities of Samaria," according to them, proving it to be of a later date, while the style and colouring of the story suggest that it embodies a tradition current in the time of the compiler—an account of certain circumstances of profound significance which marked the inauguration of Jeroboam's first great feast—for the close connexion with ch. xii. shows that it is "the fifteenth day of the eighth month" that is here described. The chapter divides itself into two sections, the first (vers. 1—10) containing the public testimony of the prophet of Judah against the schismatic worship, the second (vers. 11—32) his subsequent perversion and his tragical death.

Ver. 1.—And, behold, there came a man of God [see on ch. xii. 22. The "man of God" is throughout carefully distinguished from the "prophet." Josephus calls the former Jaddon, probably the Grecized form of Iddo, עֲדוֹ, which appears as יְעֲדוֹ I'a'do, in the Keri of 2 Chron. ix. 29. Iddo, however, notwithstanding his "visions against

Jeroboam the son of Nebat" (2 Chron. ix. 29), it cannot have been, for he survived to the reign of Abijah, and indeed wrote a "story" (Heb. *Midrash*, i.e., Commentary) of that reign, whereas this man of God died forthwith. For a similar reason, we cannot believe it to have been Shemaiah, the historian of the reign of Rehoboam (2 Chron. xii. 5, 15) out of Judah [whither, as a rule, both priests and prophets would seem to have retreated (2 Chron. xi. 14, 16). It is clear, however, that the migration of the latter was not so general as that of the former. In ver. 11 we find a prophet at Bethel; in ch. xiv. Ahijah is still at Shiloh, and at a later day we find schools of the prophets at Bethel, Jericho, &c. (2 Kings ii. 3, 5). Stanley says with truth that "the prophetic activity of the time . . . is to be found in the kingdom, not of Judah, but of Israel," but omits to add that it was because the northern kingdom more especially needed their ministry. It was just for this reason that Ahijah and others remained at their posts.] by [Heb. *in*, same word as in vers. 2, 9, 17, 20, 32, &c. Similarly, 1 Sam. iii. 21. The *ו* is not merely instrumental, but, like the *ו* of the N. T., denotes the sphere or element. "By the word" would imply that he had received a Divine communication; "in the word," that his message possessed him, inspired him, was "in his heart as a burning fire shut up in his bones" (Jer. xx. 9)] the word of the Lord unto Bethel [It is worth remembering that the new sanctuary at Bethel would probably be visible from the temple

(Porter, p. 219; Van de Velde, ii. 283), so that this function was an act of open defiance]: and Jeroboam stood by [Heb. *upon*. See on ch. xii. 32, 33. It is the same occasion] the altar to burn incense [or to burn the fat, &c., of the sacrifice. See on ch. xii. 33. This altar was clearly, *pro hac vice*, an altar of burnt offering; not an altar of incense, as is proved by the next verse.]

Ver. 2.—And he cried against the altar in the word of the Lord, and said, O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord [This apostrophe of the altar is very striking and significant. It is as if the prophet disdained to notice the royal but self-constituted priest; as if it were useless to appeal to him; as if his person was of little consequence compared with the religious system he was inaugurating, the system of which the altar was the centre and embodiment]; Behold a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name [This particular mention of the Reformer by name was formerly regarded, as by many it is still, as a remarkable instance of prophetic foresight. But the tendency of late, even amongst orthodox theologians, has been to doubt the authenticity of these two words, on the ground that it is unlike Scripture prophecy in general to descend to such details, which rather belong to soothsaying than prediction. Prophecy concerns itself not with names, times, and similar particulars, but with the “progressive development of the kingdom of God in its general features” (Keil). It is not for a moment denied that the prophet could just as easily, speaking “in the word of the Lord,” have mentioned the name of Josiah, as the circumstance that a son of the house of David would utterly destroy the worship of calves. But it is alleged that the latter prediction is quite in accordance with Scripture usage, and the former altogether contrariant thereto. The case of Cyrus (Isa. xlv. 28; xlv. 1), it is true, is an exception to the rule, unless כֶּסֶף (which means *the sun*) is, like Pharaoh and Hadad, a name of office, a title of the Persian kings. The instances of Isaac (Gen. xvii. 19) and Solomon (1 Chron. xxii. 9) are not parallels, as in both these cases the name was highly significant, and each was mentioned, not by way of prophecy, but as a direction to bestow that name on a child shortly about to be born. And it is certainly noticeable—though the argument *e silentio* is necessarily a precarious one—“that where this narrative is again referred to (2 Kings xxiii. 15—18) there is no allusion to the fact that the man of God had prophesied of Josiah by name” (Rawlinson). On the whole, therefore, it seems probable that the two words יְהוֹשֻׁעַ יֵאָדָר

were no part of the original prophecy, but a marginal note which in course of time found its way accidentally into the text. The idea of Keil, that “Josiah” is mentioned here not as a proper name, but as an appellation, “he whom Jehovah sustains,” is hardly worthy of serious consideration. It may be allowed, however, that the meaning of the name affords some slender reason for its mention]; and upon thee shall he offer [lit., *sacrifice*] the priests of the high places [see on ch. xii. 32] that burn incense upon thee, and men’s bones [Heb. *bones of man*, i.e., human bones. Nothing could more completely foreshadow the future desecration of the altar. The presence in the congregation of a living man who had merely touched a dead body and had not been purified, defiled the tabernacle (Num. xix. 13), how much more the dead body itself, burnt on the very altar. The Samaritan who once strewed the temple with human ashes (Jos., Ant. xviii. 2. 2) knew that he took the most effectual way to pollute it] shall be burnt [Heb. *shall they burn*] upon thee. [For the fulfilment, see 2 Kings xxiii. 20, “At the ground of this judgment, as of the whole theocratic law, lies the *ius talionis*” (Keil, 1846).]

It is worthy of note how completely this brief protest proclaimed to Jeroboam the utter and shameful overthrow, both of his political and religious systems. A child of the rival house of David should stand where he then stood, his successors extinct or powerless to prevent him, and should cover this new cultus with disgrace and contempt. The man of God, he must have felt, has proclaimed in few words the fall of his dynasty, the triumph of his rival, and the failure of all his schemes.

Ver. 3.—And he gave a sign [The Heb. מֵטֵר rather signifies a portent (*répas*, *miraculum*, *prodigium*) than a sign, the proper word for which is מֵטָה. The word occurs repeatedly in the Pentateuch, where it is rendered *wonder*, or *miracle*, by our translators (Wordsworth). Signs had, of course, been given before (Exod. iv. 30; vii. 9; 1 Sam. xii. 17; &c.) but hardly in such immediate attestation of a special message. From this time forward such signs are not infrequent (Isa. vii. 14; xxxviii. 8; 2 Kings xix. 29). They mark the decline of faith (Matt. xii. 39). As to the need at this crisis for some miraculous token, see Homiletics. The fitness of this particular sign is obvious] the same day, saying, This is the sign which [Rather *that*; מֵטֵר = *quod*. The A. V. rendering hardly makes sense. Nor does

it agree, as Rawlinson seems to think, with the LXX., which reads *τοῦτο τὸ ῥῆμα ἃ ἐλάλησε κύριος*, &c.] the Lord hath spoken [i.e., by me. "This is the proof that my message is from Him, and is no idle threat." Wordsworth sees in this sign "a proof vouchsafed by God Himself to the man of Judah, as well as to Jeroboam, that he was really sent by God," &c. But surely a man who came "in the word of the Lord," and cried, "Thus saith the Lord," wanted no proof that "he was doing God's bidding" (see 1 Cor. xiv. 22)]; Behold, the altar shall be rent and the ashes [strictly, *fat ashes*, פֶּתִיךָ; properly, "fatness" (see Judg. ix. 9; Psa. lxxiii. 5. *πυώτης*, LXX.), is the fat of the sacrifice, which was burnt upon the altar, mixed with the ashes that consumed it] that are upon it shall be poured out. [The sign, a partial destruction of the altar, and the scattering of the sacrifice, was admirably calculated to presage its ultimate and final and ignominious overthrow. The idea favoured by Stanley ("Jewish Ch." ii. 280) that this prediction was fulfilled "if not before, at least" in the time of Amos, when the altar was destroyed by an earthquake shock (Amos ix. 1; cf. iii. 14), does not seem to take account of ver. 5.]

Ver. 4.—And it came to pass when king Jeroboam [The A. V. follows the LXX. The Heb. omits "Jeroboam"] heard the saying of the man of God, which had cried against the altar in Bethel, that he put forth his hand [instinctively. His first thought was, not to wait and see whether the promised sign was given, but to seize and punish the man who had dared thus to denounce and thwart him. And we may imagine how extremely mortifying this interruption must have been to him. It threatened the complete frustration of his policy at the very moment when it seemed certain of success] from the altar [the ledge or platform, i.e., where he stood. He did not leave it, but shouted his commands to his servants], saying, Lay hold on him. ["Arrest him," "let him not escape." One word in the Heb.] And his hand, which he put forth against him, dried up [Possibly the result of paralysis or tetanus (Ackermann in Bähr). It was like the "withered hand" of the New Testament (Matt. xii. 10, &c.) deprived of feeling and vital force, as the next words show], so that he could not pull it in again to him. [It was not only powerless to punish, it was punished. "Now stands the king of Israel, like some antique statue, in a posture of impotent endeavour" (Hall). This was a warning to the king, not so much against his unauthorized and schismatical rites, as against his attempt to

avenge himself on the messenger of God (Psa. cv. 14, 15).]

Ver. 5.—The altar also was rent [by the same invisible power, and probably at the same moment], 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.

Ver. 6.—And the king [humbled and alarmed by the judgment he had experienced in his own person] answered and said unto the man of God, Intreat now [The Heb. is very expressive—"Smooth or stroke the face." It is an expression which occurs several times. See especially Exod. xxxii. 11; 2 Kings xiii. 4; 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12; Prov. xix. 6] of the Lord thy God [i.e., whose messenger thou art. "Jeroboam, conscience-stricken, does not dare to call Jehovah his own God" (Wordsworth). This was probably the case, yet surely it is an inference not warranted by the text. The expression, "The Lord thy God," is of constant occurrence, especially when a "man of God" is addressed; cf. ch. xvii. 12; xviii. 10], and pray for me [This sudden change in his bearing shows how much Jeroboam was frightened. The sight, too, of the king humbly supplicating the prophet who a moment before had protested against the calf-worship was calculated to make an impression on the minds of the people], that my hand may be restored me again. And the man of God besought [lit., *stroked the face of*] the Lord, and the king's hand was restored him, and became as it was before.

Ver. 7.—And the king said unto the man of God, Come home with me, and refresh thyself [with food, ablutions, &c. (Gen. xviii. 4, 5; xix. 2; Mark vii. 3, &c.)] We are hardly justified in seeing in these words (with Bähr and Keil) an attempt to "gain the prophet over to his side by friendliness," and to render his threat harmless in the eyes of the people. The king doubtless may have hoped that it would "blunt the edge of the prophet's denunciation of his schismatical altar" (Wordsworth); but this was not the object, or not the sole object, with which the invitation was given. Jeroboam could not possibly have done less, after the signal service the man of God had rendered him, than invite him to his palace. Eastern courtesy alone (Gen. xviii. 4; xix. 2; xliii. 24, &c.) would require him to offer hospitality to his benefactor. And he could scarcely hope that any hospitalities would either neutralize the impression which the recent miracles had made, or win over to his side one who had a direct commission from the Most High to oppose him. With more reason, Wordsworth cites 1 Sam. xv. 30.

"Honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people." A feeling of gratitude may have prompted the invitation, while the king at the same time was very sensible of the advantages which would accrue to himself if it were accepted, and I will give thee a reward. [The services, especially of seers and prophets, were invariably required in the East with presents, as are those of Judges, Kadis, Kaimakams, and other officers at the present day (see ch. xiv. 3; Gen. xxiv. 53; xxxiii. 11; xliii. 11; Num. xxii. 17; Judg. iii. 17; vi. 18; xiii. 15; 1 Sam. ix. 7, 8; xii. 3; 2 Kings v. 5, 15; viii. 8, 9).]

Ver. 8.—And the man of God said unto the king, If thou wilt give me half thine house [cf. Num. xxii. 18, of which, however, there is hardly a reminiscence. Obviously, half the contents or wealth of thy house], I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place.

Ver. 9.—For so was it charged [Heb. *he, sc. the Lord, charged me*] me by [Heb. *in*] the word of the Lord, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water [Participation in food—the "eating salt"—is in the East a token of friendship and affinity; a sign of close communion and fellowship. The prophet's refusal to participate was consequently a practical and forcible disclaimer of all fellowship, a virtual excommunication, a public repudiation of the calf-worshippers.

Cf. 1 Cor. v. 11, "With such an one, no, not to eat." As Corn. à Lapipe, "*Ut ipso facto ostenderet, Bethelitus idololatrias adeo esse detestabiles, et a Deo quasi excommunicatos, ut nullum fidelium cum tis cibi vel potus communionem habere velit*," nor turn again by the same way that thou camest. [The object of this command was not "simply to test the obedience of the prophet" (Rawlinson), nor yet that no one might "force him to a delay which was irreconcilable with his commission" (Keil), for that was practically executed, but to avoid as far as possible—what, indeed, happened in spite of these precautions—his being traced and followed. Because of this provision, the old prophet (ver. 10) was reduced to ask, "What way went he?" But the charge, we can hardly doubt, was also designed to serve another purpose, viz., to warn the prophet against doing what he did presently—against returning to Bethel. When he was followed, and when he was told of a revelation commanding his return, he should have remembered, among other things, that it had clearly been part of God's purpose, as evidenced by the explicit instructions given him, that he should not be followed. This alone should have led him to suspect this old prophet of deceit.]

Ver. 10.—So he went another way, and returned not by the way that he came to Bethel.

## HOMILETICS.

Vers. 2, 3, 8.—*Protest and Excommunication.* The sin of Jeroboam, the schism which he inaugurated in person at the first feast of tabernacles held in Bethel, was not consummated without protest. When the king, possibly in the "golden garments" of the priesthood, mounted the altar platform and stood before the vast multitude assembled to witness this first great function of the new régime, a messenger of God, sent from Judah, the seat of the true religion, lifted up his voice and witnessed against these irregular and impious proceedings, against the unsanctified altar, the unhallowed sacrifice, and the intrusive priesthood. It must have been pretty clear beforehand that any protest addressed to Jeroboam, who had devised and elaborated this corruption of Mosaic worship, would be unavailing, but nevertheless it must be made. It was probably in part because Jeroboam was beyond the reach of remonstrance that the warning was addressed to the altar itself. In other words, it was made for the sake of the people rather than of their king. They should be mercifully, and therefore distinctly, taught that this calf-worship had not and could not have the sanction of the Most High. Whether they would hear, or whether they would forbear, they should see that God had not left Himself without witness; they should know that at this crisis there had been a prophet amongst them. The breach should not be made without due warning of its sinfulness and its consequences. "For a testimony unto them" the man of God addresses the dumb altar, the sign and centre of the new system, and proclaims not only its overthrow but the destruction of Jeroboam's house and the defeat of all his schemes.

And as, under such circumstances, mere threats, of whatsoever character and by

whomsoever spoken, would have had but little weight without "signs following," the message straightway receives the confirmation of a miracle. That the man of God "came from Judah" was in itself reason enough why the men of Israel should not listen to him, unless he compelled their attention by prodigies. "A partizan," they would say, "perhaps a hireling of Rehoboam, it was natural such a one would prophecy evil of the Northern Church and kingdom," and so his words would have been unheeded, even if his life had been spared. Besides, one who professed to come as he did, "in the word of the Lord," they had a right to ask for his credentials, and those credentials could only be miraculous. Had not Moses and Aaron "wrought signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, before Pharaoh and all his servants?" Had not Samuel, too, supported his message by a portent? (1 Sam. xii. 18.) If the denunciation of the schism, consequently, was not to be inoperative, he must "give a sign" the same day.

And to these "two witnesses"—"the 'sure word of prophecy' and the 'sign following'"—the rashness and impiety of Jeroboam procured the addition of a third, or rather of *two* more—silent, but eloquent attestations, each of them, that the prophet had not spoken in his own name. For, enraged at this bold, this most unwelcome and sinister interruption of his ritual, and fearing the effect of this brave protest on his audience and the thousands of Israel to whom the news would ultimately come, and forgetting at the moment the sacred character of the speaker and the unseen panoply which protected him, he stretches forth his hand intuitively, as if to detain the prophet, and thunders his commands to the attendant soldiery to arrest him. But that hand, really raised against the Most High, suddenly becomes rigid and powerless, and he must needs stoop to beg the prophet's prayers that it may be restored to him again. And so it came to pass that the heretic king furnished in his own person, much against his will, two powerful proofs that the "man of God" did indeed speak the word of God and was supported by the power of God. It is thus that God makes the wrath of man to praise Him.

Such, then, was the PROTEST, in word and deed, which marked the first great service of the schismatic Church. But that was not all. The protest was to be followed by an INTERDICTION. The man of God was commissioned at the same time to put the city and inhabitants of Bethel under a ban. He was to treat them as *lepers*, as so tainted with heresy, so polluted and unclean in the sight of God, that he could neither eat of their bread nor drink of their cup. For this was clearly the object of the injunction, "Eat no bread nor drink water there;" it was to show that all who participated in this unhallowed worship were thenceforward to be treated by Divine command as heathens and publicans. And to the children of the East this public disclaimer of fellowship, this practical excommunication, would have a significance such as with our altered conditions of society we can hardly conceive, though the "Boycotting" of our own time may help us to understand its operation. Every citizen of Bethel, every worshipper of the calves, would feel himself branded as unclean. The "scarlet letter" which the Puritans of New England printed on the bosom of the adulteress hardly involved a greater stigma. It was for this reason, therefore, that when the king bade the man of God to his palace and promised him a royal recompense for the service he had rendered him, the latter flung back his invitation in his face, and swore that half the king's house would not tempt him to eat of his dainties. Jeroboam, and his people through him, should learn that if they would persist in their wanton defiance of Divine law; if they *would* have two churches and three sanctuaries where God had decreed there should in either case be but one; if they would sacrifice before the works of their own hands, and by ministers of man's ordaining, and at times of man's devising, then the pious Hebrews who preserved inviolate the ancient faith should wipe their hands of them, and treat them as renegades and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.

The lessons of this history are manifold. Two, however, occupy a position of pre-eminence above the rest.

1. *That corruptions of religion are not to be consummated without PROTEST on the part of the Church* That Christianity, as well as Judaism, should have its

heresies and schisms was distinctly foretold by St. Paul himself (1 Cor. xi. 19; Acts xx. 29, 30). But if they are inevitable, because of the frailty of our nature and the hardness of our hearts, they are none the less sinful, and it is none the less our duty to strive and to witness against them. If God did not suffer that first great schism to pass unreprieved, can we do better, or do less, than follow His example? It may be said that *we* cannot always distinguish between heresy and orthodoxy—that we “call our doxy orthodoxy, and other people’s doxy heterodoxy,” and this is quite true. But individual opinion is one thing and the teaching of the Church another. Has the Church, then, no teaching office? Is she or is she not “the pillar and ground of the truth”? Has she or has she not the promise of our Lord’s guidance and illumination? (Matt. xviii. 17, 18; xxviii. 20.) Or can the Church universal err? (Matt. xvi. 18.) Is her “*Quod semper, quod ubique,*” &c., no test of truth? It is not for the private Christian to claim any infallibility, but it is for the Church to say what is in and what is against her *depositum fidei*. And furthermore it is her duty, in her synods and by her officers, to protest against all corruptions of the faith. “A man that is a heretic . . . reject,” Titus iii. 10; cf. ch. i. 9—11; 1 Tim. vi. 3—5 (“From such withdraw thyself”); Rom. xvi. 17; Matt. xviii. 17; 3 John 9, 10; Gal. i. 8; ii. 11. The Christian verity is not less dear to God than was the teaching of Moses. The preacher is as much bound to preserve the faith whole and undefiled as was the prophet. And it is idle to say, as it sometimes is said, that mere protests are worse than useless. They may not avert a schism—this protest did not—but they may have their use nevertheless, as this had. Or if they are entirely futile as regards others, they are not forgotten of God. Besides, who shall say that success or non-success is to alter the standard of Christian duty? It is surely something to be able to say, whatever the issue, *Liberavi animam meam*. It is to be remembered that God knew beforehand that this *His* protest, though enforced by signs and wonders, would be comparatively unavailing.

2. *That certain crimes against morality and religion are still to be visited by EXCOMMUNICATION.* Not the excommunication of bell and book and candle—that finds no place in Holy Scripture—but social excommunication such as that described to us in this history. Indeed, there is also an ecclesiastical excommunication which must sometimes be wielded. There are persons with whom we have no right to eat and to drink at the Table of our Blessed Lord—persons who must be repelled at any cost from Holy Communion, lest we should indirectly make ourselves “partakers of other men’s sins” (1 Tim. v. 22). When John Wesley once proposed to give a note of admission to the Lord’s Table to a man of dubious character, Henry Moore, one of his preachers, bluntly said that if that man were admitted he should refuse to attend. “Sir,” said Wesley, “I should attend even if the devil came to Holy Communion.” “So should I,” was the answer; “but not if John Wesley gave him a note of admission.” For it is obvious that the Eucharist, the closest rite of fellowship—the rite which makes and proclaims us members one of another (Rom. xii. 4, 5)—if knowingly administered to the “notorious evil-liver,” is a virtual condoning of his sin; it is equivalent to bidding him God speed (2 John 10, 11), and so it makes the Church “partaker of his evil deeds.” “Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person” (1 Cor. v. 13). But our history points rather to social than ecclesiastical interdict. And it must be distinctly understood that the refusal to eat and drink with notorious and incorrigible evil-livers is a part of Christian duty (see 1 Cor. v. 9—11; 2 Thess. iii. 14, 15; Matt. xviii. 17). We are not permitted to know them and to treat them like other men. The story of St. John’s hurriedly leaving the bath because of the presence there of the heretic Cerinthus, is one for which the so-called tolerance of the age can only afford a contemptuous smile; but the age is often wiser in its own conceit than Christ and His apostles. Only let us remember, if we must treat any as heathens and publicans, how Christ treated the penitent publicans (cf. Luke xv. 1, 2); and then let us not shrink from discharging this painful duty both to our country, our Church, and our God. Among the secondary lessons of our story are these:

1. *That right shall triumph in the long run.* The schism throve for 250 years,

but the altar was ultimately dishonoured and overthrown. The Reformer who should desecrate it with bones of men was already appointed in the counsels of God. Even so, sooner or later, "every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up" (Matt. xv. 13). "If this work be of men, it will come to nought" (Acts v. 38).

"Our little systems have their day,  
They have their day and cease to be."

*Magna est veritas, &c.* The Babel of sects cannot last for ever.

2. *The ministers of God are secure so long as they do their duty.* Jeroboam, with the ten tribes at his back, was powerless against the unprotected missionary. "He reproved kings for their sakes, saying . . . Do my prophets no harm" (Psa. cv. 14, 15). The stars shall fall from their courses before a hair of their heads shall be injured. Cf. Dan. iii. 27; vi. 22; 2 Kings i. 10, &c. But it may be objected, "The saints and messengers of God have often been brutally outraged and murdered" (Heb. xi. 35—37). True, but who shall say that they were not then most secure? "Through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts xiv. 22). It was when Stephen was martyred that he saw "Jesus standing"—i.e., to help—"at the right hand of God." It has been suggested that it was when St. Paul was stoned and taken up for dead (Acts xiv. 19) that he was caught up into Paradise (2 Cor. xii. 4). *Sic iter ad astra.*

3. *The wicked cannot dispense with the prayers of the saints.* "Entreat the face of the Lord thy God, and pray for me" (cf. Exod. ix. 28; Num. xii. 2, 13; Acts viii. 24). How often has this history repeated itself; and what a foreshadowing of the world to come! Here was one of the synagogues of Satan worshipping at the prophet's feet, &c. (Rev. iii. 9). Observe, too, it is the part of a man of God to answer threats with prayers. "They are mine adversaries, but I, prayer" (Psa. cix. 4, Heb.; cf. Psa. xxxv. 18 sqq.) It is the very best way of overcoming evil with good.

4. *Men are often more concerned about their sufferings than about their sins.* Jeroboam's entreaty is, not that his sin may be forgiven, but that his hand may be restored. How many pray, "Heal my body;" how few, "Heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee" (Psa. xli. 4). The plague of head or hand extorts more cries for mercy than the plague of the heart (ch. viii. 38).

5. *"Law and order cannot be violated with impunity by any ruler under any religious pretext"* (Maurice). The rent altar teaches the lesson of Psa. ii. 2—5: "Those betray themselves that think by any sin to support themselves." . . . "He promised himself that the calves would secure the crown to his family, but it proved they lost it" (M. Henry).

6. *Let the ministers of God beware of bribery.* "Come home with me and I will give," &c. The device of Jeroboam for silencing and conciliating the prophet has often been tried since, and with fatal success. How many men's mouths have been stopped by a sop—by place or pension, nay, by an insignificant present. Men know well—the enemy of man knows well—that the preacher finds it hard to reprove a benefactor. The writer once heard an influential person boasting that he had silenced his clergyman's remonstrances and appeals by a present of game! The world has a shrewd suspicion that the clergy are not incorruptible; that they, like others, have their price. Let us be on our guard against social corruption. How sinister the influence of some homes on the younger clergy. The cordial "Come home with me" was to them a snare of Satan. With the State clergy how strong the temptation to sacrifice independence for a benefice; with Nonconformists, to speak smooth words lest the congregation should "stop the supplies." *The man of God thus speaks to all ministers of God.*

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

**Vers. 1—8.—The Fire of Jehovah.** Jeroboam went to inaugurate his feast of tabernacles at his principal temple in Bethel, and to give effect to the ceremonies officiated in person as high priest. Then, as he stood by the altar, censer in hand, he was confronted by the word of the Lord. A man of God from Judah denounced the altar in the words before us, which contain a very remarkable prophecy; and he authenticated his message by a miraculous sign. (Compare Mark xvi. 20.) The subject teaches—

**I. THAT GOD SEES THE END FROM THE BEGINNING.** 1. *This is evinced in His works of creation.* (1) There is foresight in the constitution and adjustments of the framework, and in the motions, of the orbs. (2) Also in the *anticipatory instincts* of animals—storing of food, provisions for young. Moths deposit their eggs upon leaves, not used by themselves as food, but proper to sustain the larvæ. (3) And in the *anticipatory faculties* of man. *Intelligent foresight* in business, in politics, in science, in religion. 2. *It is evinced in prophecy.* (1) Great outlines of the world's history pre-written there (see Gen. ix. 25—27; Dan. vii.). (2) Particular example here. (Compare this with 2 Kings xxiii. 15—20.) The facts here were attested—By the Jews, on whose behalf they were ordered—By the Ephrathites, who would have impugned their authority if they could. 3. *This example is too circumstantial to have been accidental.* (1) The child was to be of the house of David. Who but God could foresee that the house of David should occupy the throne of Judah at a distance of 356 years? (2) Who but God could foresee that Bethel would then have passed from the kings of Israel under the dominion of Judah? (See 2 Chron. xiii. 19.) (3) Who but God could foresee that at a distance of 340 years a child should be born to the house of David, bearing the name of *Josiah*, who should in due time do these things? (4) Who else could anticipate, even when Josiah received his name, that the grandson of the wicked Manasseh, and son of the no less wicked Amon, should come to the throne, and with pious zeal bring these things to pass? Note: Such prescience as God displayed in this prophecy, and such providence as He evinced in its accomplishment, encourage faith. They assure us that our very names are in His book (Phil. iv. 3). They encourage prayer.

**II. THAT HE WILL CONFRONT THE SINNER IN JUDGMENT.** 1. *The message to Jeroboam was to this very effect.* (1) He bore His testimony against the altar. It had been consecrated, after a fashion, by the king, but God would desecrate it. The bodies of its priests were to be sacrificed upon it, and the bones of men were to be burnt upon it (ch. xiii. 2). God will accept no will-worship—no worship ordered after the policy of statesmen. (2) In the demolition of the altar, not only is the religion connected with it doomed to be overthrown, but the judgment involves its votaries—the king, his priests, his people. (3) The testimony was strong. The man of God cried aloud. He did not quail in the presence of the king amidst his friends. God's messengers should never cringe nor quail. God's word can never fail. 2. *These things were an allegory.* (1) Many of the wonderful narratives of Holy Scripture may be thus understood. We have the famous example, Gal. iv. 21—31. (2) Here Jeroboam, like all other leaders in apostasy, was a forerunner of the Antichrist. As the religion of the "man of sin" is a caricature of the religion of Christ, so was that of Jeroboam a parody upon the Mosaic. (3) Josiah was a type of Christ, the true Son of David. (Compare Isa. vii. 14.) Warning and mercy come before destruction. The army of Judah was stayed from crushing Jeroboam (ch. xii. 24), and in the mission of the man of God there was mercy in the warning. Let the sinner be admonished not to refuse the gospel.—J. A. M.

**Vers. 4—6.—The Man of Sin.** When the man of God predicted the confusion of the political religion of Jeroboam, and gave the sign that the altar at Bethel should

be rent and its ashes poured out, the pride of the king who stood there as a priest was mortified, and his resentment was manifested as described in the text.

I. JEROBOAM WAS A TYPICAL SINNER. 1. *He transgressed God's law*—(1) In making *images*. The law forbid this (Exod. xx. 4, 5). But he made two golden calves. Note: Images of God must be caricatures, and God will not be mocked, solemnly or otherwise, with impunity. How many frightful caricatures of Deity has the "man of sin" perpetrated! (2 Thess. ii. 3—12.) (2) In multiplying *altars*. Legal worship was limited to one altar "in the place which the Lord should choose" (Deut. xvi. 16). This was to keep before men the one only Mediator (John xiv. 6; 1 Tim. ii. 5). Therefore other altars than that at Jerusalem were "altars unto sin" (Hos. viii. 11). (3) In creating *priests*. According to the law, none but sons of Aaron had a Divine vocation to the priesthood (Exod. xxx. 7, 8; 2 Chron. xxvi. 18; Heb. v. 4). According to the gospel, Christ is sole Priest. Jeroboam, an Ephrathite, invaded the law-principle, making himself high priest, and making subordinate priests of the lowest of the people. 2. *He did so impudently*. (1) His sin was not of ignorance, for he had access to the Scriptures; but it did not serve his purpose to refer to them. (2) Prophecy was particularly distasteful to him, for his doom is written there. Jeroboam had this from the lips of Ahijah, and now has it from the man of God from Judah. Beware of the spirit that would discourage a study upon which God has pronounced a blessing (Rev. i. 3). (3) The spirit of his religion was *political*. He would not have troubled himself with it had he not political ends to serve (ch. xii. 26—29). And to carry out these he dissembled: "It is too much for you to go to Jerusalem!"

II. HIS DOOM ALSO WAS TYPICAL. 1. *He was confronted by the word of God*. (1) With this the man of God from Judah withstood him at his altar. So by the word of the Lord, and especially with the spirit of prophecy, has the man of sin been confronted by Waldenses, Paulikians, Hussites, Lutherans, and such-like men "from Judah." (2) But against this testimony he invoked the civil power under his usurped control (ver. 4). The *spirit* of persecution was there. The modern Jeroboam carried it further (Dan. xii. 21; Rev. xiii. 7; xvii. 6). 2. *He was humbled by the power of God*. (1) His hand was withered; his power to persecute was paralyzed. How powerless is the hand of man when arrested by the hand of God! Behind the political restraints which now hold the persecuting hand of our enemies we must discern the invisible hand of God. (3) The altar, then, was cloven, and the ashes of the spurious sacrifices poured out as with contempt. This also was effected by the same invisible hand. Who can resist the might of God? (4) Constrained by these judgments, he confessed the finger of God, and entreated the man of God to pray for the restoration of his hand (see Exod. x. 16, 17; Num. xxi. 7; Matt. v. 23, 24). 3. *Yet he persisted in his sin*. (1) His humiliation was selfish. It was the creature of his terror and suffering, so it was transient. (2) True repentance is of a loftier principle, and is enduring. It is a life, as faith also is a life. (3) Instead of using his restored hand to demolish his high places, he used it to repair the altar at Bethel, and persisted in his sin (vers. 33, 34; 2 Chron. xiii. 20). But Josiah executed the judgments of prophecy in due time. So will the modern Jeroboam and his monstrous organization of sin perish in the fires of the judgment (Dan. vii. 10, 11; 2 Thess. ii. 8). Note: Let those come out of Babylon who would escape her plagues.—J. A. M.

Vers. 7—10.—*The Man of God*. We may view "Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin," as the "man of sin" of his time, and a forerunner of the Antichrist of more modern times (2 Thess. ii. 3). In contrast to him we have to consider the "man of God," in which character this prophet who confronted Jeroboam at Bethel, is described. The instructions under which he acted teach us how a saint should behave amongst workers of iniquity.

I. HE MUST HOLD NO FELLOWSHIP WITH THEM. 1. *He must not eat and drink with them*. (1) For this was anciently a profession of fellowship. Hence the Hebrews in Egypt would not eat with the Egyptians (Gen. xliii. 32). The Jews would not eat with the Samaritans (John iv. 9); and they were shocked to see

Jesus eating with publicans and sinners (Matt. ix. 11). For the same reason Christians were forbidden to eat with ungodly persons (1 Cor. v. 11; see also Rom. xvi. 17; 2 Thess. iii. 6, 14; 2 Tim. iii. 5; Jas. iv. 4; 2 John 10). (2) The law of distinction between clean and unclean meats set forth not only the duty of avoiding fellowship with moral uncleanness, but also with those who are morally unclean; for the unclean animals represented "sinners of the Gentiles" while the clean stood for the "holy people" of Israel (Acts x. 14, 34, 35). (3) The eating of the forbidden fruit in Eden at the instigation of the serpent, who also seems to have eaten of it first, expressed fellowship with Satan! As the trees of Eden were *sacramental*, it may have expressed a *covenant* with the Evil One! Those who ate together were understood to stand to each other in a *covenant* relationship (Gen. xxxi. 43—46). (4) In this light the Christian Eucharist sets forth the covenant fellowship, that we have, first, with Christ, and secondly, with those who are in such fellowship with Him (see, in this light, John vi. 53—56). 2. *He must refuse their presents.* (1) Some think Jeroboam's offer to "reward" the man of God was to give him a *bribe*. This is not evident. Yet good men are liable to be tempted with bribes, but should stoutly refuse them (1 Sam. xii. 3; Job xv. 84). (2) The king's intention was to do honour to the man of God, according to a constant custom in the East (see 1 Sam. ix. 7; 2 Kings v. 15). The word מַתָּה here translated "reward," would have been better rendered "gift," as in many other places it is. But such a gift or present, if accepted, would express friendship, and therefore, coming from the hand of an arch idolator and schismatic, it must be declined. (3) Good men must be careful how they accept favours from the wicked, lest in doing so they may compromise to them their independence, or come unduly under their influence (see Gen. xiv. 23; xxiii. 13—16; 2 Kings v. 16).

II. HIS INTERCOURSE WITH THEM SHOULD BE BRIEF. 1. *While serving God he is safe.* (1) His very testimony for God commits him to a course of conduct consistent with it. This element of moral strength is lost to those who hide their light under a bushel. (2) He has a right to claim God's help (Matt. x. 19, 20; xxviii. 20). 2. *But it is perilous longer to remain.* (1) The very disposition to remain amidst circumstances with which we should have no sympathy argues weakness which should alarm. (2) He lays himself open to temptation. He may find the "king" disposed to honour him. Some are foolishly susceptible to flattery from the great ones of this world. The man of God should be proof against this (ver. 8). (3) He may be taken at a disadvantage. Being away from the influence of godly friends. Having now no claim to special help from God. 3. *But why must he return by another way?* (1) Not only did the man of God give a sign, but he was also himself a sign (see Ezek. xii. 11; xxiv. 24; Zech. iii. 8, margin). As Jeroboam was the sign of the man of sin, this prophet was, at least in his instructions, a typical "man of God." (2) In coming from Judah, where God was purely worshipped in His temple, to Ephraim, where "altars were made unto sin," he would personate that moral lapse into which Ephraim had fallen. (3) In his speedy return from Ephraim to Judah, after deprecating the sin of the place, he would represent to the Ephraimites what God expected from them, viz., repentance and reformation. (4) But the way back to God is not precisely the reversal of the way from Him. Adam fell by sin of his own and was turned out of Eden, but must return by the righteousness of another (Gen. iii. 24). Our way back to God is the "new and living way opened in the blood of Jesus."—J. A. M.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The Nameless Prophet.* Jeroboam's inauguration of the high place at Bethel was an imitation of Solomon's dedication of the temple at Jerusalem. Like Solomon, he chose the feast of tabernacles as the season for this ceremony, although he daringly altered the date of the feast from the seventh month to the eighth. Describe the scene: the crowds of people, the new-made priests, the gorgeous shrine, the conflicting feelings of the worshippers. None dared to oppose the king, and at the expected moment he stepped forward to burn incense before the calf. Just then one, who had been till then unnoticed, pressed to the front of the crowd. He came from the neighbouring kingdom of Judah. In words of terrible

invective he delivered the message of the Lord. Who was he? Josephus (Ant., viii. 8. § 5) identifies him with Iddo the seer. There is no proof of this. He was one of the many servants of Jehovah who have done their work without emblazoning on it their name. Like John the Baptist, he was content to be "a voice crying" out a testimony for God. In considering the service rendered in his day by this NAMELESS PROPHET let us look at the following:

I. HIS MESSAGE. 1. *Its Divine origin.* "He cried . . . in the word of the Lord." A remarkable expression. It represents the word as the sphere in which he lived, the atmosphere he breathed. A sense of the Divine presence, a confidence in the Divine call, a certainty of the Divine message, characterized him. This was a sign of the true prophet. Compare with this the call of Samuel, the announcements of Elijah, the commission of Isaiah, &c. To some the declarations of God's will came fitfully. Prophecy was never a constant possession of a servant of God. There was a tidal flow of inspiration, the law of which we know not. So was it with the miraculous powers of the Apostles. 2. *Its definite nature* (ver. 2). The very name of the coming avenger is mentioned more than three hundred years before Josiah's birth. It was foretold that the priests would be sacrificed on the altar at which they had insulted God. The *lex talionis* is the ground of this, as of other theocratic laws. It reminds us that the sinner is destroyed by his own sin; that punishments are not arbitrary, but are the legitimate issues of crime against God. It was further announced that the bones of the dead would be taken from the graves and burnt on the altar, so that the place of idolatry might be defiled and dishonoured. See Num. xix. 16. For fulfilment of prophecy read 2 Kings xxiii. 15—20. 3. *Its merciful design.* In ch. xiii. 24 we read that God forbade the advance of the army of Judah on Jeroboam. Instead of carnage he sends this message. He willeth not the death of a sinner, but would rather he should turn from his wickedness and live. Suggest the warnings God now sends to rouse us to thought and penitence.

II. HIS COURAGE. It was a bold thing to venture amongst the people at a time when they were full of hatred to Judah, and of unwillingness to be reminded of Jehovah; and to face the king, who was a man of despotic and resolute temper, in the very pride of his royal strength. But in the presence of them all the prophet's cry arose, "O altar, altar, thus saith Jehovah," &c., as if the stones would listen more readily than the people. Give examples of similar courage being displayed by men who have had the consciousness they were speaking for God; e.g., Moses before Pharaoh, Elijah before Ahab, John the Baptist before Herod, Peter and John before the Sanhedrim, Paul before Felix. From church history, too, such examples as that of Ambrose, John Knox, &c., may be cited. Show how requisite courage is now to genuine fidelity to conviction, amongst sceptical or sinful associations.

III. HIS CREDENTIALS. A sign was given there and then. The altar was left in twain, and the ashes were poured out. For the significance of the latter see Levit. xvi. 3, 4. Point out the credibility of supernatural signs as attesting supernatural revelations. Refer to the miracles of Christ, of which He said, "Believe me for the very works' sake." See also Mark xvi. 20; Acts ii. 43. Indicate the nature of the credentials which the world may fairly demand of Christian men in the present day; and show how far we fail in giving these, and the causes of our failure.

IV. HIS SAFETY. Amidst all the perils encircling him he was "kept by the power of God." The hand that would have slain him was withered; the man who cursed his message besought his prayers. "Man is immortal till his work is done." When God's servants die, it is because they have fulfilled the purpose of their lives. They have many enemies, but God can disable all their foes. The path of duty is the path of safety. Illustrate this from the records of the Christian Church; Luther at Worms, &c. 1. *Learn to listen for God's message.* He would make you His "voice." 2. *Learn to dare anything in God's name.* The rarity of Christian chivalry. 3. *Learn to trust in God's protection.* "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." 4. *Learn to pray even for your persecutors.* Compare ver. 6 with Matt. v. 44.—A. R.

**Ver. 6.**—*The King confronted by the Prophet.* Jeroboam is not allowed to pursue his iniquitous career without solemn Divine rebuke and warning. Though Rehoboam has been forbidden to attempt forcibly to suppress the revolt of the tribes (ch. xii. 24), a “man of God out of Judah” is sent sternly to denounce the rival altar, and to give the sacrilegious king something like a symbolic forewarning of the disasters that should surely befall him. The scene, described here with so much simplicity and dramatic force, is full of moral instruction.

I. In the person of the king we see **THE HELPLESSNESS OF A WICKED MAN IN THE HANDS OF AN OFFENDED GOD.** The physical associations and the mental conditions here presented are alike suggestive of this. It is a striking picture of restrained infatuation and impotent rage. 1. *The king's withered arm* tells how God can in a moment turn the strength that is used against Him to weakness. “When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity,” &c. (Psa. xxxix. 11). 2. *The rent altar* suggests the certain frustration, sooner or later, of the purposes and plans of those that are at enmity with God. “The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought,” &c. (Psa. xxxiii. 10). “If this counsel or this work be of man,” &c. (Acts v. 33). 3. *The king's inability to pray for himself* reminds us how God sometimes forsakes those who forsake Him, so that it seems utterly vain for them to call upon Him. Many a man has felt like Saul, “I am sore distressed, and God is departed from me,” &c. (1 Sam. xxviii. 15). 4. *His appeal to the prophet to intercede for him* is typical of the way in which ungodly men are often contrained by force of circumstance to seek succour from those whom they have despised. “The wheel of fortune turns and lowers the proud,” and they are placed, perhaps, at the mercy of the very men whom they once scorned and injured. Such are the penalties that God often inflicts on those who trifle with His authority and defy His power. Such is the curse that falls upon “presumptuous sin.”

II. The behaviour of the prophet presents **A FINE EXAMPLE OF MORAL DIGNITY AND CONSCIOUS STRENGTH.** See here—(1) The courage of a man who knows that God is on his side. The prophets of old, conscious of a more majestic Presence and a higher Sovereignty, never trembled before the face of wicked kings. The fear of God casts out all other fear. “Be not afraid of them that kill the body,” &c. (Luke xii. 4, 5). “If God be for us,” &c. (Rom. viii. 31). (2) The magnanimity of one who feels that he is called to witness for God among men. The prophet will not take advantage of the king's helplessness; rather responds at once to his appeal. He who is inspired by God's Spirit will not return scorn for scorn, or retaliate an attempted injury, but rather use for beneficent ends the power that he possesses. “Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of,” &c. (Luke ix. 54, 56). (3) The efficacy of the prayer of a righteous man. The withered arm is restored, and though this had no happy moral effect, as might have been expected, on Jeroboam, the whole transaction, in which mercy was thus blended with judgment, vindicated the honour of Jehovah, and established afresh His sovereign claim to the allegiance alike of king and people.—W.

**Vers. 1—10.—I. THE PRETENSIONS OF ERROR DEEPEN ITS SHAME.** The idolatrous altar was being solemnly consecrated. The people's eyes were dazzled with the splendour of the priestly and regal display. Jeroboam himself stood by the altar to offer incense. And then the cry arose which arrested every ear and thrilled through every soul. 1. *The attempt to give importance to the new idolatry only broadened the mark for God's rebuke:* it simply lent emphasis to His condemnation. They had come to consecrate, and had really come to attend upon God while He desecrated the work of their hands. Heathenism in its splendour thus rebuked by the preaching of the cross, Rome by the light of the Reformation. 2. *The agent by whom God's glory was vindicated.* The insignificance of the poor, weary, travel-stained man deepened their disgrace. “God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.”

II. **THE DOOM OF IDOLATROUS WORSHIP.** 1. *The altar will be desecrated.* The place will be made an abomination and horror. Sin's judgment will in the end be

sin's destruction. 2. *The sin will be wiped out in the blood and shame of those who have wrought it.* The priests will be offered upon the altar, the bones of its worshippers burned upon it. The world's sin will be ended in God's fiery judgment upon the sinful. 3. *The certainty of God's purpose.* Centuries intervened between the prediction and the fulfilment, but all was arranged. The time was fixed, the avenger named. There is no uncertainty in God's mind regarding the end of iniquity. The decree has been recorded, the time fixed, THE MAN named by whom He will judge the world in righteousness. 4. *The sign meanwhile given.* The altar was rent and its ashes poured out. The wrath revealed from heaven now is proof that all God's purpose shall be fulfilled.

III. MAN'S INABILITY TO CONTENT WITH GOD. 1. *The withered arm.* The arm outstretched in eager, wrathful command to arrest the man of God, withered in the very attitude. It was the emblem of his house and of his people; they were withered in the attitude of rebellion against God. 2. *The prophet's safety.* He needed none to shield him. God protects all those who serve Him. 3. *Jeroboam's humiliation.* He turns from idol and altar and priests, and requests the prophet's intercession with Jehovah. 4. *His arm is restored at the prophet's request,* and he thus bears in his person another token that the word he has heard is from God. It is the story of God's contest with darkness and wrong to-day.

IV. SEPARATION ESSENTIAL FOR TESTIMONY. Jeroboam's hospitality and reward were alike refused. The prophet was even forbidden to return by the same way: he was not to enter even into acquaintance with men who were sinning so deeply against God. Unless there be separation our testimony is a sham. Our life un- says our speech. If we will speak God's word to the sinful, our attitude must reveal their distance from God and the peril in which they stand. **If our own heart be filled with holy fear it may pass from us to them.—J. U.**

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER XIII. 11—24.

THE DISOBEDIENCE AND DEATH OF THE MAN OF GOD.—The seduction of the man of God, who has borne such fearless witness against Jeroboam's ecclesiastical policy, and his tragical end, are now narrated, partly because of the deep impression the story made at the time, but principally because these events were in themselves an eloquent testimony against the worship of the calves and the whole ecclesiastical policy of Jeroboam, and a solemn warning for all time against any, the slightest, departure from the commandments of God. The very unfaithfulness of this accredited messenger of the Most High, and the instant punishment it provoked, became part of the Divine protest against the new régime, against the unfaithfulness of Israel; whilst the remarkable manner in which these occurrences were recalled to the nation's memory in the reign of Jotham (2 Kings xxiii. 17, 18) made it impossible for the historian of the theocracy to pass them over without notice.

Ver 11.—Now there dwelt an old prophet [Heb. a certain (lit. one) old prophet. For this use of  $\text{רָבִי־זָקֵן}$  (=  $\text{רַבִּי}$ ) cf. 1 Kings xx. 13; xix. 4] at Bethel [It is at first somewhat surprising to find one of the prophetic order residing here, at the very seat and stronghold of the apostasy, especially after what we read in 2 Chron. xi. 13—16, that the priests and Levites, and it would seem all devout worshippers of the Lord God of Israel, had left the country, and had gone over to Rehoboam. For we cannot suppose that a sense of duty had kept this prophet at his post (see note on ver. 1). The fact that he remained, not only in the kingdom, but at its ecclesiastical capital; that he stood by without protest when the schism was being effected, and that, though not present himself at the sacrifice, he permitted his sons to be there, is a sufficient index to his character. It is quite possible that strong political sympathies had warped his judgment, and that he had persuaded himself that the policy of Jeroboam was necessitated by the division of the kingdom, which he knew to be from the Lord, and which one of his own order had foretold. Or it may be that, despite his better judgment, he had gone with his tribe and the majority of the nation, and now

felt it difficult to withdraw from a false position. Or, finally, he may have taken the side of Jeroboam because of the greater honours and rewards that prince had to bestow (see on ver. 18). There is a striking similarity between his position and action and that of Balaam]; and his sons [The Heb. has *son*; The LXX., Syr., and Vulg., *sons*. It is quite true that a "very slight change in the Hebrew text would bring it into accordance with the Septuagint here" (Rawlinson, similarly Ewald), but it would be against sound principles of textual criticism to make it. It is much more likely that the LXX. and other versions have been altered already, and that the plural has been introduced here because it is uniformly found in the later narrative. "*His son*" (בן), as the *lectio ardua*, is therefore to be retained. The use of the singular indicates that one of them was at first the principal speaker. Perhaps one hastened home with the news before the rest. The sons of the prophet are not to be confounded with "the sons (i.e., disciples of the prophets" (2 Kings ii., iii., iv., *passim*); not merely because "the latter would scarcely have witnessed the golden calf-worship" (Bähr), but also because they would have been differently designated] came and told him all the works [Heb. *work*] that the man of God had done that day in Bethel: the words which he had spoken unto the king, them they [observe the plural] told also to their father. [It is quite clear that the virtual excommunication which the man of God had pronounced had made as great an impression as the signs which he had showed. The interdict was a matter which came home to the Bethelites, as an affront to the whole community.]

Ver. 12.—And their father said unto them, What way went he? [The question shows that the old prophet thoroughly understood the import of those "words," and that his first thought was that the interdict must be removed at any cost.] For his sons had seen [Heb. and his sons saw, or showed. LXX. *δεικνύουσιν*. Similarly most of the versions. A very slight change in the vowel points אֲנִי for אֲנִי would give this sense] what way the man of God went which came from Judah.

Ver. 13.—And he said unto his sons, Saddle me the ass. [This prompt and seemingly abrupt command—though we cannot be sure that all the conversation is here reported—shows his instant resolve to follow. These are the words of one who had made up his mind, *coïte que coïte*, to bring the man of God back.] So they saddled him the ass: and he rode thereon.

Ver. 14.—And he went after the man of

God and found him sitting under an oak [Heb. *the oak*; i.e., the well-known oak. Possibly there was but one, or one of great size, in the neighbourhood—such trees are comparatively rare in Palestine. Possibly also this tree became well known from these events. It is singular that in another place (Gen. xxiv. 8) we read of "the oak" (אֲלֵן) of Bethel, whilst in Judg. iv. 5 we read of the "palm tree" (תְּמָר) of Deborah, between Ramah and Bethel." And it is not at all improbable, seeing that in 1 Sam. x. 3 we read of the terebinth (אֲלֵן) of Tabor—in the A. V. rendered "*plain* of Tabor"—which Ewald ("Hist. Israel," iii. 21; iv. 31) considers to be only a dialectic variation of *Deborah*, and remembering the great age to which these trees attain, that the same tree is referred to throughout. The word here used, it is true, is אֲלֵן (which is generally supposed to indicate the terebinth, but is also "used of any large tree" (Gesenius), and which, therefore, may be used of the אֲלֵן of Bethel. Both names are derived from the same root אָלַן, *fortis*. Cf. Amos ii. 9), and both indicate varieties—*what* varieties it is not quite clear—of the oak. Some expositors have seen in this brief rest the beginning of his sin, and certainly it would seem against the *spirit* of his instructions to remain so near a place (see note on ver. 16) from which he was to vanish speedily, and, if possible, unperceived. In any case the action betrays his fatigue and exhaustion], and he said unto him, Art thou the man of God that camest from Judah? And he said, I am.

Ver. 15.—Then he said unto him, Come home with me [Heb. *Come with me to the house*] and eat bread. The sting was in the tail of this invitation. If he would partake of food, he would thereby remove the ban and so neutralize one part of his mission.]

Ver. 16.—And he said, I may not [Heb. *am not able to*] return with thee, nor go in with thee: neither will I eat bread nor drink water with thee in this place. [The translation "*in that place*" adopted by Wordsworth (after the Vulgate, *in loco isto*) does not agree with the Hebrew. And it is not required by the context. The tree was probably at no great distance from the town.]

Ver. 17.—For it was said to me [Heb. *a word to me*] by [Heb. *in*] 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.

Ver. 18.—He said unto him, I am a

prophet also as thou art; and an angel (Bähr observes that "he does not venture to say that Jehovah spake to him, but says an angel did.") Is it not more probable that the angel was mentioned, partly for the purpose of giving an air of circumstantiality and reality to his story, and partly to convey the idea of his having a superior authority for his message? A communication through a celestial messenger would seem to have been regarded as a higher form of revelation than a subjective communication to the mind of the prophet. Cf. Acts vii. 53; Heb. ii. 2; Luke i. 13, 29; Acts xxvii. 23, &c. Observe, the prophet speaks presently of "the word of Jehovah" spake unto me by [Heb. *in*; same expression as in ver. 17] the word of the Lord, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house that he may eat [Heb. *and he shall eat*] bread and drink water. But he lied to him. [These last words are inserted parenthetically; hence there is no "but" in the Heb. The true character and designs and motives of this "old prophet" have long been a *crux interpretum* (see Hall, Contempl., ii. 151—3.) Some, including Josephus and most Jewish commentators, have supposed him to be altogether a false and lying prophet, such as are found plentifully later on in the history (ch. xxii. 6; Jer. xxviii. 1); but against this is the fact that he was undoubtedly the channel of a Divine communication (ver. 21). The real difficulty, no doubt, lies in the fact that one by whom the Spirit of God spake to man should have acted so base a part as he did. But it must be remembered (1) that he did not know what a terrible judgment his lie would bring upon "the man of God;" (2) that truth had not the place in the Jewish scheme which it has in Christian morals; (3) that the gift of prophecy is compatible with much moral imperfection on the part of the prophet—the cases of Balaam and Caiaphas will occur to all—and (4) that this man was constrained to prophesy almost in spite of himself; he was compelled, *i. e.*, to proclaim his own falseness, and to announce the punishment of the man he had himself deceived. It is also to be considered that this lying prophet, like those of ch. xxii. 22, accomplished the purpose of God, which was to make the man of God a sign to the men of that generation. Cf. Isa. xx. 3; Ezek. xii. 6; xxiv. 24. In this latter consideration, indeed, lies the key to the history. The object the old prophet had in view it is not so difficult to divine. He hears that the prophet of Judah has refused the hospitality of King Jeroboam, and has put the city of Bethel and the new cultus under a virtual ban by refusing to eat bread in the place, or to hold any communication

with the inhabitants, himself among the rest, although he has taken no part, even by his presence, in the ceremonial of the day. He naturally feels himself condemned and aggrieved by this conduct. A prophet would feel the interdict much more keenly than the people, and there can be little doubt that this man, who had been trying to serve two masters, was deeply mortified by the excommunication pronounced against him. He resolves, therefore, to rehabilitate himself in his own estimation and that of his neighbours, by bringing back the man of God to eat and to drink, and so in effect to remove the interdict, at any cost. If he succeeds, he will make the whole city, and especially the sovereign, whose policy has been so emphatically condemned, his debtor; while by accomplishing what the king had failed to effect, he will at once heal his wounded pride and secure a position of influence in the new kingdom. If it was the hope of temporal advancement had detained him at Bethel, he now sees, as he thinks, an easy way to its attainment; if it was an ardent sympathy with the new state of things, he sees before him an opportunity of expressing it in a most practical and serviceable way.]

Ver. 19.—So he went back with him, and did eat bread in his house, and drank water [cf. ver. 10].

Ver. 20.—And it came to pass, as they sat at the table [cf. Ps. lxxviii. 30. He is taken in the act, "even in the blossoms of his sin"], that the word of the Lord came unto the prophet that brought him back.

Ver. 21.—And he cried [same word as in ver. 2. He who denounced the "sin of Jeroboam" is now denounced in turn] 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.

Ver. 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 [rather *corpse*; "carcase" is now a term of disparagement, of which, however, there is no idea in the Hebrew] shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers. [The desire, common in a greater or less degree to all mankind, to rest after death amongst *kindred* dust, was especially strong in the Jew. It is evidenced by the common euphemism "he was gathered unto his fathers," and by the provisions of Abraham (Gen. xxiii. 4), Jacob (Gen. xlvii. 29; xlix. 29—31), and Joseph (Gen. l. 25). See also the words of Barzillai (2 Sam. xix. 37; and compare

2 Sam. ii. 32). This denunciation did not necessarily imply a violent death (as Keil, *al.*) or even a speedy death, but it prepared the man of God for some untimely end.]

Ver. 23.—And it came to pass, after he had eaten bread, and after he had drunk, that he saddled [*i.e.*, the prophet of Bethel; the “man of God” would seem to have come on foot. See below] for him the ass, to wit, for the prophet whom he had brought back. This translation is inadmissible. For not only is the term “prophet” throughout this narrative restricted to the prophet of Bethel (the prophet of Judah being always spoken of as “the man of God,”) but the expression here used *וְהָאֵסִי אֲשֶׁר לְהָבִיאוֹ* is also twice used (vers. 20, 26) of the same prophet. He is characterized there, that is to say, as “the prophet which brought him back;” it is hardly likely, therefore, that the same words are here to be interpreted, “the prophet whom he brought back.” The mistake has arisen from the proximity of *לְ* (“for him”) to *לְהָבִיאוֹ* (“to” or “for the prophet”). But the *לְ* is here indicative of possession (the dative of the possessor), as in 1 Sam. xiv. 16, “the watchmen to,” *i.e.*, of, “Saul,” and *ib.* xvi. 18, “a son to Jesse” (cf. Gen. xiv. 18 Heb.; 1 Kings v. 29 Heb.; Ruth ii. 3 Heb.) We must therefore render “He (the old prophet, but this is not absolutely certain; the “man of God” *may* be understood) saddled for him (the man of God) the ass of the prophet which brought him back.” The man of God had been delayed by his return to Bethel, and the prophet, out of pity, lends or gives him his ass. Not merely, it is probable, for the sake of speeding him on his way, but that he might have some living thing with him on a journey which he had so much cause to dread.

Ver. 24.—And when he was gone [Heb. *and he went*], a lion (Lions were evidently numerous in Palestine in former days, though they are now extinct. This is proved by the names of places, such as *Laish*, *Lebanth*, &c., and by the constant reference to them in Scripture. They had their lairs in the forests, one of which existed near Bethel (2 Kings ii. 24), and especially in the thickets of the Jordan valley (Jer. xlix. 19; Zech. xi. 3]) met [Heb. *found*. The primary meaning of *נָפְץ* is, no doubt, “found accidentally,” “came upon” (*εἶπεν, invenit*), but it is often used of finding after a search (1 Sam. ix. 4, &c.), and it should be remembered that this is the word used in vers. 14, 28] him by [*in*, as below] the way, and slew him: and his carcase was cast in the way [road.

highway, ver. 25], and the ass stood [Heb. *standing*] by it, the lion also stood [*standing*] by the carcase. [These particulars are mentioned to show that his death was no accident, or chance, but a visitation of God. There are probably but few persons who have not felt that this summary punishment was marked by extreme severity; the more so, as the prophet was cruelly deceived, and that by a brother prophet, who claimed to have received a subsequent revelation, and whom, consequently, it appeared to be a duty to obey. And when it is observed that the really guilty person, the prophet of Bethel, so far as appears, escaped all punishment, and by his lie secured for himself respect for his remains, we seem to have a case of positive hardship and injustice. As I have discussed the question at some length elsewhere (Homil. Quart., vol. iv. pp. 214—221), it must suffice to say here that the difficulty is at once removed if we remember that although the Jewish dispensation was one of temporal recompenses, yet all the same there is a judgment hereafter. No doubt the man of God was punished for his disobedience, for inexcusable disobedience it was. It is quite true that he was solemnly assured that an angel had appeared to revoke his commission, but for this he had only the word of a stranger, of one, too, with whom he had been commanded “not even to eat.” He had “the word of the Lord;” that is to say, the voice of God, borne in upon his soul, forbidding his return, and the word of an irreligious stranger, who gave no “sign the same day” in proof of his mission, authorizing it. There can be no doubt which he ought to have followed, the more so as the command he had himself received was so remarkably explicit and decisive (ver. 9); so decisive that we can hardly suppose he would have deviated from it, had not the pains of hunger and thirst pleaded powerfully in favour of the pretended revelation of the Bethelite prophet. Indeed, it is hardly too much to say that he eagerly welcomed this cause for returning. It is impossible, therefore, to acquit him of disobedience. Nor is it difficult to see that the consequences of this disobedience were serious. It was not as if he had disregarded a mere *positive* obligation, the only object of which was to test his obedience (Rawlinson); he had acted in a way calculated to destroy the moral effect of his mission. He had been employed not only to testify publicly against the calf-worship, but also to lay the city and the new sanctuary of Jeroboam under an interdict, and by his return that interdict lost much of its force. His eating and drinking, small matters in

themselves, were full of significance. Indeed, he did in one way precisely what Jeroboam and his people were doing in another—he forsook the plain commands of God for the ordinances of men; he listened to the tempter and ate the forbidden fruit; and so it came to pass that, instead of witnessing against disobedience, he himself set them the example of disobedience. It is the story of the Fall over again; and therefore death, the punishment of the Fall, befell him. But before we say that his punishment was too severe, let us remember what, by the mercy of God, that primal punishment has become. It has been turned into a blessing. It has given us the incarnation, redemption, eternal life. We forget that death is not necessarily an evil—is in reality a blessing. One of the heathen has said that if we only knew what the future life was like, we should not be content to live. To this “man of God” it must surely have been gain to die. If the flesh was destroyed, it was that the spirit might be saved (1 Cor. v. 5). Only because we forget that death is the gate of life do we complain of the severity of his doom. And as to the lying prophet who wrought all this mischief escaping retribution—which, by the way, he did not do, for assuredly he must have had a life-long remorse—it is overlooked that the day of retribution has not yet arrived. There is for him a judgment to come. It may be said that the Jew did not know of this—that the future life had not then been revealed. That is quite true, and for that very reason this visitation would make all the deeper impression on their minds. To this must be added that the man of God did not die merely or principally because of his sin, but “that the works of God might be made manifest in him.” His death was necessary in order that his mission might not be altogether invalidated. His miserable end—as it must have seemed to them—would surely speak to the inhabitants of Bethel and to all Israel and Judah, for long years to come, as to the sure vengeance awaiting the disobedient, whether king, prophet, priest, or people. Though dead “he cried against the altar of Bethel.” And the sacred narrative (vers. 26—32) affords us some ground for hoping that the “old prophet” became penitent for his sin. It is noteworthy that he joins his testimony to that of the man of God. Thus, this tragedy extorted even from *him* a warning against disobedience (ver. 26), and a confirmation of the prophecy against the altar of Bethel (ver. 32).]

Ver. 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. [This was precisely what God had designed. By this means, the very disobedience and death of the man of God became a part of the protest against the new rites. “For if the partaking of food against the commandment of God, though the result not of indulgence, but of deceit, brought so great a punishment upon a righteous man, what sort of chastisements would befall those who had left God their Maker and were worshipping senseless images” (Theodoret).]

Ver. 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 [Heb. *rebelled*; same word as in ver. 21] unto the word [Heb. “*mouth*,” as in ver. 21] of the Lord: therefore the Lord hath delivered him unto the lion, which hath torn [Heb. as marg., *broken*. The word “is very expressive, for the lion kills with one blow” (Thenius)] and slain him, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake unto him.

Ver. 27.—And he spake to his sons, saying, Saddle me the ass. And they saddled him.

Ver. 28.—And he went and found his carcase cast in the way, and the ass and the lion standing by the carcase: the lion had not eaten the carcase nor torn [Heb. *broken*, as in ver. 26] the ass.

Ver. 29.—And the prophet took up the carcase of the man of God, and laid it upon the ass [*i.e.*, the one standing by], and brought it back: and the old prophet came to the city, to mourn and to bury him. [The mourning is specially mentioned, because in the East professional wailers were and are employed at funerals. The Jew, no less than the Greek and Roman, esteemed it a great misfortune and disgrace to be deprived of decent burial: Isa. xiv. 19; Jer. xxii. 19; and especially 2 Kings ix. 10.]

Ver. 30.—And he laid his carcase in his own grave [Matt. xxvii. 60. This was a mark of profound respect (Ruth i. 17; Gen. xxiii. 6)]; and they mourned over him, saying, Alas, my brother. [A customary formula in lamentation (Jer. xxii. 18). It hardly implies that “he was mourned and buried as a relative of the family” (Bähr). Seeing that the old prophet was responsible for his death, he could hardly have done less. “It is a cruel courtesy to kill a man and then help him to his grave” (Hall).]

Ver. 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 [Palestine, being of limestone formation, has a large number of caves. These, enlarged and adapted, were everywhere used for interments. ("The whole cliffs on its southern side [Hinnom] are honeycombed with tombs," Porter). In three sides of the cave vaults (*loculi*), each large enough to hold a body, were recessed in the rock, the entrance being closed by a slab of stone (see Conder, pp. 85, 96, 118, &c.) In the so-called "tombs of the kings" and "prophets" we have such sepulchres on a large scale. A Paper on the Tombs of Palestine will be found in the Quarterly Statement of the Palestine Exploration Fund, p. 66 sqq. It appears from 2 Kings xxiii. 17 that a pillar was erected to mark this prophet's resting-place] wherein the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones. [That is to say, "Bury me in the cell next to his" (Rawlinson). But it is not absolutely certain that this arrangement (of *loculi*) obtained at this early period. The bodies may have been in much closer contact. See 2 Kings xiii. 21. The LXX. adds here, "That my bones may be saved with his bones;" an obvious gloss, founded on 2 Kings xxiii. 18. This request throws some light on the yearning desire of the modern Jew to rest as near as possible to the bodies of the saints. See Porter, i. p. 145.]

Ver. 32.—For the saying which he cried by the word of the Lord against the altar in Bethel, and against all the houses of the high places [At that time there would seem to have been but two "high places." Keil sees "a prophetic element in these words." He thinks the old prophet foresaw that such sanctuaries would be multiplied. Rawlinson gathers, "from the mention of the great high place in 1 Kings iii. 4, that there were many lesser high places in the land," which, no doubt, was the case at the date of Solomon's accession. It is probable, however, that many of these, if not all, would be deserted when the temple was built. And it is most reasonable to suppose that in these, as in the following words, the historian has represented the prediction or affirmation of the old prophet in the language of his own time] which are in the cities of Samaria. [Obviously, these exact words cannot have been used by the prophet of Bethel, for Samaria dates its existence and name from the reign of Omri (1 Kings xvi. 24). The compiler of the Kings probably found the term in the documents which he used, or possibly, as already suggested, translated the prophet's meaning into the language of a later day] shall surely come to pass.

Ver. 33.—After this thing [calculated though it was to make a deep impression and to furnish a solemn warning] Jeroboam turned not from his evil way. "Some hand was found that durst repair the altar God had rent" (Matthew Henry). According to Josephus, the old prophet now explained away the miracles of the prophet of Judah, alleging that the altar had fallen because it was new and the king's hand had become powerless from fatigue (Ant., viii. 9, § 1), but made again [Heb. "returned and made." The tautology is significant. He returned not from his sin, but returned to it] of the lowest [see on ch. xii. 11] of the people priests of the high places: whosoever would [Heb. *pleased*], he consecrated [Heb. *filled his hand*]. In the consecration of Aaron and his sons, and possibly of their successors also, the portions of the victim which were usually burned upon the altar, together with the right shoulder or leg, which was the priest's portion, and three cakes of unleavened bread, were put into the hands of the candidates for the priesthood, and waved before the Lord before they were offered on the altar (Exod. xxix. 22—26; Levit. viii. 25—28). To "fill the hand" consequently became a synonym for consecration] him [It would almost appear, from the extreme readiness with which Jeroboam ordained his priests, that few candidates offered themselves for the office. In one respect, however, he exacted more from the candidate than did the law. For whereas the latter required "one bullock and two rams" (Exod. xxix. 1, &c.), he demanded one bullock and seven rams as the offering on consecration (2 Chron. xiii. 9), and he became one of the priests [Heb. *and he became priests*, &c. So the Chaldee, LXX. *καὶ ἐγένετο ἱερεῖς*] of the high places.

Ver. 34.—And this thing [Heb. "in this thing:" *בְּדָבָר*. Cf. 1 Chron. vii. 23; ix. 33] became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off, and to destroy it from off the face of the earth [ch. xv. 29. The forfeiture of the crown would bring in its train, almost as a matter of course, the destruction of his family (ch. xiv. 10—14). And we are taught here that both events are to be regarded, under the dispensation of temporal rewards and punishments, as the recompenses of his impiety; of that daring schismatic policy which, in all its branches, betrayed a complete disregard of the terms of the covenant, and which was persevered in contemptuous defiance of the repeated warnings of God.]

## HOMILETICS.

**Vers. 21 sqq.**—*The Man of God and the People of God.* The morning of that fifteenth day of the eighth month, that black day in the Hebrew Kalendar, that birthday of division, was hardly more memorable or eventful than the evening. In the morning the Bethelites saw the signs of the man of God; in the evening they saw in him a sign, a parable, and a terrible warning. The lesson of the rent altar and the rigid hand was followed by the lesson of the lion and the ass and the rigid corpse. Truly, of that day it might be truly said, "The evening and the morning were one day."

For we may be sure, when the old prophet came back from his quest of the body, and brought with him that melancholy burden, swinging across the ass, the men of Bethel, who had already heard from wayfarers of the tragedy, would crowd the streets or lanes—for Bethel was probably little more than a village—to meet him, and would gaze, hushed and awestruck, into the dumb and helpless face of the man whose words and deeds had that day been so full of power. There was not a child that night but would leave his play to stare in silent wonder, or with whispered question, on the corpse. Of that sad funereal procession, the words which, near a thousand years later, described the entry of a living Prophet into an adjoining city, might justly be used, "All the city was moved, saying, Who is this?" (Matt. xxi. 10.) Nor would the language which described the effect of that same Prophet's death a few days later be less applicable here, "All the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts and returned" (Luke xxiii. 48).

Let us now suppose, however, for the sake of bringing out the lessons of this narrative, that there were some in the crowd—as on the first feast-day there may well have been—strangers in Bethel (cf. John xii. 20; Acts ii. 5—11), who did not understand the things which were come to pass there that day. Let us join them, as they go, carried by the stream, to meet the body; let us listen to their questions, and to the answers they receive. We shall not gather all the truth from the discourse we overhear, but we shall learn at all events one lesson which this tragedy had for the men of that time.

Now the first question which would rise to these strangers' lips, as they came upon the body, borne by the patient ass, which was the one terrified witness of the catastrophe, would be, "Who is this?" They think, perhaps, it is some peasant who has been slain as he tilled his fields, or some itinerant chapman who has been murdered on his journey. But the bystanders speedily undeceive them. They tell them that this is "a man of God who came from Judah." His name, it may be, is unknown to them, but not his deeds. They relate, with breathless excitement, not unmingled with fear, how a few short hours ago he was amongst them; how on the morning of that very day he had confronted their king as he was in the act of sacrificing, had denounced his innovations, had foretold the overthrow of his policy and dynasty, and had then wrought wonderful works in attestation of his mission. The strangers listen with steadily increasing wonderment. Had this man been "a murderer whom vengeance suffered not to live," or a sinner above all men that dwelt in Bethel, they could have understood it. Such a one, however he might have met his end, would only have received the just reward of his deeds, but "a man of God," a man who wrought miracles, a favourite of Heaven!—they cannot comprehend it, and they, as excited as their informants, hurriedly ask how he has come by his death.

"A lion slew him," is the answer. It is true no human eye saw the deed, but there can be no doubt as to the manner of his death. Then they tell how way-faring men that afternoon had seen a strange sight, a corpse cast in the way—whose corpse they knew not—and an ass and a lion standing as joint sentinels over it, &c. And then the strangers would understand that this man of God had died by the visitation of God. They would remember that the "teeth of evil beasts" were one of the plagues denounced in the law, and they would wonder, and

they would ask, what this messenger of the Most High, this miracle-worker, could have done between morning and evening to bring this terrible judgment down upon his head.

And this was a question which only the old prophet could rightly answer, and he had answered it already. He had told his sons and neighbours that afternoon, when first he heard of this tragedy, that it was the punishment of disobedience (ver. 26). Not improbably he proclaimed it again to the crowd which awaited his return. "He had been charged," he would say, as they stood gazing on the helpless corpse, "to lay our city under a ban; he had been commanded to eat no bread, to drink no water here. And he came back, and he ate bread and he drank water in my house; therefore it is that 'the lion hath torn him and slain him, according to the word of the Lord'" (ver. 26).

And so the men of Bethel, and the strangers among them—and thousands of strangers would be present in Bethel at that time—would understand that this man, albeit a prophet, and a doer of wondrous works, had paid the penalty of his partial disobedience with his life. They would perceive that God had not spared His own elect messenger. They would see that the man who had been commissioned to protest against Jeroboam's will-worship, who had courageously faced the king in his might, and had stood like an Athanase against the world, had received judgment without mercy when he overstepped the commandment of his God. And they would assuredly be reminded, some of them at least, how sinful and how dangerous must be that departure from the law which they had that day seen instituted amongst themselves. And as one by one they dropped off, and, deeply awed and impressed, returned to their tents or booths, the one thought which above all others filled their minds would be this—how sure and swift and terrible was the recompense of disobedience.

But if these strangers, in their perplexity, proceeded to make further inquiries, as they may well have done; if they asked what could have led such a man as this to set at nought the plain commandment of God: if they discovered from the old prophet, or his sons, or others, the circumstances of his sin; if they learned that this man of God had resisted the entreaties of the king, had obeyed his own instructions to the letter, and had only come back and eaten bread on the solemn assurance of this old prophet himself that an angel from heaven had distinctly reversed his commission; if they understood that it was because he had taken this man at his word and trusted to his good faith, as they themselves would have done in like circumstances, that he had been induced to return; and that because of this, and nothing else, this ambassador of the Most Merciful had died by the stroke of a wild beast, we may imagine what their astonishment and horror would be like. "Who shall deliver us," they would cry, "out of the hand of this mighty God?" And it is probable that at first they would find it difficult to see wherein his sin lay, and to disentangle the right and the wrong in his conduct. They would say, and rightly, that he was much more sinned against than sinning. It would seem to them that the really guilty party escaped unpunished, whilst his innocent victim paid to the uttermost farthing. And it is possible that some found, at least for a time, in this episode, as some in later days have done, a riddle which they could not read. But its meaning could not be lost upon them all; if it had been, the Divine purpose in this visitation would have been defeated. It may be the old prophet himself expounded its lessons; it may be that "such as set their heart to seek the Lord"—and we may be sure that Jeroboam's innovations had occasioned the gravest misgivings and fears in many minds—found them out for themselves. But in any case some would not be long in discovering that *these things were an allegory*. "As hieroglyphics," says Lord Bacon, "preceded letters, so parables were more ancient than arguments." May we not add that *acted* parables were still more ancient than *spoken* ones. A Tarquin, striking off the heads of the tallest poppies, belongs to the beginnings of history. This was the age when men not only gave signs, but *were* such themselves (Isa. xx. 3; Ezek. xxiv. 24; Matt. xii. 39, 40). The death of the "man of God" accordingly was a parable, an object-lesson of the most impressive

kind as to the doom of the unfaithful *people* of God. In his end, men might see a fore-shadowing of their nation's, if it should persevere in the worship of the calves.

For they would assuredly remember, as they pondered this history, that as this prophet of Judah was a *man* of God, precisely so was Israel the *people* of God (ch. viii. 43, 52, 66; xiv. 7; Levit. xxvi. 12; Deut. xxvi. 18). As he was to other men, so was Israel to other nations. Was he elect of God and precious? So were they. Had he a mission? So had they. Had God spoken to him? He had also spoken to them, and moreover, had given them a charge not unlike his. For it is to be also considered that God had plainly spoken to Israel on this very subject of Divine worship. At the very threshold of the Decalogue, at the head of "the words of the covenant," stood the charge, "Thou shalt have none other gods but me. Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image," &c. And it is to be noted here that these words stand side by side with the formula, "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt"—the very words which Jeroboam had cited in instituting his new mode of worship; the very cry which had been raised before when Israel made its *first* golden calf (Exod. xxxii. 8). It is almost certain, therefore, that these initial words of the covenant had been lately and forcibly recalled to their minds. But in any case they could not be ignorant that their forefathers had been expressly charged to make no similitude, no graven or molten image (Levit. xxvi. 1; Deut. iv. 16, 25; v. 8; xxvii. 15, &c.) And this commandment, too, like the message of that morning, had been confirmed with signs following. The blackness, darkness, tempest, trumpet, fire, all these had attested that revelation of God's will. It might possibly occur to some of their minds, therefore, that when the first protest against a corrupt following of the true God was raised, He "gave a sign the same day."

Such, then, was the commandment given to Israel. It was as explicit, as authoritative as that which this dead prophet had recently received. But of late a new teacher had appeared amongst them, in the person of their king, who presumed to countermand this law of the Almighty. We are not told, indeed, that Jeroboam claimed to be prophet as well as priest, but we find him acting as one, and received as one. It is hardly likely that *he* laid claim to any revelation from on high. He was not the man to pretend to visions of angels. It was his contention that he was reverting to the old form of religion, but that was all. At the same time, he was the great false prophet of the Old Testament. Just as Moses was the giver of the law, just as Elias was its restorer, so was Jeroboam its depraver. Precisely what the lying prophet taught the man of God, that had he taught the people of God, *viz.*, that God's command was somehow abrogated. Prophet of Bethel and priest-king of Bethel were alike in this, that each met the Divine, "*Thou shalt not,*" with the human, "*Thou shalt.*" There was this difference between them, that the first inculcated disobedience to but one command, whilst the second contravened a whole system; but this very divergence would make the parallel all the more impressive. "If," they would argue, "if a prophet, a doer of signs and wonders, died without mercy because he listened to the voice of a brother prophet—who swore that he had received a revelation concerning him—and so was betrayed into breaking one commandment, of how much sorer punishment shall those be thought worthy who at the mere word of their king, albeit he claimed no spiritual authority, and acted from political motives only, reject the gracious covenant of heaven, confirmed by many signs, and go after false gods," &c. There were some, no doubt, would see in the corpse borne to its burial that day a foreshadowing of the more terrible judgment then hanging over their own heads.

And so we find this prophet of Judah has not lived or suffered in vain. His death, like that of Samson, wrought even more effectually than his life. He was set forth as it were appointed to death (1 Cor. iv. 9). He silently and unconsciously mirrored forth the sin and the punishment of a disobedient people.

It now only remains for us to indicate briefly how the analogy between man of God and people of God received its completion in the punishment which befell the latter. The punishment of the prophet was death; of the people, whose sin was much greater, death and superadded infamy. We see this—

1. *In the case of Jeroboam's house.* For the family of the deceiver was the first to suffer. As in the case of the man of God, "swift retribution" followed upon sin. And what retribution! The death and destruction of the race. He himself was smitten of God. His seed was suddenly cut off. The sword of Baasha was as swift as the lion's paw. Only one of his children "came to the grave." The rest were devoured of beasts and birds. (Cf. ch. xiv. 11 with ch. xiii. 28.)

2. *In the case of his intrusive priests.* If they escaped a violent death, their remains experienced disgrace worse than death (ver. 2). Here prophet and priests stand in contrast. The respect accorded to his ashes was denied to theirs.

3. *In the case of the entire people.* For the captivity, foretold in ch. xiv. 15, was the death of the kingdom, and the death-knell of the people. The ten tribes soon lost their corporate existence. And what agonies preceded that dissolution! (See Jer. lii.; Lam. *passim*; Pss. lxxiv., cxxxvii.) The people to death, the land to lions! (2 Kings xvii. 25.) Could the analogy be much closer?

But indeed the analogy does not end there. *De te fabula narratur.* The Christian Church has inherited the place, the privileges, the responsibilities of the Jewish people. If that Church, or if the individual Christian be unfaithful or disobedient, let them see their own fate glassed and portrayed in that of the disobedient prophet. "If God spared not the natural branches," &c. "I will remove thy candlestick out of his place." "Shame and everlasting contempt."

*The Two Prophets.* We have already considered the principal lesson which this strange history had for that time. Let us now indicate some of the lessons which it has for all time. The text, to borrow Bishop Ridley's phrase, "shall lead us by the hand;" we will record them as we find them set down in the story. And first let us contemplate the OLD PROPHET. Observe—

1. *It was the false prophet that was old.* Age should bring wisdom (Job. xxxii. 7; ch. xii. 7), and piety. But see Homiletics, p. 225. The old king (ch. xi. 4) and the old prophet alike remind us that there is "no sinner like an old sinner."

2. *It was only the false teacher that was styled a prophet.* Probably because he alone had been taught in the schools. He was, so to speak, in the prophetic succession. The man of God was an irregular, though not self-constituted messenger. But observe, when God employs an irregular, He authenticates his mission with a sign. And consider, too, the unworthiness of ministers argues nothing against the office or the succession. See Art. XXVI.

3. *The old prophet was in Bethel.* "Where Satan's seat is" (Rev. ii. 8). But God had not fixed the bounds of his habitation. What wonder if, like him who "pitched his tent toward Sodom" (Gen. xiii. 12), he fell into temptation and sin? The old prophet, in his way, has "lifted up his eyes and beheld the plain of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere." He has remained here to worship the rising sun. Conscience bade him go. Convenience made him stay.

4. *The old prophet tries to serve two masters.* Though Jeroboam sets up molten images, a sanctuary, a priesthood, he raises no protest. But when Jeroboam burns incense and sacrifices, he does not sanction the proceeding by his presence. But he compromises the matter by sending his sons. "*Video meliora proboque, Deteriora sequor.*" "He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed" (James i. 6). The temporiser soon finds difficulties in his path. Those who try to gain both worlds generally contrive to lose both. After the conduct of ver. 18, he could not respect himself; and after the prophecy of ver. 32, he could expect no advancement from the king.

5. *The old prophet stoops to lies.* And yet he was a true prophet. A preacher of righteousness, yet he practised deceit. Baalam has been called "a strange mixture of a man." This prophet's character and conduct were equally strange. But, alas! it is a common thing to find men's example differing widely from their precept; to find insight without holiness, light without love. Prophetic gifts do not imply piety. It is no new thing for God's ministers to fall into sin.

6. *The old prophet slays a man of God.* It was his tongue, not the lion's paw, really slew a man more righteous and better than he. A prophet is the instru-

ment of a murder (cf. John viii. 44). "What shall be given unto thee, or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue?" (Ps. cxx. 3.) Let us take care lest we destroy *with our meat* one for whom Christ died (Rom. xiv. 15). Let us remember—

"What guilt, what grief may be incurred  
By one incautious, hasty word."

Now let us turn to the MAN OF GOD. Observe—

1. *The man of God believes every word.* He was not altogether without excuse. False prophets were not as plentiful as they afterwards became. He was unprepared for such unblushing deceit. We should probably have done the same. Yet we have had manifold warnings (Matt. vii. 15; xxiv. 11.; Acts xx. 29; 1 John iv. 1; 1 Tim. iv. 1, &c.) We have been taught that if "an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto us," it is at our peril we listen (Gal. i. 8). We have been reminded that "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light" (2 Cor. xi. 14).

2. *The man of God is deceived by lies.* It is a favourite device of the enemy. He is the "father of lies" (John viii. 44). It was thus he deceived our first parents. That weapon has answered so well that he plies it again and again (cf. 2 Cor. iv. 4; 2 Thess. ii. 11).

3. *The man of God goes back to Bethel.* This faithful and courageous servant, who had defied the king, who had refused his dainties and rewards, &c., does not endure to the end. "Let him that thinketh he standeth," &c. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law and offend in one point he is guilty of all," because he is guilty of disobedience. "Evil is wrought by want of thought." The commands of God must be kept in their entirety.

4. *The man of God is denounced by the prophet.* Those who lead us into sin are the first to tax us with it afterwards. The deceiver turns upon his victim. We get scant comfort from companions in sin. "What is that to us? See thou to that" (Matt. xxvii. 4).

5. *The man of God hears his doom in silence.* "He was speechless." "I became dumb and opened not my mouth, for it was thy doing." "Being convicted by their own conscience" (John viii. 9).

6. *The man of God dies without mercy.* Though a prophet, the teeth of an evil beast avenge his disobedience. Judgment begins at the house of God (1 Pet. iv. 17). The teacher shall receive the greater condemnation (James iii. 1). "Many stripes" are for those who knew and did not. "The wages of sin is death."

7. *Yet his corpse is not mangled or dishonoured.* It was partly for our admonition that he died. He was ordained to be a sign to that generation. Therefore, though deceived, he was not forsaken. The lion and the ass keep watch over his remains. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." "A bone of him shall not be broken." "Let no man move his bones" (2 Kings xxiii. 18). His honourable funeral (cf. Isa. liii. 9; Matt. xxvii. 60) and the respect subsequently paid him show that he was no castaway.

And now that we have considered the prophet of Bethel and the prophet of Judah separated by deceit and death, let us see them for a moment reunited.

1. *In their testimony.* For to the witness of the man of God against the altar of Bethel was added the unwilling, and therefore powerful, witness of the old prophet (ver. 32). Jeroboam has gained nothing by the death of the man who had denounced him and his rites. Though dead, he speaks, and speaks as he could never have done in life. And now "one of themselves, even a prophet of their own," has been constrained to echo and enforce his testimony. The king has now the testimony of two unimpeachable witnesses against his impious proceedings.

2. *In their grave.* "Lay my bones beside his bones." Like Balaam, this old prophet would "die the death of the righteous." "Gather not my soul with sinners" (Psa. xxvi. 9) is his cry. "*Sit anima mea cum illo.*" He will take his chance with the man of God rather than with the king. "I had rather be," says one, "with Origen wherever he is than with Justinian and Theodora wherever they are." "In death they were not divided."

But how different their lot in life. The deceived dies; the deceiver lives. The lion which slew the comparatively innocent man of God would not touch the lying prophet. Though old, he is spared to grow older, while the other's sun went down at noon. What an illustration this of the strange confusion of this present life (cf. Pss. lxi., lxxiii., &c.); what a proof of a life to come, where each shall receive his just recompense of reward! To the Jew, suckled in a creed of temporal rewards &c., this history would present some anxious problems, all of which are clear since our Prophet, Priest, and King "brought life and immortality to light."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 11—19.—*The Old Serpent again.* As the ways of the serpent are tortuous so are those of Satan. If he cannot effect his purposes by moving in one direction he will move in another, and thus by crooked ways he advances (Isa. xxvii. 1; Psa. cxxv. 5). He had already tempted the man of God by means of the schismatic king, and failed; his next work is to see what influence an old prophet may have upon him. So versatile are his devices that it is our wisdom to be ever on the alert. Observe the adroitness with which he lays his plans. His astuteness is seen—

I. IN CHOOSING HIS INSTRUMENTS. These were—1. "*The sons of the old prophet.*" (1) They were near the altar. Whether by the contrivance of Satan, or that, finding them there, he made them his tools, is not revealed. Or whether they were there out of curiosity, or sympathy with the apostasy, is not revealed. But they were there—on the devil's ground. We must keep from that if we would escape mischief. (2) They were witnesses of the words and works of God. So, might have been rebuked for sympathy with evil and admonished to separate themselves from it. They also saw the way the man of God took in returning to Judah. (3) They lost no time in reporting to their father, urged, unconsciously to themselves, by Satan. We cannot always tell when we are prompted by the devil, or when he uses for his purposes our natural promptings. We should pray God to spare us the humiliation of serving Satan's purposes. 2. *The old prophet himself.* (1) He was an "old" prophet, or had been a prophet in the old time before the apostasy of Jeroboam. Probably he had backslidden from God; for, though he did not appear at Bethel, he allowed his sons to be there. Had he not lost his old fire would he not have lifted his voice against the national sin? Backsliders from God become the devil's dupes. (2) The energy of Satan is seen in the promptness of this old prophet's action. He quickly got information. He lost no time in the pursuit. The sluggishness of age was shaken off under the excitement of the devil's spur. (3) But what was the old man's motive? Probably the desire to display that hospitality which the Easterns cultivated so carefully, mingled with a curiosity to know more about the wonders the man of God was commissioned to discover. But Satan's motive was very different. Beware that your motives become not subservient to those of the devil. Let your motives be pure and godly.

II. IN USING THEM. 1. *See the stratagem in Eden, repeated.* (1) Had Satan tempted Eve in his proper character he would have failed (1 Tim. xi. 14). So the man of God was proof against the solicitations of the king whom he discerned to be the "man of sin" of his time. (2) Satan therefore concealed himself under the sleek, lustrous form of a serpent, and deceived our mother. Then transferring himself to the fallen Eve, under her lovely disguise, overcame Adam. So, enshrining himself in the old prophet, he vanquished the "man of God." Beware of Satan's disguises. Especially beware of the religious devil. (3) The offence, again, was eating. In Eden it was eating the forbidden thing. Note: The place may be right, the thing wrong. At Bethel it was eating in the forbidden place. Note: The thing may be right, the place wrong. 2. *See the spirit of the devil.* (1) The spirit of cruelty. The old prophet knew that the man of God was forbidden to eat in Bethel, yet he importuned him to eat bread with him. Cruelty is no less real because sheathed in professions of kindness. Over-indulgent parents are their children's cruellest enemies. (2) The spirit of treachery. The man of God had refused a king;

will he withstand a prophet? (Jer. xxiii. 13; Amos ii. 11.) (3) The spirit of *lies* (ver. 18). Now is Satan transformed into an angel of light. Could the old prophet have been himself thus deceived? He deceived the man of God. Beware of the devil of hospitality. Perhaps the man of God the more readily yielded being weak with fatigue and fasting (compare Matt. iv. 2—4). No example, save that of Jesus may be followed implicitly.—J. A. M.

Vers. 20—22.—*The Voice of Reproof.* No man of God will deliberately sin against God (John viii. 44; 1 John iii. 9; v. 18). But the good are liable to be surprised or deceived into transgression (James i. 13—15; 1 John ii. 1, 2). We must be ever on our guard against the “wiles” and “depths” of Satan. For lack of vigilance this man of God fell into the snare, and we see here how he was reprovèd.

I. HE SINNED AGAINST THE WORD OF JEHOVAH. 1. *This is evident upon the face of the narrative.* (1) He came out of Judah “by the word of Jehovah.” Cried against the altar at Bethel “in the word of Jehovah.” Gave the sign upon the altar “by the word of Jehovah” (vers. 1, 2, 5). (2) He professed that his instructions not to eat in Mount Ephraim, but to return to Judah by another road, were by the same word. Professed to the king (ver. 9); to the old prophet (ver. 17). 2. *But could not God revoke or modify His word?* (1) Certainly. He did so to Abraham (see Gen. xxii. 11, 12). What had been might be. (2) Upon the recognition of this principle the old prophet proceeded, and so far was the man of God from disputing it that he was taken in the snare (vers. 18, 19). 3. *Wherein, then, was his fault?* The revocation here came not with the evidence of the command. The command was immediately from “the mouth of the Lord” (ver. 21). The revocation came immediately from the mouth of the old prophet. Note: We are responsible for the proper use of reason in religion. (2) Faith in the word of the Lord must be implicit. The Bible is that word. The evidence that it is such is conclusive—external, internal, collateral. (3) Other voices must not be allowed to replace this. The voice of “nature,” of “reason,” of the “Church.” We listen implicitly to these at our peril.

II. BY THE WORD OF JEHOVAH HE WAS REPROVED. 1. *This came to the man of God himself.* (1) The reading of the text would lead us to conclude that it came to the old prophet. The words אִשְׁרָהּ הֵשִׁיבוּ here rendered, “who brought him back,” are in verse 23 construed, “whom he had brought back,” and might be so construed here. Josephus asserts that the word of the Lord here came to the man of God; and so does the *Arabic*. In the 26th verse we are assured by the old prophet that this word of the Lord came to the man of God. (2) According to this view it was “Jehovah” who “cried unto the man of God,” viz., from heaven as He called to Abraham (Gen. xxii. 11). So, coming to himself, as the command did in the first instance, he had not to weigh contradictory testimonies from the old prophet, but was left without a doubt. God brings home sin with demonstration. 2. *It came to him in the ripeness of his transgression.* (1) “As they sat at table.” Conscience reproves the sinner in the very act of sin. This is the voice of God in the soul. But here was an external voice to which the internal voice responded. Conscience responds to the word or law of God. (2) It came to all who were at the table. To the old prophet as well as to the man of God. His conscience, too, would respond to the voice of God. To the sons of the old prophet, if present, there would also be a voice. What will our emotions be when in the day of judgment all the mischief to which we have been accessories will be discovered? 3. *It was terribly severe.* (1) He is doomed to die. “Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” We all die in consequence of sin entailed. But here is an actual “sin unto death” (1 John v. 16). (2) He is doomed to die *abroad*. The mention of his carcase not coming to the sepulchre of his fathers implied a violent death away from home. Possibly the manner of his death may have been made known to him (compare ver. 26; ch. xx. 86). The word of God is not violated with impunity. What will be the case of those who seldom take pains to consult it?—J. A. M.

Vers. 23—29.—*The Visitation of Judgment.* The man of God from Judah, deceived by the old prophet of Ephraim, ate and drank in that land of apostasy. This was a disobedience to the word of the Lord, and a complicity in the abominations he was sent to denounce. For this he heard the Divine voice of reproof, and went forth to suffer accordingly, as detailed in the text.

I. THE SEQUEL VERIFIED A REMARKABLE PROPHECY. 1. *Review the prophecy.* (1) Ver. 22. He was, therefore, doomed to die away from his home; and, presumably, by violence. (2) With what solemn feelings would he see his ass saddled with the prospect of such a journey! Ought not our feelings also to be solemn to whom death is certain, though the moment and the manner be unknown? 2. *Note the fulfilment.* (1) Vers. 29, 30. He was met and slain by a lion, and his corpse was cast in the way. There was a spectacle for all passers! What an evil thing is sin! (2) Thus suffered for disobedience a "man of God." The sanctity of his profession did not protect him from sin, neither can it protect him from punishment. So neither, the dignity of his office. So neither, the service he had rendered to God (see 1 Cor. ix. 27; 2 Cor. xiii. 5, 6). (3) Judgment begins at the house of God, but falls more terribly upon the wicked (1 Peter iv. 17, 18). They may well tremble before "Him that can destroy both soul and body in hell." (4) The man of God came not to the sepulchre of his fathers, yet was mourned over by one who had been a snare to him, but to whom he had been made a blessing. There are strange reciprocities.

II. THE FULFILMENT WAS ATTENDED BY REMARKABLE SIGNS. 1. *Miracle controlled the instincts of animals.* (1) The lion was moved, not by thirst for prey, but by revenge. But this revenge was the Lord's. The animal had suffered nothing from the hand of the man of God. (2) Instinct was otherwise controlled. For here were the lion and the ass together watching the carcass. The ass did not fly from the face of the lion; neither did the lion molest the ass. (3) Nor was this strange witnessing the accident of a momentary surprise. It was maintained while certain passengers, who first observed it, journeyed to the city and reported it; and until, in consequence, the old prophet, divining its import, came upon the scene. 2. *Here let us admire the Divine resources.* (1) He that moved upon the instincts of the lion and the ass was the same who made the representatives of the animal creation defile before Adam to receive their names; who brought them into the ark of Noah; restrained the lions from injuring Daniel; the same who, in the days of His flesh, dwelt among the wild beasts in the wilderness, and who controlled the movements of fishes in the depths (Mark i. 13; Matt. xvii. 27; Luke v. 4—7). This power over the instincts of the lion and ass is but a sample of corresponding dominion over every department of nature. And the resources of this power are the resources of justice and mercy. 3. *But what is the mystical meaning of the signs?* (1) The death of the man of God was judgment for his complicity with the sin of Ephraim in eating and drinking in that polluted place. So it was the last of the series of warnings to Jeroboam before the abandonment of his house to destruction (see ver. 33). (2) The lion that inflicted the penalty was the symbol of Judah, of its royalty, and especially of Shiloh, in whom that royalty culminated. Hence Messiah is described as the "Lion of the tribe of Judah" (see Gen. xlix. 9, 10; Rev. v. 5). Of this glorious Lion, Josiah was to be a type. Messiah visits the sin of Ephraim in the apostasy of the son of Nebat, and the sin of Judah for complicity in its abominations (see Hosea v. 14). So in like manner will He strike down the forms of apostasy extant in these latter times. (3) The ass was the symbol of Issachar (Gen. xlix. 14, 15); but not of Judah; for it is difficult to justify the translation in verse 11, which is better rendered, "and him shall the peoples obey; binding up the shoots of the vine, and the branches of the choice vine." (4) As the ass stood as a witness of this judgment of God upon the sin of Jeroboam, and then carried the carcass away to be buried, so "Baasha, the son of Ahijah, of the house of Issachar," destroyed and put out of sight the house of Jeroboam, fulfilling the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite (ch. xv. 27—30). How manifold is the wisdom of God! How deep are His judgments!—  
J. A. M.

Vers. 30—34.—*The Law of Extremity.* God has made us free to choose or refuse good or evil. Will cannot be coerced and yet be free; coercion here, therefore, would be destruction. But while God does not compel us to choose the right, He induces by gracious promises, and admonishes by alternative penalties. Still we remain free to elect the good with its blessing, or the evil with its entailments of misery. But so loth is He to see His creatures wretched that He has opened a way of repentance and reformation for sinners. In this, mercy is carried to the extreme limit which consists with the welfare of the universe, which must ever depend upon the order and harmony of righteousness. At this point there comes in the law of extremity; and the sinner passing it has to encounter "judgment without mercy."

I. THE OLD PROPHET SOUGHT MERCY. 1. *His conduct expressed repentance.* (1) He went out for the corpse of the man of God, and brought it to his home, discerning the hand of God in the judgment. Looking now upon that ghastly form of death he saw his own sad work. He had caused a mischief he could not now repair. How inadequately men estimate beforehand the consequences of their wrong-doing! (2) He decently interred the body in his own grave. This was the only reparation now within his power for the injury he had caused. But how inadequate! What a bitter thought! (3) He "mourned over him, saying, Alas, my brother!" This exclamation (הוי אחי) was the refrain of a lamentation (see Jer. xxii. 18). Ward, in his "Manners and Customs of the Hindoos," gives two specimens of such lamentations. There are frequent allusions to these in the prophets (see Jer. xxx. 7; Ezek. vi. 11; Joel i. 15; Amos v. 16, 17; Rev. xviii. 10—19). With the old prophet this was more than a conventional mourning. He mourned for himself before God. 2. *His conduct also expressed faith.* (1) He commanded his sons, when he died, to lay his bones beside those of the man of God. He believed him to be a man of God in reality, notwithstanding this single act of disobedience for which he had suffered death. There are "sins unto death," viz., of the body, which do not involve the final death of the soul. He desired to be with him in the resurrection. The concern of the ancients respecting the disposition of their bodies after death arose out of their faith in a resurrection (see Gen. l. 24—26; Exod. xiii. 19; Heb. xi. 22; see also 2 Kings xiii. 20, 21). (2) He gave as the reason of his command the faith he had in the certainty of the prophecy of the man of God (ver. 32). And in further testimony of his faith put an inscription on the tomb (see 2 Kings xxiii. 17). He desired to be associated in death with the denouncers of Jeroboam's sin rather than with those involved in that sin. Nor would he be identified in the judgment with perverters of true worship. (3) By this faith his bones were spared when those of the priests and votaries of Jeroboam were burnt upon the altar by Josiah (see 2 Kings xxiii. 19). By a corresponding faith shall we be saved from the judgments of the more illustrious Son of David upon the man of sin of the mystical Babylon.

II. BUT JEROBOAM ENCOUNTERED THE EXTREMITY OF WRATH. 1. *He disregarded the goodness of God.* (1) The conditional promises by the hand of Ahijah were very gracious (ch. xi. 37—39). What a magnificent opportunity he had! But he missed it. (2) What opportunities have we wasted? Who can estimate their value? No opportunity of glorifying God should escape us. 2. *He disregarded his remonstrances.* (1) The judgments upon Rehoboam were lessons to him. The same God who in them visited the sins of Solomon had also set him upon the throne of Israel, and would deal with him upon the same principles. But he sinned against this admonition. (2) Then came the warning from the man of God at the altar. That God was in this warning was left without doubt by the signs (vers. 3—6). These staggered him for a moment; but there was no true repentance. (3) Then came the final warning in the death of the man of God for being implicated, though by a deception, in his sin. This also was shown to be from God by miraculous signs (ver. 64). But this also he disregarded (ver. 83). (4) Now, therefore, the law of extremity must take its course. He and his house are devoted to destruction (ver. 84). This last warning was written in letters of blood. God gave it to Him at the expense of His own servant. And He warns us at the expense

of His own Son ; and if we finally reject Christ the extremity of mercy is spurned, and we must encounter the extremity of wrath.—J. A. M.

Vers. 18, 19.—*Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.* The miraculous element in this chapter is, with many, a reason for its rejection. The same reason might lead us to reject the story of our Saviour's life, and deny the possibility of supernatural revelation. If miracles and signs ever occurred they would be likely to do so at the time described in this chapter. Idolatrous practices were being set up. Many who had been worshippers of Jehovah had been seduced. Worldly policy, social influences, moral enervation, following on the extravagant prosperity of Solomon's reign, and an inherent tendency to sensuous worship, were all combining to induce the people to put away all belief in Jehovah. Then, if ever, He would fitly reveal His power, as He did at the later crisis when Elijah faced the false prophets on Carmel. The effect on Jeroboam was *nil*, but the goddess had warning, and the secret worshippers of the Lord still left in Israel were encouraged. The story of the temptation and fall of this prophet, who at least delivered one message with fidelity, is tragic and suggestive. After reading it we have left with us the following thoughts :

I. THAT A STRONG TEMPTATION HAD BEEN RESISTED. Jeroboam had failed to reach the prophet by violence, but resolved to overcome him by craft. Terrible as had been the effect of Jehovah's wrath (ver. 4), the king's conscience was not stirred. His heart was not touched, though his arm was withered. Hence he did not ask the prophet to pray that his sin might be forgiven, but that his arm might be restored. Immediately after, with a show of civility and gratitude, he invited him to his house. Clearly this was not in order to honour the prophet, but to weaken the effect of his message. The people had heard it, and had been moved by it ; but if they saw the messenger going down in seeming friendship with their king, this would diminish, perhaps destroy, the effect of his words. Lest this should happen, the prophet had been forbidden to enter any house. As the representative of Jehovah, he was to show that God would not dwell amongst the people. Firmly, therefore, he rejected the invitation of the king, saying, "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," &c. The temptation was resisted ; the victory won. Give illustrations of similar moral conquests. A young man tempted to impurity says, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Another sits silent among the scorers, and cannot be induced to join or smile with them, &c. There are times when we are specially able to resist : *e.g.*, when we come fresh from the influences of a Christian home ; when we are feeling the impression of an earnest sermon ; when we are made serious by the death of a dear friend. Under such influences many obey the command, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you!"

II. THAT A NEW TEMPTATION WAS SUCCESSFUL. (Read vers. 11—19.) (1) *What were the motives of this old prophet of Bethel?* Probably he was not a false prophet, though these existed ; as tares amongst the wheat, as Judas among the apostles. Nor must he be charged with the malignant wish to bring this man to his death. Picture him as one who knew his Lord's will, but did it not. He had been silent, instead of protesting against the impiety of Jeroboam, and now felt rebuked by this daring stranger. To entertain him might reinstate him in his own good opinion, and in the eyes of the people. Hence he gives the invitation, and when it is resisted another sign of his moral decadence appears, and he tells a lie about receiving a message from the Lord. (2) *How came this temptation to succeed?* Not improbably there was some self-complacency in one who had just resisted the king successfully, and a sense of false security which is indicated by his resting under the terebinth instead of pressing on homewards. Observe here—*I. The conquest of one evil may only bring on the assault of another ; e.g., when sensuality is repressed, scepticism may arise and prevail.* We sometimes forget that it is not a momentary but a life-long conflict we have to wage. If the Egyptians are drowned, the Amorites and Canaanites await us. A gross sin fails to conquer us, but a subtle sin may lead us to bitter bondage. We can never say

to our soul, "Take thine ease;" but always, and everywhere, must listen to the command, "Watch, and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." 2. *Lingering near scenes of temptation may imperil us fatally.* Had the prophet not rested he might not have been overtaken, but would have crossed the border line of the two kingdoms. As the moth flutters round the candle, so do some hover about sin. They read of vices which they think they would never commit, and choose associates unlike what they mean to be, and yet dare to pray, "Lead us not into temptation." He who "standeth in the way of sinners," as one half inclined to join them, may at last "sit in the seat of the scorers," as one who has united with them. "Avoid it, pass not by it," &c. (Prov. iii. 15).

III. THAT A TRIVIAL ACT OF DISOBEDIENCE WAS A GREAT SIN. It seemed a small offence to go home with a brother prophet; but observe that he was in no doubt as to the will of God. He was not really deceived by that lie about the angel's message. He knew that he was forbidden to enter any house, and that the reason for that inhibition was weighty: he knew further that God would not contradict Himself, or alter His command, yet his sensuous wish for food and rest prevailed. An act may seem trifling, but the principle involved in it may be momentous. So it was in Eden. To eat the fruit, or to leave it untouched, might appear a question of small consideration; but man's decision of it, "brought death into the world, and all our woe." It is in trifles that we test the willingness of our children's obedience. If they refuse to do an unimportant act because to do it would be to disobey us, we are more satisfied with their sensitive loyalty than if the act were notoriously evil. To sin for the sake of a passing pleasure is morally worse than to sin for the sake of a kingdom, for the temptation is less.

IV. THAT A TRAGIC PUNISHMENT WAS INFLICTED. (Read vers. 23—25.) Note the points which marked out this event as the result of God's displeasure, and not of accident; e.g., that it was foretold (vers. 21, 22), and that the lion did not kill the ass, nor eat the dead body. Show how Jesus Christ used the judgments of God, as recorded in the Old Testament, for purposes of moral and religious instruction. Sin merits punishment. "We are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth, against them which commit such things," &c. (Rom. ii. 2—5). In the consciousness of frequent disobedience let the prayer arise, "God be merciful to me a sinner."—A. R.

Vers. 20—22.—*The Disobedient Prophet.* The "old prophet," though here employed as the medium of a Divine message, had acted falsely towards his "brother" ("he lied unto him," ver. 18). The fact that he was content to remain in the land under the rule of Jeroboam was against him. As the Levites had been supplanted by a base priesthood, so the prophets in Israel would seem to be a degenerate race. It must have aggravated the bitterness of the remorse the "man of God" felt, that the prophet who had dealt so treacherously with him should be commissioned to pronounce the Divine sentence on his transgression. His case seems altogether a hard one. How shall we explain it? What lessons does it teach?

I. THE INFLEXIBILITY OF A DIVINE COMMAND. The command had been given clearly and positively (ver. 9), and He who gave it had in no way revoked it. The reasons for it remained as they were. The man of God greatly erred in giving more weight to the report of an angelic message delivered to another than to the clear voice of "the word of the Lord" in his own soul. "God is not a man, that he should lie; nor the son of man, that he should repent" (Num. xxiii. 19), and His commands can be abrogated only by others that are equally explicit and authoritative.

II. THE DANGER OF PARLEYING WITH THE TEMPTER. The integrity of the man of God was imperilled as soon as he began to listen to the persuasion that would lead him astray. The first deliverances of conscience are generally right, and we run great moral risk when we begin to question them. He who had resisted the allurements of the king yields to those of the seeming prophet. Moral evil is always most fascinating when it assumes a sacred disguise, and the false "prophet" is the most plausible and dangerous of all tempters.

III. THE GUILT OF DISOBEDIENCE. "To obey is better than sacrifice," &c.

(1 Sam. xv. 22, 23). The spirit of disobedience is the root of all practical iniquity. "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners" (Rom. v. 19). A seemingly trifling offence may thus, especially under certain circumstances, have an important meaning, and entail fatal consequences out of all proportion to its outward form. It is on this principle, that every act of wilful wrong is a violation of the spirit of obedience, that St. James says, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James ii. 10).

IV. THE TEMPORAL PENALTIES THAT FOLLOW THE SIN EVEN OF GOOD MEN. The "man of God" may have been at heart a true prophet, and may have received in another world the eternal reward of the true prophet; but his transgression involved him in a violent death, and he was denied the privilege, so much desired by every Hebrew, of having his body laid in the "sepulchre of his fathers." Sin may be pardoned and yet punished. The temporal penalty may be inflicted though Divine mercy cancels the eternal. David's sin is forgiven, but his child must die (2 Sam. xii. 13, 14). Christ is "the propitiation for our sins," and His blood "cleanseth us from all sin," but He promises us no immunity from the ill effects, the shame and loss and pain and sorrow in which our sin may in this world involve us.—W.

Vers. 11, 12.—*The Tempter*. I. THE PROPHET'S SIN AND DOOM. Evil is never wanting in emissaries. It finds them among the so-called followers of God as well as in the world. *This was*—1. *a prophet*. The possession of privileges does not ensure salvation. Balaam took the wages of unrighteousness. "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?" &c. Is our own life on a level with the place God has given us? If not, we may be among those whose influence and suggestions place stumbling-blocks in the path of God's children. 2. *He dwelt at Bethel*, without testifying against its sin, and unmoved by fear of God's judgment. How many who know God's will and have declared it to others remain in Bethel still! 3. *His instant resolve*. The very story of the prophet's obedience led him to tempt the man of God. His own religion was not like this, and this must therefore be either hypocrisy or delusion. Had the king's request not been made publicly it might have been acceded to. There must be a weak point somewhere, and he will try to find it. Lower life is ever suspicious of a higher, and is anxious to prove that it is not higher. The prophets in Bethel are ever on the watch to break the credit of the men of God from Judah. Is thine the spirit of the learner or of the scorner? Does the higher life judge thee and fill thee with desire to press upward, or only with angry suspicion and desire to show it is no better than thine own? They who are of the wicked prophet's spirit still do his work.

II. THE FALL OF THE MAN OF GOD, 1. *How the tempter found him*. He sat, weary and faint, resting under the shadow of the tree. The invitation to eat bread had more power there than before in Bethel. The tempter knows his opportunity. In times of weakness and need we should hide ourselves in the joy and strength of God. 2. *The weapons he uses*. When an appeal to appetite fails, he professes his oneness with him and uses falsehood. "I am a prophet also as thou art, and an angel spake unto me," &c. To eat bread in Bethel with a prophet did not seem quite the same thing as eating with the idolatrous king; nor does fellowship with those who profess to know God, but yet remain in communion with the world, seem the same thing as fellowship with the world itself. It is thus that the testimony of the Church against idolatry and iniquity has so largely ceased. And then there is Scripture for every concession. "An angel spake unto me . . . but he lied unto him." A worldly Church ensnares where the world itself cannot. 3. *The fatal neglect*. God was as near to him as He could be to his tempter, and he might have inquired of Him. But in the weakness of the flesh he desired to have it so. There is only one preservative from spiritual shipwreck—a *sincere* desire to know what the Lord saith, and a determination to follow that only.

III. HIS DOOM. (Vers. 20-22.) 1. *It was uttered as he sat at meat*. Conviction found him in his sin, and the food he had desired became as wormwood and gall to him. 2. *It came from the lips of his seducer*. We do not rise in the world's estima-

tion through compliance with its desires. As God used the lying prophet so will He use the men of the world for the humbling of those who yield before their temptations. 3. *The penalty.* Death in the land where he had sinned. His carcase, buried in Bethel, declared the truth his obedience should have impressed. God will judge His unfaithful servants. If not glorified in their service, He will be glorified in their punishment.—J. U.

Vers. 23—34.—*Judgment and its result.* I. **MERCY DISPLAYED IN THE MIDST OF JUDGMENT.** The sin may have been forgiven though the chastisement fell. 1. *His body was preserved from dishonour.* The lion's ferocity was bridled; the prophet's body was neither eaten nor torn; he guarded the remains from the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field. (1) Though God chastises His erring people, He will not utterly cast them away. (2) The fiercest instruments of His vengeance can go only so far as He permits them. 2. *The message he had borne received added weight by his punishment.* In his humiliation God was exalted. The circumstances showed that the blow was from the hand of God, and the question was no doubt raised in many a heart, if the Lord has so punished His servant's error, what will Israel's judgment be? 3. *He still preached in his grave.* He was buried near the altar, and over his tomb was graven the story of his mission and his fate (2 Kings xxiii. 17).

II. **THE PUNISHMENT OF UNFAITHFULNESS.** When all has been said that can be of the attendant mercy, the judgment still stands out in terribleness. The prophet still preached, but the cry came up from the dark pathway of death. His place was not among the vessels of mercy, but among the vessels of wrath. If we eat in idolatrous Bethel, even though it be in ignorance, God's hand will find us. He punishes now in spiritual leanness, and that again leads to deeper judgment; in the falling away of our children into indifference and worldliness and sin, and will not God demand their blood at our hand? God will have perfect compliance in regard to the conduct of His own worship; He demands "a pure offering." Are we making His word our only law? Whose altar are we serving, Jehovah's or Jeroboam's?

III. **BETHEL'S ANSWER TO GOD'S WARNINGS.** 1. *The prophet's fear.* (1) He owned God's servant. He cared for his body, mourned over him with the cry, "Alas my brother!" placed him in his own tomb and had his own bones laid beside those of the man of God. (2) He lifted up again God's testimony (ver. 32). The beginning of a better thing in Bethel is ever after this fashion; the honouring God's servants, cleaving to them, and continuing their work. 2. *The king's unconcern.* We are not told that he did anything worse than he had done before; he simply "returned not from his evil way." And this became sin to his house, to cut it off and to destroy it, &c. To bring upon ourselves God's judgments we need do no more than turn a deaf ear to His warnings.—J. U.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER XIV. 1—20.

**THE DEATH OF JEROBOAM'S SON.**—The protest of the prophet of Judah, the signs which supported it, and above all the solemn visitation, with its strange portents, which straightway followed it, having alike failed to arrest Jeroboam (ch. xiii. 33) in his high-handed and shameless depravation of the true religion, we now read of the retribution which came upon his family, and which began with the sickness and death of

his firstborn. We can hardly regard this as a part of the discipline designed to reform the king, and so avert the schism, for the narrative distinctly conveys the impression that Jeroboam's day of grace was past, and that judgment was already begun. Moreover, these events would seem to belong to a much later period than that of which the preceding chapter treats—a period, indeed, not far distant from the close of Jeroboam's reign. He then heard, as was fitting, from the venerable prophet who had

been God's messenger to announce to him his future reign over the ten tribes, that the death of the youth whom he had destined to succeed him was but the beginning of sorrows, and foreshadowed the speedy and shameful extinction of his family (ver. 14). He too, like Solomon, has sown to the wind and now reaps to the whirlwind. This section is omitted in the Vat. LXX.

Ver. 1.—At that time [or about (?) that time. The king is now settled at Tirzah (ver. 17). In ch. xii. 25 we left him residing at Shechem. The time referred to is that somewhat indefinite period mentioned in ch. xiii. vers. 33, 34. These opening words clearly connect the sickness with Jeroboam's impenitence. What led the king to move his Court to Tirzah, Shechem being, as we have already seen, not only the capital of Ephraim, but "the natural capital of Palestine." "its central situation, its accessibility, and its wonderfully fine water supply" giving it "advantages not enjoyed by any other city in the land" (Conder), we are not told; but it is interesting and instructive to find that it has one conspicuous disadvantage as a capital, viz., that it is "commanded by a hill on either side so close to the town, that the old geographer, Marino Sanuto, in the fourteenth century, considers the place to be untenable by any military force, because stones might be rolled down upon the houses, from either Ebal or Gerizim" (Conder, p. 16. Cf. Judg. ix. 36). It is very probable that this consideration suggested the transfer, of which Ewald despaired of discovering the cause ("Hist. Israel," iv. 23)] Abijah [Rawlinson sees in the name, which means "Jehovah is his father," an indication that Jeroboam "did not intend to desert the worship of Jehovah." But the name was probably bestowed long before the schism, possibly in Egypt. It is more likely that it connects itself, if with anything, with the message of Jehovah to him (ch. xi. 28). But the name was not uncommon—it was borne by a son of Rehoboam (ver. 31; compare *Ahijah*, below), and inferences from names must necessarily be precarious] the son of Jeroboam fell sick. [The historian undoubtedly means us to see the finger of God in this sickness. This was one of the penalties of disobedience (Deut. xxviii. 22, 58—61; Exod. xxiii. 25].

Ver. 2.—And Jeroboam said to his wife [Conscious that his proceedings would merit Abijah's reproof, he is afraid to go in person. And his wife—if in this particular we may trust the LXX., an Egyptian princess—could be more readily disguised. The com-

mission was too delicate to be entrusted to a stranger. "None might know it but his own bosom, and she that lay in it" (Bp. Hall). Jeroboam evidently suspected that this sickness was punitive, and he would not have others think so too), Arise, I pray thee, and disguise [lit. *change*. The word suggests that the disguise was to be effected by a change of garments. "She must put off her robes and put on a russet coat" (*ib.*) Possibly the queen was not unknown to the prophet (ver. 4)] thyself, that thou [Observe the archaic form פִּנָּן for פִּנָּן, which latter the Keri would substitute, quite needlessly, here] be not known [Heb. *and they* (*i.e.*, those whom she met, not the prophet only) shall not know that thou art, &c.] to be the wife of Jeroboam; and get thee to Shiloh [the modern *Seibin*. "There is no site in the country fixed with greater certainty than that of Shiloh" (Conder, p. 44. See Judg. xxi. 19). The identification, however, was only effected in 1838. Conder gives some interesting particulars which lead him to believe that we can identify the very site of the tabernacle. For its history, see Josh. xvi. 5; xviii. 1—10; Judg. xviii. 31; xxi. 19; 1 Sam. iv. 3; Jer. xli. 5. Presuming that Tirzah is to be identified with *Teiasir* (see on ver. 17) Shiloh would be over thirty miles' distant—more than a day's journey to the queen, as the road involves some toilsome climbing]: behold, there is Ahijah the prophet [see on ch. xi. 29. Shiloh was probably the birth-place, as well as the residence, of Ahijah. It was in the territory of Ephraim (Josh. xvi. 6), and at no great distance from Bethel. We can only explain Ahijah's continued residence there, after the migration of the God-fearing Israelites to the southern kingdom, not by his great age, but by the supposition that, having been concerned in the transfer of the kingdom to Jeroboam, he felt it a duty to stay and watch his career. And the time has now come when he can be useful. His relations with Jeroboam had apparently so far been good. He had not protested, so far as we know, against the calf-worship, but then God had sent another prophet to do that], which told me that I should be king [Heb. *he spake of me for king*] over this people. [So that he had already proved himself a true prophet, and so far a prophet of good.]

Ver. 3.—And take with thee [Heb. *in thine hand*] ten loaves [Ten would seem to have been a usual number (1 Sam. xvii. 18). On the subject of gifts or fees to prophets, judges, &c., see on ch. xiii. 7], and cracknels [or *cakes*, as marg. The original word דִּבְרֵי (דִּבְרֵי *pupugit*) means "pricked," or "spotted." It is the word translated

"mouldy" in Josh. ix. 5, 12, where Geresius would render "crumbs." Mouldy bread would hardly be taken as a present. These cakes, according to the LXX., Cod. Alex., were for the prophet's *children* and a cruse [*i.e.*, leather bottle. בַּבְּבִיבָּ *Babbûk*, is clearly an onomatopoeic word, suggested by the bubbling noise of liquids in emptying] of honey [Spices and other delicacies were often given as presents, and honey was a special product of the country (Exod. iii. 8; Deut. viii. 8; 2 Sam. xvii. 29). The honey sent by Jacob to Joseph was probably "honey of grapes"]. The present was purposely a poor one, for the sake of maintaining the deception; *i.e.*, it was a part of the disguise], and go to him: he shall tell thee what shall become of [Heb. *be to*] the child. [At first it strikes us as strange that Jeroboam merely asks what the result will be. He does not petition, that is to say, as in ch. xiii. 6, for a cure. But we find the same peculiarity, which some would explain by the fatalism of the East, in 2 Kings i. 2, and ch. viii. 9. In the present instance, however, no such explanation is needed. For (1) Jeroboam could hardly ask a favour of a prophet of Jehovah, or hope that it would be granted if he did, and (2) if, as he feared, the sickness was judicial, it would be useless to ask for healing. The infatuation which insisted on a disguise for the purpose of deceiving the prophet, who nevertheless was believed to be able to divine the issue of the sickness, is very characteristic, and has had many parallels since.]

Ver. 4.—And Jeroboam's wife did so, and arose, and went to Shiloh, and came [probably on the second day] to the house of Ahijah. But [rather *Now*] Ahijah could not see; for his eyes were set [Heb. *stood*. Same word as in 1 Sam. iv. 15. Cf. Gen. xxvii. 1. In *amaurosis* the pupil is set, and does not contract with the light. A partial paralysis of the optic nerve is common in extreme old age] by reason of his age. [Heb. *for hoariness, i.e.* old age.]

Ver. 5.—And the Lord said unto Ahijah [the attempted deceit was frustrated by a direct revelation, the same which disclosed the fate of the child. "God laughs in heaven at the frivolous fetches of crafty politicians" (Hall)]. Behold, the wife of Jeroboam cometh to ask a thing of thee for her son [or *concerning* בְּנֵי, properly "to," *ad*, has the meaning of *de*, after verbs of speaking. Cf. Gen. xx. 2; 1 Sam. iv. 19, &c.; Jer. xi. 16. Gesenius remarks on the similar use of *et* in the New Testament: Acts ii. 25; Eph. v. 32]; for he is sick: thus and thus [cf. Judg. xviii. 4; 2 Sam. xi. 25. הִן is a

form of הִנֵּן] shalt thou say unto her, for it shall be, when she cometh in, that she shall feign herself to be another woman [Heb. *make herself strange*].

Ver. 6. And it was so, when Ahijah heard the sound [Heb. *voice*] of her feet as she came in [הִנֵּן should strictly be plural, in agreement with הַיָּדָיִם] feet. It is in the singular, probably because the writer is thinking of the woman. But see Ewald, 317 a, and cf. 1 Sam. iv. 15] at [Heb. *in*] the door, that he said, Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; why feignest thou thyself to be another? [Heb. *make thyself strange*, as in ver. 5] for [the Heb. "*and*" brings out the meaning much better, which is, "Thou art cleverly playing a part, and I all the while have a message," &c.] I am sent to thee with heavy [same word as in ch. xii. 13; there translated *rough*] tidings. [Heb. *omits*. For the construction see Ewald, 284 c.]

Ver. 7.—Go, tell Jeroboam, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Forasmuch as I exalted thee from among the people [compare 2 Sam. xii. 8; Psa. lxxviii. 70; 1 Kings xvi. 2], and made thee prince over my people Israel. [God still claims dominion over Israel, despite the schism. They are still His people, and He is still their God],

Ver. 8.—And rent [same word as in the former prophecy of Ahijah, ch. xi. 30, 31] the kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it thee: and yet thou hast not been as my servant David [who had been proposed to Jeroboam as his example, ch. xi. 38. This name, as that of a prince of the rival house, would now be almost hateful to Jeroboam], who kept my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart [cf. ch. xi. 33, 38; xv. 5], to do that only which was right in mine eyes;

Ver. 9.—But hast done evil above all that were before thee [perhaps preceding kings are not meant, so much as judges—*judices et duces Israelis* (Le Clerc). Kings, however, are not excluded. Both Saul and Solomon had sinned (1 Sam. *passim*; 1 Kings xi. 5, 6), though neither had set up an organized idolism and "made Israel to sin"]: for thou hast gone and made thee other gods [in defiance of the decalogue (Exod. xx. 4). Jeroboam, no doubt, insisted that his calves were not idols, but cherubic symbols. But God does not recognize this distinction. Practically they were "other gods," and so they are here called derisively], and molten images [the word is used of the golden calf, Exod. xxxii. 4, 8. See also Exod. xxxiv. 17; Deut. ix. 12; Judg. xvii. 3, 4. The "other gods" and the "molten images" are but two names for

the same thing, viz., the calves of Bethel and Dan], to provoke me to anger [This was the result, not, of course, the object of Jeroboam's idolatrous worship], and hast cast me [The order of the Hebrew stamps the "me" as emphatic, "and me hast thou cast, &c."] behind thy back [This strong expression only occurs here and in Ezek. xxiii. 35. It forcibly expresses Jeroboam's contemptuous disregard of God's revealed will. In Ps. l. 17, Neh. ix. 26, we have somewhat similar phrases]:

Ver. 10.—Therefore, behold, I will bring evil upon the house [The punishment fell on the house (ch. xv. 29), not, however, to the exclusion of the prime offender (2 Chron. xiii. 20; cf. ch. xxi. 29). The reader will observe that the judgments denounced against Jeroboam's sin, like all those of the Old Testament, are temporal. The recompense to come is completely ignored. These severe retributions are calculated and proportioned precisely as if there were no hereafter] of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam him that pisseth against the wall [This phrase, which Rawlinson observes is confined to the period from David to Jehu, is by him, and generally, understood to mean "every male." (It is found in 1 Sam. xxv. 22; 1 Kings xvi. 11; xxi. 21; and 2 Kings ix. 8.) But it is noteworthy, as Gesenius has remarked, that this is not a habit of Eastern men. Every traveller in Egypt will confirm the remark of Herodotus (ch. ii. 35) on this subject, and the same applies to Palestine; i.e., the men sit down for this purpose, covered with their garments (Judg. iii. 24; 1 Sam. xxiv. 3). Some, consequently, have been led to suppose that the reference is to the dog, but animals would hardly share in the destruction of the royal house. Gesenius is probably right when he interprets it of boys. Thus understood, it lends additional meaning to the passages where it occurs. It expresses extermination, root and branch, man and boy], and him that is shut up and left in Israel [A proverbial expression (Deut. xxxii. 36; 1 Kings xxi. 21; 2 Kings ix. 8), and involving some play upon words. It evidently means "men of all kinds," but as to the precise signification of the terms "shut up" and "left," there has been much difference of opinion, some (1) interpreting them to mean respectively *married* and *single* (so Keil, *al.*); others (2) *bond* and *free* (Gesen., *al.*); others (3) *precious* and *vile*; and others again (4) *minors* and *those of age*. (So Bähr, "All the male descendants, even the minors, were threatened with destruction.") On the whole perhaps (2) is preferable, and will take away the remnant [Heb. "exterminate after" (Gesen.) or

"sweep after" (Keil). The first rendering is the more literal. The "after" is explained, not as Bähr ("as often as a new scion arises I will take it away"), but by the fact that one who expels another follows after him (Gesen.)] of the house of Jeroboam, as a man taketh away dung [cf. 2 Kings ix. 37; Job xx. 7; Jer. viii. 2; ix. 22; xvi. 4. This word expresses the loathing and contempt with which they would be treated], till it be all gone.

Ver. 11.—Him that dieth of Jeroboam [Heb. to Jeroboam, i.e., belonging to, of the house of. "Of Jeroboam" conveys the idea of his seed. It is possible that his wife shared in the general doom], in the city shall the dogs eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air [Heb. heavens, as in Gen. i. 26; ii. 19; vii. 23, &c.] eat [This was a terrible threat to a Jew—that the dead body should fall a prey to dogs and wild beasts. Cf. Ps. lxxix. 2; Jer. vii. 33; xvi. 4; xxxiv. 20; Ezek. xxix. 5, &c. For him it had a factitious horror, because of the threatening of Deut. xxviii. 26; cf. Rev. xix. 17, 18. It was, therefore, the climax of disgrace and misfortune; the greatest dishonour that could be offered to the dust and to the memory. Hence the threat of David (1 Sam. xvii. 46; cf. ver. 44); hence the devotion of Rizpah (2 Sam. xxi. 10), and the complaint of the Psalmist (Psa. lxxix. 2). Cf. Homer, Iliad i. 4, 5.

"Whose limbs, unburied on the naked shore,  
Devouring dogs and hungry vultures tore."

Dogs, it is well known, are the scavengers of Eastern cities. They exist there in great numbers, and in a semi-savage state, and the carcases of animals and carrion of all sorts are left for them to consume, which they do most effectually, roaming the streets all night (Psa. lix. 6, 14) in search of garbage. Vultures and other birds of prey perform a similar office in the open country (Job xxxix. 29, 30; Matt. xxiv. 28)] : for the Lord hath spoken it.

Ver. 12.—Arise thou therefore, get thee to thine own house: and when thy feet enter into the city, the child [Heb. then the child. This is the force of the *l*] shall die. [This was "the sign that the Lord hath spoken" (ch. xii. 3). The death of the child at the precise moment of the return should serve as an earnest and fore-taste of the doom just denounced.]

Ver. 13.—And all Israel shall mourn for him [no doubt he was heir to the throne] and bury him [mentioned to heighten the contrast. He should be the one exception to the rule of ver. 11]: for he [Heb. this] only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave, because in him there is found [Heb. was

found] some [Heb. *a*] good thing [The idea is not merely that he was an amiable youth, but the words imply some degree of piety, and almost suggest that he dissented from his father's ecclesiastical policy. "The Rabbins have a fable that he disobeyed his father's command to hinder people travelling to Jerusalem to keep the feasts, and that he even removed obstructions in the road" (Bähr) toward the Lord God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam.]

Ver. 14.—Moreover [Heb. *and*] the Lord shall raise him up a king over Israel, who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam [for the fulfilment, see ch. xv. 29] that day: but what? even now. [Rawlinson only expresses a general feeling when he says that "no satisfactory sense can be obtained from the Hebrew text," and suggests that it is corrupt or defective. The passage, no doubt, is one of extreme difficulty, and inasmuch as the MSS. and Versions lend us no aid to its interpretation, affords scope for conjecture. The explanation I venture to submit may, I hope, contribute—it can hardly do more—to the elucidation of the text. I observe that in ver. 13  $\text{הַיּוֹם}$  is used of Abijah, "this one alone," &c. I assume that it has the same import here, viz., "this one to-day," i.e., "this one dies or is cut off to-day,"  $\text{הַיּוֹם}$  being understood, as constantly, adverbially, = *hodie* (see, e.g., Gen. iv. 14; xxii. 14; 1 Kings ii. 24). It would be a natural reflection to the prophet who had just been speaking of the excision of the house of Jeroboam, "one perishes to-day, judgment is already begun," i.e. As to the rest, for  $\text{הַיּוֹם}$  I would read  $\text{הַיּוֹמָה}$ , which has practically the same sound, and for which, consequently,  $\text{הַיּוֹם}$  is sometimes substituted by the transcriber, as in ch. i. 18, 20, and understand "And what wilt thou also do?" i.e., what will become of thee also? It is quite possible (ver. 11) that Jeroboam's wife perished in the wholesale destruction of his house, as it is clear from the severe punishment assigned to her (ver. 12) that she must have shared in his sin. The readiness with which she lent herself to this deceit (ver. 4) also favours the supposition that she had approved his policy. She would then have survived her husband only two years. Keil's explanation, "cut off the house of Jeroboam *this day*," appears contrary to actual fact, while to interpret "*that day*" (with the A. V.) is contrary to Hebrew grammar.]

Ver. 15.—For [Heb. *And*. The prophet now proceeds to state the share of the people in the punishment. They had acquiesced in the wicked innovations of Jeroboam and had joined in the worship of

the calves] the Lord shall smite Israel, as a reed [ $\text{קַנְנָוָה}$  *kánna*, *canna*, cane] is shaken

[The construction is pregnant, viz., "shall smite Israel so that it shall be shaken as a reed," &c. (cf. Luke vii. 24). "The image is very striking, for Israel was thought so low that every political influence bore it along" (Thenius)] in the water, and he shall root up [same word as in Dent. xxix. 28; Jer. xxiv. 6] Israel out of this good land, which he gave to their fathers, and shall scatter them beyond the river [i.e., the Euphrates: see on ch. iv. 24. This is the first clear prophecy of the captivity foreshadowed by Moses (Dent. iv. 27; xxviii. 25, 36, 63, 64), and by Solomon (ch. viii. 46—50). For its fulfilment, see 2 Kings xvii. 6; xviii. 11, &c.], because they have made their groves [Heb. *their Asherahs*, i.e., images of Astarte. The translation "grove" after the LXX.  $\alpha\lambda\sigma\sigma$ , Vulg. *lucus*, is now abandoned. It is clear some sort of idol is intended by the term. This is evident from ver. 23, where it is said the Asherahs (A. V. *groves*) were built "under every green tree" (cf. 2 Kings xvii. 10); from ch. xv. 13 (where see-note); from 2 Kings xxiii. 6, which tells how Josiah "brought out the Asherahs out of the house of the Lord," and from the connexion in which the word is found with "molten images, carved images," &c. (ver. 23; 2 Chron. xxxiii. 19; xxxiv. 3, 4; cf. also Judg. iii. 7; 1 Kings xvii. 19). They were doubtless effigies of Ashtoreth, made of wood (Dent. vii. 5; cf. 2 Kings xxiii. 6), planted erect in the ground (Dent. xvi. 21), and were consecrated to her impure and revolting worship. It is clear from this passage that the frightful impurities of the Canaanitish races had subsisted in the new kingdom by the side of the new *sacra*. They had probably revived under Jeroboam's rule, having apparently been in abeyance since the time of Gideon], provoking the Lord to anger. [Ch. xiv. 22; xv. 30; xxi. 22; 2 Kings xvii. 11, 17; xxii. 17; Deut. iv. 25; xxxii. 16, 21; Judg. ii. 12; Psa. lxxviii. 58.]

Ver. 16.—And he shall [or, *that he should*] give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, who did sin, and who made Israel to sin. [These words became almost a formula (ch. xv. 33, 34; xvi. 2, 19, &c.)]

Ver. 17.—And Jeroboam's wife arose, and departed, and came [possibly she lingered for some time on the road, dreading to return] to Tirzah [Identified by Robinson and Van de Velde (Narrative, ii. 334, 335), with Tellúzah, or *Tahise*, a place in the mountains, six miles north of Shechem. See Josh. xii. 24. Both these writers admit, however, that if this is indeed Tirzah, "all traces of royalty have disappeared." "With the exception of a few sepulchral caves,

subterranean granaries, wells, and old hewn stones, nothing of ancient Tirzah remains in Tallûse." Conder recognizes the name in the modern *Teiâsr*—a village near Jezreel, in the Great Plain—which "contains the exact letters of the Hebrew word, though the two last radicals are interchanged in position." "The beauty of the position, . . . the ancient remains, and the old main road from the place to Shechem seem to agree well with the idea of its having once been a capital" ("Tent-work," p. 57). Some of its "numerous rock-cut sepulchres," he thinks, may be the tombs of the early kings of Israel. It was famed for its beauty (Cant. vi. 4), and for this reason, perhaps, among others (see on ver. 1) was selected by Jeroboam for his residence. It is not certain that it had taken the place of Shechem as the political capital; and when she came [the Hebrew is much more graphic. "She came to . . . and the child died"] to the threshold of the door [Heb. *house*], the child died. [This statement seems at first sight to contradict that of ver. 12, which says the child should die as she entered the city. But the palace may have been on the edge of the city (Rawl.), or the "city" may have been little more than the palace.]

Ver. 18.—And they buried him [see on ver. 13]; and all Israel mourned for him, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by the hand [see on ch. ii. 25] of his servant Ahijah the prophet. [It was

a token of the righteous judgment of God that the same prophet who announced Jeroboam's exaltation predicted his fall.]

Ver. 19.—And the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, how he warred [see ver. 30; 2 Chron. xii. 2], and how he reigned, behold, they are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. [As to this work, see Introduction, Section VI. The exact title is "the book of the words (or matters) of the days," i.e., the record of daily occurrences.]

Ver. 20.—And the days which Jeroboam reigned were two and twenty years [Bähr remarks that the exploits of this long reign find no mention in Scripture; the historian dwells exclusively on the sin, the consequences of which were of so much greater moment]; and he slept with his fathers [Jeroboam's end would appear to have been untimely. After his defeat by Abijah, we are told, "the Lord struck him, and he died," which may either mean that he died by a lingering disease (2 Chron. xxi. 18, 19) or more suddenly (2 Sam. xii. 15), but which certainly implies that he died "by the visitation of God." I have suggested elsewhere (Homil. Quart. IV., p. 257) that the "stroke" was not improbably his son's death, which was at once so tragical and such a bitter foretaste of judgment to come. He may have "warred and reigned" (ver. 19) after this event. He may also have steadily drooped to his grave], and Nadab his son reigned in his stead.

### HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—20.—*Abijah and Ahijah.* Perhaps there is no single section of this book more full of lessons, and lessons of the most varied kind, than this. Let us try to gather something of what God has strawed with so liberal a hand.

1. "At that time (ver. 1)"—the time of ch. xiii. 33. The sickness of the child distinctly connects itself with the father's persistence in sin (see Deut. vii. 15; xviii. 22, 61). The hard and impenitent heart treasures to itself wrath (Rom. ii. 5). Warnings (ch. xiii.) have been unheeded: it is now the time for judgment. "If we sin wilfully," &c. (Heb. x. 26, 27). *Deus habet suas horas et moras.* As "the fulness of time" gave us a Redeemer, so it will give us a Judge.

2. "*Abijah, the son of Jeroboam, fell sick*" (*ib.*) Observe—(1) The pious son sickened, and died; the impenitent father and the worthless brother lived." Then sickness is no invariable proof of God's displeasure. "Behold, he whom thou lovest is sick" (John xi. 3; cf. Heb. xii. 6). "Whom the gods love, die young." The fable of Ganymede is full of significance.

"Te rapuit coelum, tales nam gaudet habere  
Illustres animas degeneresque fugit."

• 'Tis ever thus, 'tis ever thus with all that's best below,  
The dearest, noblest, loveliest are always first to go;  
The bird that sings the sweetest, the pine that crowns the rock,  
The glory of the garden, the flower of the flock.

\* 'Tis ever thus, 'tis ever thus with creatures heavenly fair,  
 Too finely framed to bide the brunt more earthly creatures bear;  
 A little while they dwell with us, blest ministers of love,  
 Then spread their wings we had not seen, and seek their home above."

See also Longfellow's poem of "The Reaper and the Flowers." (2) *Sickness* spares none. "Neither his dignity as a *prince*, nor his age as a *young* prince, nor his interest with heaven as a *pious* prince could exempt him from sickness". (M. Henry). As to the purpose of sickness, see *Homiletics*, pp. 12, 13. Perhaps this child, in whom was *some* good thing, only needed the discipline of sickness to make him fruitful in *every* good work. "After ye have *suffered* awhile, make you perfect," &c. (1 Peter v. 10). (3) The sickness of his son, while it was a judgment on Jeroboam, was a warning to Israel. "A cloud and darkness" to the one; it gave light to the other (Exod. xiv. 20).

"Let us be patient! These severe afflictions  
 Not from the ground arise,  
 But oftentimes celestial benedictions  
 Assume this dark disguise."

8. "Get thee to Shiloh" (ver. 2). But Shiloh was not one of his sanctuaries. Why not to Bethel? There were *his* priests and prophets (see on ch. xxii. 6). But Jeroboam only does what many more have done since. He has one religion for health, another for sickness. Like Joab, he turns in adversity to the altar which he scorned in prosperity. He would fain share the consolations of those to whose admonitions he never listened. This sending to Ahijah is one result of the sickness of Abijah.

"There is no God,' the foolish saith,  
 But none, 'there is no sorrow;'  
 And nature oft, in time of need,  
 The cry of faith will borrow.  
 Eyes that the preacher could not school  
 By wayside graves are raised,  
 And lips say, 'God be pitiful,'  
 Which ne'er said, 'God be praised.'"

4. "There is Ahijah the prophet" (*ib.*) Whom he has never troubled since the day when "he spake of him for king" (ch. xi. 31). "Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him" (Gen. xl. 31). The ministers of Christ may well be content if they are sent for in times of sorrow and sickness. "Lord, *in trouble* have they visited thee" (Isa. xxvi. 16). We think scorn of those who only come near us when they want something. But how often do we serve God thus?

5. "Disguise thyself, that thou be not known to be the wife of Jeroboam" (*ib.*) Was ever grosser infatuation than this? Jeroboam, the most astute of politicians, the Machiavelli of the Old World, thinks that a prophet who can peer into futurity cannot penetrate his flimsy disguises. It never occurs to him that "the seer" can see through a woman's veil. Ahithophel is not the only statesman whose wisdom has been turned into foolishness (2 Sam. xv. 31). What an illustration does this history afford of that saying of the Temanite, "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness" (Job v. 13; 1 Cor. iii. 19).

6. "He shall tell thee what shall become of the child" (ver. 3). A strange object for such a journey. It is not, "what to do for the child;" still less, "what to do for the *sin*;" but simply, what should be the issue of the sickness. But that, time would show. It needed no ghost, no prophet to declare that. *Che sara sara*. Probably Jeroboam despaired of obtaining more. There are petitions "which for our unworthiness we dare not ask." Despair is not uncommonly the end of presumption. "Sin makes such a strangeness between God and man, that the guilty heart either thinks not of suing to God, or fears it" (Bp. Hall). Or was it fatalism prompted this inquiry? It has often been remarked that unbelief and

superstition are very near of kin. Man cannot divest himself of all belief. Head and heart alike "abhor a vacuum." Those who will not believe in one God shall be the victims of strong delusions, and shall believe a lie (2 Thess. ii. 11).

"Hear the just law, the judgment of the skies,  
He that hates truth shall be the dupe of lies;  
And he that will be cheated to the last,  
Delusions strong as hell shall bind him fast."

Witness Julian the Apostate, Lord Herbert of Cherbury, Robert Owen, and many more. The Chinese people the air with demons and spirits of the dead. Infidel France thinks it unlucky to travel on a Friday. "There was never wicked man that was not infatuate" (Hall).

7. "*His eyes were set*" (ver. 4). Yet "having his eyes open" (Num. xxiv. 4). Reason is "the candle of the Lord." Revelation is a "light to the feet, and a lamp to the path." Inspiration is as "eyes to the blind." "Visions of the Almighty need not bodily eyes, but are rather favoured by the want of them" (Henry). The eye is but the instrument of vision. Eyes of flesh are not the organs of the spirit.

8. "*I am sent to thee with heavy tidings*" (ver. 6). Compare Ezek. xiv. 4. "I the Lord will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols." Heavy tidings for heavy transgression. The sentence should be proportionate to the sin. " whatsoever a man soweth," &c.

9. "*I exalted thee from among the people*" (ver. 7). It was Jeroboam's abuse of the singular favours he had received, and his forgetfulness of Divine benefits, that so much enhanced his sin. Cf. ch. xi. 9; 1 Sam. xv. 17 ("When thou wast little in thine own sight"); 2 Sam. xii. 8, 9; Psa. lxxiii. 10 ("Took him from the sheepfolds," &c.); Luke xii. 48 ("Unto whomsoever much is given," &c.); *ib.*, x. 15 ("Exalted to heaven, thrust down to hell"). It is well to remember the rock whence we were hewn, and the hole of the pit whence we were digged (Isa. li. 1).

10. "*Other gods and molten images*" (ver. 9). Men often disguise their sins under specious names. "Cherubic symbols" was perhaps Jeroboam's name for his calves. He would not allow that they were images or idols. Josephus happily reproduces the language he held to his subjects: "I suppose, my countrymen, you know that every place hath God in it," &c. (Ant. viii. 8. 4). But God calls things as they really are. Longfellow truly says that "things are not what they seem." But they are what they seem to the Omniscient.

11. "*And rent the kingdom away from the house of David,*" &c. Note the contrast between this language and the discourse which Ahijah held with Jeroboam once before. That meeting was full of promises; this message is full of upbraidings. Then God declared that He would rend the kingdom; here He complains that He has done so, and done so in vain. Then He proposed David as Jeroboam's pattern—his name is mentioned six times—here He accuses the king of contemning that example. There He speaks of a "sure house;" here, of "taking away the remnant of the house," "as a man taketh away dung." Yet "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." It is Jeroboam's sin has made this difference.

12. "*I will bring evil on the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off,*" &c. Compare ch. xii. 27. "And they shall kill me." So the very means which Jeroboam took to secure his throne procured its overthrow. "The engineer is hoist with his own petard." If he could but have trusted God his kingdom would have lasted. But he must needs prop it up himself, with rotten supports, and leaning on these he brought it speedily to the ground.

13. "*When thy feet enter into the city the child shall die*" (ver. 12). For the second time does a prophet give Jeroboam a sign the same day. And the second sign was hardly less significant than the first. For the mother was, in some sense, the cause of her child's death. Her step on the threshold was the signal for the severance of his "thin-spun life." It was not only a foretaste, consequently, of the doom awaiting the entire house; it was also a shadowing forth of the cause of that destruction. The sins of the father were visited upon the children.

14. "*And all Israel shall mourn for him*" (ver. 13). The most, and the most genuine, tears are shed over the graves of children. (Is it that many of us, as we grow older, become less lovely and engaging, less desirable as companions?) Yet of this child it might justly have been said, "Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him" (Jer. xxii. 10). For (1) he was taken away from the evil to come (ver. 11). (2) He escaped the butchery of Baasha. And he escaped, too, the danger of contamination and moral ruin. His life was not unduly shortened. Life is to be measured not by the beats of the pulse, but by the life-work we have accomplished. "He being made perfect in a short time fulfilled a long time."

"It may be by the calendar of years  
You are the elder man; but 'tis the sun  
Of knowledge on the mind's dial shining bright  
And chronicling deeds and thoughts that makes true time."

(5) The "good thing toward the Lord God of Israel" was an earnest of better things to come. "Little faith can enter heaven." "A little grace goes a great way with great people." "Those that are good in bad times and places shine very bright in the eyes of God. A good child *in the house of Jeroboam* is a miracle of Divine grace" (Henry).

15. "*For the Lord shall smite Israel*" (ver. 15). For if Jeroboam had "made Israel to sin," Israel had loved to have it so (ch. xii. 30). He could not have had his calves and sanctuaries without priests; and calves, sanctuaries, and priests would have been useless without worshippers. But as the king, so the people. Jeroboam was but a sample of many thousands of his subjects. As the chief offender, he was the first to suffer, and suffered most. But the nation that had shared his sin must suffer in its measure and turn.

16. "*Beyond the river*" (*ib.*) The judgments of God are governed by a *lex talionis*. Not only "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," but, "Like as ye have forsaken me, and served strange gods in your land, so shall ye serve strangers in a land that is not yours" (Jer. v. 19).

17. "*And Jeroboam's wife arose, and departed, and came to Tirzah*" (ver. 17). It is hardly possible to realize the horror with which the princess, still wearing her disguise, heard the doom of her house, and who shall attempt to describe the agonies of that journey home. Rizzpah, the daughter of Aiah (2 Sam. xxi. 10 sqq.), has been called the *Mater Dolorosa* of the Old Testament, but the title equally belongs to Jeroboam's wife. But why, let us ask, does *she* suffer such things? Why must this sword pierce her soul? Was it not because of her share in the sin? As she is included in the sentence against the house (ver. 11, Heb.), it is probable that she had aided and abetted her husband in his irreligious and schismatic policy. And now she must drink of his cup: she must be the first to taste its bitterness; she must bring death to one child and tell of disgrace worse than death to the rest.

18. "*And they buried him*" (ver. 18). In Tirzah the beautiful (Caut. vi. 4), great lamentation was made over him. And indeed his seemed to be a case for tears. The heir to the throne, he was never to ascend it. The possessor of singular gifts and advantages, he was never to exercise the former or enjoy the latter. Had he lived, he might have effected a reformation, and suppressed the calf-worship. But now the grave closes over him, and he is no more seen. What a proof this of a life to come! Otherwise there would be injustice with God, inequality in His dealings with men. "But the righteous live for evermore, their reward also is with the Lord." "We fools counted his life madness and his end to be without honour. How is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints" (Wisdom v. 4, 5, 15).

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—3.—*The Impenitent Seeker.* The day of judgment will come at the end of the world, when the heavens and earth shall be burnt up (2 Thess. ii. 7—10; 2 Peter iii. 7). But this has its prelude in a season of judgments which overtakes the sinner in this life. Jeroboam, having sinned away his day of grace, had now entered into such a season. But of this he seems to have been doubtful. Hence learn—

I. THAT THE SINNER MAY BE SURPRISED IN HIS SEASON OF JUDGMENTS. 1. *That there are such seasons is evident.* (1) Witness the great deluge (Gen. vi. 11—13). Also the rain of fire on the cities of the plain (Gen. xix. 13). The overthrow of nations. Signal visitations upon notorious sinners (Exod. ix. 13—15; 1 Sam. xxviii. 15—19). (2) Such were presages of the awful judgment to come (Matt. xxiv. 37—39; 2 Peter ii. 4—6; Jude 5—7; Rev. xviii. 4). 2. *But all afflictions are not such retributions.* (1) Some are entailed upon us through the fall, and alike affect the penitent and impenitent (Gen. iii. 16—18; Job v. 17; 1 Cor. x. 13). (2) Some come to us through the wickedness and blundering of those around us. Many suffer, irrespective of their character, as when a ship is wrecked through the drunkenness of the master. (3) Some are appointed or permitted for disciplinary and educational purposes. These are often amongst our greatest blessings. (4) Sometimes we suffer for the benefit of others—vicariously. When this is voluntary it is very Christ-like (see Psa. xxii. 11; Col. i. 24). (5) Under all these we have a refuge in God (Psa. ix. 9, 13; xvi. 1). 3. *These may be confounded.* (1) Had Jeroboam known that the mercy of God had reached its limit, and that the season of retribution had set in, he might have spared his queen her journey to Shiloh. (2) But what else could he have expected? Was he not obstinately wedded to his sins? Had he not before him the history of Saul? (1 Sam. xxviii. 15—19.) (3) Men still, in our day, presume upon the mercy of God to their destruction. Eminently the case with those who defer repentance. Learn further—

II. THAT A SINNER MAY SEEK THE LORD TO NO GOOD PURPOSE. This happens—  
1. *When the end sought is unprofitable.* (1) Such was the case with Jeroboam. His inquiry should have been, not, "What shall become of the child?" but, "How may the anger of God be averted?" (Compare 2 Sam. xii. 16, 17.) But he was not prepared to repent of his sin. (9) His inquiry was one of curiosity as to the future. Similar curiosity was manifested by Saul under similar circumstances. It is unseemly for a sinner to pry into Divine mysteries rather than seek the salvation of his soul. 2. *When the spirit of the seeker is improper.* (1) He did not, indeed, seek his calves (compare 2 Kings i. 2). He rather sought Ahijah, because the spirit of prophecy was with him (ver. 2). But he had no such faith in his calves. (2) Why, then, did he not renounce them? He had reasons of worldly policy against this (see ch. xii. 26—28). He was therefore a deceiver of the people. Hence he would have his queen disguise herself. So several of the Popes were known to have been infidels. (3) So were he and his dupes doomed to perish together (see Matt. xv. 14; 2 Thess. ii. 9—12; 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2). 8. *When the manner of the search is unworthy.* (1) He paid a respect to the man of God. This was the meaning of his present (see 1 Sam. ix. 7, 8). Hence such gifts are called blessings (see Gen. xxxiii. 10, 11; Judg. i. 15; 1 Sam. xxv. 17; xxx. 26, marg.; 2 Kings v. 15). (2) Even Jacob would eat of his son's venison before he proceeded to bless him (see Gen. xxvii. 4, 19, 25, 31; see also 1 Kings xvii. 11). (3) So are God's blessings and sacrifices offered to Him commonly associated (see Gen. viii. 20—22; ix. 1—17). All His blessings come to us through the sacrifice of Christ; and especially so when we, by faith, present Christ to Him. (4) But here was no sacrifice; and the value of the gift was small. What were a few loaves, a few cakes, and a cruse of honey as a gift from a king! (Compare 2 Kings v. 5; viii. 9.) The meanness of his present was another reason why he would have his queen disguised.

What an argument for early piety is here! Surrender to Christ before you  
1 KINGS.

are overtaken by a season of judgments. How admonitory is this subject to the effect that prayer should be true; that we should seek the right thing, in the right spirit, and in the right manner!—J. A. M.

Vers. 4—6.—*Spiritual Vision.* When the season of retributions set in upon Jeroboam, and his son Abijah was smitten with sickness, he sent to the prophet Abijah the Shilonite to inquire of the word of Jehovah, what should become of the child. He was unwilling it should be publicly known that, in such an emergency, he had recourse to the prophet of the Lord rather than to his calves (compare 2 Kings i. 2). He accordingly entrusted this delicate business to his wife, and enjoined that she should disguise herself. The text evinces how futile were these expedients. Note—

I. SIN SEEKS DISGUISES. 1. *Truth needs none.* (1) It is naturally open. "He that doeth truth cometh to the light." (2) It has nothing to be ashamed of. It is self-consistent, harmonious, lovely. (3) It ought to be displayed; its influence is elevating (Phil. ii. 15, 16). The saint who hides his light wrongs his race. (4) Churches are constituted that Christians should, to the best advantage, witness for Christ. They are the candlesticks (see Matt. v. 14—16; Rev. i. 20) Note: Christians should discourage the eccentricity that would lead them away from the Churches. 2. *It is otherwise with sin.* (1) It is naturally close. The sinner has as instinctive an aversion to the light as the owl and the bat, his types. (2) It has everything to be ashamed of. It is self-contradictory, discordant, frightfully and monstrously ugly. (3) It ought, by the impenitent sinner, to be concealed. For he could only desire to disclose it in order to infect and demoralize others. (4) But the true should drag it to the light, that its deformity might be seen, abhorred, and execrated.

II. GOD SEES THROUGH ALL DISGUISES. 1. *Nature itself teaches this.* (1) He that formed the eye, can He not see? (Exod. iv 10—12; Psa. xciv. 9.) (2) He that formed the mind, can He not perceive? (1 Chron. xxviii 9; Psa. vii. 9; Prov. xv. 11; Rev. ii. 23.) 2. *It is evinced in the visions of prophecy.* (1) How far-reaching are those visions! The end was seen from the beginning. The instalments fulfilled certify the remainder. (2) How deep their insight into the secret workings of the heart! The secret ambition of Jeroboam, when he was yet the servant of Solomon, was read by Abijah (ch. xi. 37). Now he sees through the disguise of the queen and reads its motives. 3. *This should be considered.* (1) How foolish are disguises where God is concerned! And where is God not concerned? (2) Those who would deceive God only deceive themselves. (3) What disclosures will the day of judgment make! (1 Cor. iii. 13; iv. 5.) What a day of trembling to the hypocrite!

III. GOD CAN OPEN THE EYES OF THE BLIND. 1. *Literally.* (1) Miracles upon the sight were occasionally wrought in ancient times (Gen. xix. 11; 2 Kings vi. 18). (2) Many such were wrought by Christ. 2. *Spiritually.* (1) The prophets were gifted with spiritual vision. They were therefore called *seers*. Their prophecies were called *visions*. (2) Such vision had Abijah. His natural sight had now failed him (ver. 4), yet he saw Jeroboam's queen before she came into his presence, saw through her disguises, and discerned the purpose of her visit. (3) Spiritual vision is not exclusively the privilege of prophets. (a) God gives this to the sinner when He discovers to him the exceeding sinfulness of sin. God strips him of the disguises by which he would deceive himself, and exhibits his own life-likeness to his conscience. (b) God gives it to believers, when He witnesses His pardon and their adoption, to their spirits. (See Acts xxvi. 17, 18; Eph. i. 18.) Have your eyes been opened? Pray God that Satan may never succeed in throwing his dust into them.—J. A. M.

Vers. 7—11.—*Hard Tidings.* Such is the character given by the prophet to the matter of the text (ver. 6). What we translate "*heavy tidings*" is, in the Hebrew, *עש* in the margin, *hard*. The uses of the word (*עש*) in several places suggest

that it should be here taken as indicating retributive judgments merited by one who had hardened his heart in sin. Observe—

I. PRIVILEGES INVOLVE RESPONSIBILITIES. Thus—1. *Special favour calls for special gratitude.* (1) Jeroboam was “exalted from among the people.” He was “an Ephrathite of Zereda,” an obscure place, mentioned once, and that only in connection with his birth (ch. xi. 26). The names of his parents also had remained in obscurity but for the figure he cut in history. (2) He was made “prince” over the “people of God.” This was a splendid distinction. A people is great, not through its number or the extent of its territories, but from its virtues (see Deut. vii. 6; xiv. 2; xxvi. 18, 19). What an influence has that people exerted upon human destinies! (3) The kingdom rent from the house of David was given to him. Jeroboam, then, was placed in succession to that David who had led the armies of Israel to victory! Also to that Solomon who had built the temple, and who, in the earlier part of his career, filled the world with the fame of surpassing wisdom! 2. The favoured are compared with their *peers*. (1) Jeroboam was a *compeer* to David. Both were lifted from humble station—David from the sheep, Jeroboam from the army (ch. xi. 28). Both ascended the throne of Israel—founded dynasties. (2) But how do they *compare*? “David kept the commandments of God”—followed Him “with all his heart.” This did not Jeroboam. Melancholy record, he did *nothing* for God! 3. They are *contrasted* with their *peers*. (1) Jeroboam “had done evil above all that were before him.” More than Saul, who never worshipped idols. More than Solomon, who did not make Israel to sin. (2) Jeroboam made “other gods; and” (or *even*) “molten images.” Note: He intended his calves to represent the God of Israel; but the God of Israel Himself calls them “other gods.” So are the images of Antichrist other gods though baptized with Christian names. This was worse than the idolatry of Solomon. The caricaturing of the true God is more offensive to Him than the worshipping of His creatures. Let the worshippers of barbarous pictures of the Holy Trinity, in which the Almighty is portrayed as a decrepit old man, and such-like, seriously consider this. (3) Jeroboam is described as having “cast” the God of Israel “behind his back.” What a startling figure! How descriptive of the sin of those who now neglect God!

II. RESPONSIBILITIES ABUSED PROVOKE JUDGMENTS. Amongst these may be mentioned—1. *The bitter sense of wasted opportunity.* (1) Jeroboam is reminded that he once had the grand chance of making for himself a “sure house like David” (see ch. xi. 38). What golden opportunities may we not have wasted! (2) That though the more glorious chance was missed and lost, he had then a gracious season of warnings, which also he let slip. (See events recorded ch. xiii.) This respite improved *might* have averted, and *would* have mitigated, the severity of the judgments impending (compare ch. xxi. 29). 2. *The knowledge that the day of vengeance has set in.* (1) An admonition of such a day was *implied* in the earlier prophecy of Ahijah, in the judgments then denounced against the house of David for the sin of Solomon (ch. xi. 30—38). (2) This admonition was *declared explicitly* in the message of the man of God from Judah, and solemnly impressed by the signs attending and following (ch. xiii.) (3) Now Ahijah announces that these judgments are *taking effect*. But even now, had Jeroboam come to God in the spirit of repentance, though his sin is “unto death,” yet might he save his soul. It is hard now to break a chain so riveted as that is by which he has bound himself. No repentance being evinced, the knell of doom sounds forth like the echoes of the closing door of Noah’s ark, which announced mercy fled and wrath begun. 3. *The severity of the sentence.* (1) The honour of the house of Jeroboam is to be brought down to ignominy. (2) The carcases of members of this family are to be consumed by carrion-feeders. Such are the swords of the wicked (compare Gen. xv. 11; Jer. xxxiv. 18—20). Whether by the sword of Baasha, or *literally*, after that sword had done its part, the words of Ahijah came true (see ch. xv. 29). “The doom of the house of Jeroboam was a figure of that of the house of this man of sin (see Rev. xix. 17, 18). God knows the proud afar off. But He gives grace to the humble.—J. A. M.

Vers. 12—14.—*The Reprobate's Doom.* In the queen of Jeroboam we see a remarkable messenger. For she went as messenger from a king and returned as messenger from a prophet. Her message in the first instance was simple, but in her return twofold. She brings a message to the king, and with it a message also to the nation. The message to the king brings—

I. HEAVY TIDINGS RESPECTING ABIJAH. 1. *As to the issue of his illness.* (1) "The child shall die." This is a direct answer to the question with which the royal messenger was charged (ver. 3). Here was the withering of a limb of Jeroboam's family answering to the sign of the withering of his arm (see ch. xiii. 4). (2) The king does not now ask for the restoration of the child as he had done for the restoration of his arm (ch. xiii. 6). He did not even ask, in time, that the judgment might be averted. How could he, without repenting of his sin? Note: The descents of depravity, like those of natural gravitation, are in accelerating degrees. (3) This judgment is the signal that the season of retributions has now fairly set in. What a horror to wake up to such a conviction! "Be sure your sin will find you out." 2. *As to the near approach of his death.* (1) "When thy feet enter into the city." Every step of the queen's advance over that twelve miles from Shiloh to Tirzah measured a stride of death towards his victim. Do we sufficiently realize the fact that this is the case with us in passing through the journey of life? (2) What must have been the conflict in the heart of the queen? Maternal affection would urge her steps with speed that she might see her son alive. Yet was it a race with death; and death was first at the palace. That monster overtakes the swiftest. If he passes one it is to strike another, and so that the recoil of his sting may wound the trembling heart. 3. *As to the circumstances attending.* "All Israel shall mourn for him and bury him;" but for him only of the royal family, "because in him there is found some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel." Hence learn (1) God's punishments are discriminative. He does not overlook the good in the evil. (2) Yet the good suffer with the evil. Abijah dies for the sin of his father. Christ dies for the sin of the world. But in His death is life to the believer. (3) Still the good suffer for their good. They are taken away from evil to come. Had Abijah lived he might have been drawn into his father's sin. God often takes them soonest whom He loves best. (4) The evil suffer in the good. Jeroboam had reason to mourn the loss of the best of his family. So had Israel, since the succession would now open to a wicked prince. Note: We should pray for the preservation of virtuous and useful lives. Especially so when such are found in seats of power and influence.

II. HEAVY TIDINGS RESPECTING HIS SURVIVORS. 1. *They are devoted to extermination.* (1) This as a general fact was already known. (2) It is now published with additional circumstance. The agent that shall effect it is one who shall himself mount the throne of Israel. (3) This was fulfilled to the letter (see ch. xv. 27—30). 2. *Judgment will come speedily.* (1) Some think this exclamation of the prophet, "But what? Even now" arose from his having seen that this would be the case. (2) So it proved. Within two years Jeroboam died. He was succeeded by Nadab, who two years later was slain by Baasha. In that time also, and by the same hand, the predicted extermination was completed. (3) "The wicked do not live out half their days." This is true of dynasties as of individuals. The dynasty of Jeroboam lasted only four and twenty years.—J. A. M.

Vers. 15—16.—*The Future of Israel.* The vision of the Shilonite concerning the house of Israel, now before us, seems to have come upon him suddenly. We think the exclamation, "But what? Even now!" was the half-involuntary expression of the surprise of this new revelation. This utterance should, then, have stood at the beginning of verse 15 rather than at the end of the verse preceding. The connecting particle "For," with which verse 15 now opens, favours this view. The new vision describes the then future calamities of Israel, together with their provoking causes.

I. HE WAS HENCEFORTH TO BE TROUBLED IN HIS OWN LAND. He is there to stagger and tremble under the stroke of God—1. "As a reed is shaken in the

*water.*" (1) The reed is a figure of *frailty*. Rabshakeh, in describing the inability of the Egyptians to support Hezekiah against the Assyrians, compares them to a bruised reed (2 Kings xviii. 21; Isa. xxxvi. 6; see also Ezek. xxxix. 6). Contrariwise, our Lord, asserting the stability and vigour of John Baptist, said that he was *no "reed shaken with the wind"* (Matt. xi. 7). In derision of the royalty of Jesus the soldiers put a reed in His hand for a sceptre (Matt. xxvii. 29). Subsequent history bore emphatic testimony to the instability and feebleness of Ephraim. (2) The reed is "shaken in the water." This element is at once a symbol of *trouble* and of *people* (see Psa. lxxix. 17; Rev. xvii. 15). So disquiet, arising from popular tumults and civil war, is suggested. And did not this become fact? The frequent changes of dynasty kept the nation in perpetual broils. These evils were aggravated by wars with their brethren of Judah. 2. *As a reed shaken by the wind.* (1) This is not asserted, but implied, since reeds shake in water when moved by winds. And foreign influences had much to do with the troubles of Israel. (2) Foreign idolatries introduced by Solomon's wives were at the root of the troubles. (3) The wars between Israel and Judah brought foreign armies upon the scene—Egyptians, Syrians, and Assyrians. By these rough winds the troubles were aggravated.

II. THEN TO BE SCATTERED IN THE LANDS OF STRANGERS. 1. *A captivity of Israel is foretold.* (1) The settlement of the people in Canaan is frequently described in Scripture under the figure of the planting of a vine there (see Psa. lxxiv. 2; lxxx. 8; Jer. ii. 21; xi. 17). (2) This is now to be reversed. "He shall root up Israel out of this good land which he gave to their fathers." Suppose the vine had feeling; what a painful process! 2. *Also the region of their dispersion.* (1) "I will scatter them beyond *the river*," *i.e.*, the Euphrates, for thus, by emphasis, this river is ever distinguished in Scripture (see Gen. xv. 18; compare Deut. xi. 24 with 1 Kings iv. 21 and Psa. lxxii. 8). (2) This river also stands for the *Assyrians*, through whose territory it flowed. Their armies invading Israel are likened to the Euphrates rising and overflowing its western bank (see Isa. viii. 7). (3) How literally was all this accomplished (see 2 Kings xv. 29; xvii. 6, 15).

III. THESE VISITATIONS WERE TO EXPRESS THE ANGER OF GOD. 1. *First provoked by their Canaanitish idolatries.* (1) These are represented here by "their groves." The word *Asherah* (אֲשֵׁרָה) occurs thirty-nine times, and is everywhere translated *groves*, yet it may well be doubted whether this is its meaning. For take the next occurrence after that in our text, *viz.*, ver. 23 of this chapter: How could a grove be built under a green tree? How could a grove be made in the house of the Lord? (See 2 Kings xxi. 7; xxiii. 6.) (2) These Asheroth, or Asherim, appear to have been images made of wood, cased in metal, perhaps fashioned like goats, which were worshipped with abominable rites. They were popular Canaanitish divinities, and for this reason to be execrated by Israelites (see Exod. xxxiv. 13; Deut. xvi. 21). (3) But for all this they fell into the snare of worshipping together with the Baalim, or Bulls, and other Canaanitish idols (Judg. iii. 7; vi. 25; 1 Kings xviii. 19). 2. *Then by their complicity in the sin of Jeroboam.* (1) This addition to their earlier idolatries filled up the measure of their iniquity. For it completely alienated them from the worship of Jehovah in His temple. (2) They forsook the Lord, so He threatens to "give up Israel for the sin of Jeroboam," as He had also given up the house of Jeroboam to judgment.—J. A. M.

Vers. 17—18.—*Death and Mourning.* With a heavy heart the queen of Jeroboam moved along the road from Shiloh to Tirzah, and received the salute of death at the threshold of the palace. This sad event was soon followed by a state funeral and by a public mourning. In all this note how—

I. SORROW TARNISHES HUMAN SPLENDOUR. 1. *Survey this palace of Tirzah.* (1) This is not the only palace of Jeroboam. Soon after his promotion to the crown of Israel we find him building a palace at Shechem. That commemorated the event of his elevation; for there those circumstances occurred which gave rise to it (see ch. xii.) (2) But this palace did not long satisfy the royal ambition. We

find the king presently engaged in building a second at Penuel, in the tribe of Gad, eastward of Jordan (ch. xii. 25). Those who come suddenly to fortune commonly affect great splendour. (3) Now we find him occupying a third. This probably was the most magnificent. It is situated in a place famous for its beauty in the days of Solomon (see Song vi. 4). From this it had its name (הרציה), which signifies *pleasantness*. Doubtless the palace was in keeping with the place, for it was preferred as the royal residence until its destruction by fire (ch. xvi. 18). 2. *Behold in this paradise a corpse!* (1) Death has smitten Abijah, the best and most promising of the royal family. What a scene of grief when the mother, arrived from Shiloh, entered that chamber! What a dense gloom would rest on the household! In that solemn moment how vain must earthly splendour have appeared! (2) And does not sorrow still mingle with all earthly scenes! Why, then, should we not rather set our affections upon things above? (3) Wealth cannot bribe death. The King of Terrors enters the palace of royalty as certainly as he enters the cottage of poverty. To the great this enemy is even more formidable than to the humble, for they have more to leave. The acquisitions of the worldling, therefore, are only giving point and venom to the sting of death.

II. IT HAS RELIEFS AND AGGRAVATIONS. 1. *The reliefs are the fruits of virtue.* (1) The public mourning would be a solace to the royal family. A king might provide a pompous funeral for his son, but he could not command the heart of the nation to mourn. (2) This public mourning was a tribute to the virtues of the prince (see ver. 13). (3) There was pure comfort in the reflection that the spirit of the pious youth is away from a world of sin, in the companionship of saints and holy angels. 2. *The aggravations are the fruits of sin.* (1) How the grief of Jeroboam must have been embittered by the fact that this bereavement came not as a messenger of mercy to him, but as a visitation of judgment! (2) How it must have alarmed him to know that it was but the first of a series of judgments destined to issue in the extermination of his house! (3) The very virtues of the prince first taken, in this view, became an aggravation, for he is removed as too good a prince for so wicked a people, and to make way for the succession of a wicked prince to punish them.—J. A. M.

Vers. 19, 20.—*The Review.* The text reminds us—

I. THAT THE SEASON OF DEATH IS A TIME FOR REFLECTION. 1. *In presence of a corpse the giddiest pause.* (1) This is seen when an ordinary funeral passes along the streets, in the sombre countenances of the bystanders, if not in more special tokens of respect. It is more evident still when the deceased may have been an acquaintance or a relative. But most so in the very house of mourning, where the relics are seen shrouded in their pallor and immobility. (2) What trains of thought are started! (a) What a mystery is death! (b) What a mystery is life! (c) What a mystery is futurity!—the spirit world—the resurrection—the judgment—heaven—hell. (d) Are we prepared to encounter the inevitable? Who can forecast the moment? (e) Why should we defer the needful preparation? 2. *When a monarch dies a nation thinks.* (1) This is so under ordinary conditions. The social position occupied is so elevated that the event is conspicuous to all. What a leveller is death! In this article all claim kindred, the prince and the beggar (Prov. xxii. 2). (2) But Jeroboam's death was by the stroke of God (2 Chron. xiii. 20). Such a conspicuous judgment was fitting to the man of sin (see Isa. xi. 4; 2 Thess. ii. 8; Rev. xix. 15). How alarmingly would such a death speak to workers of iniquity! (3) The demise of Jeroboam opened the succession to Nadab, who, without the genius of his father, followed in his iniquities. 3. *But the virtuous only are lamented.* (1) Jeroboam was buried. He *did* come to the sepulchre "with his fathers." And he may have had the formality of a family mourning. His household may have gone barefoot, wept, torn their clothes, smote on their breasts, lay on the ground and fasted, as the custom was. (2) But there was no national mourning. The public mourning for Moses and Aaron lasted thirty days, that for Saul seven (Num. xx. 29; Deut. xxxiv. 8; 1 Sam. xxxi. 13).

For Abijah, a pious prince of the house of Jeroboam, there was a national mourning, though he never came to the throne; but for Jeroboam, after a reign of twenty-two years, no mourning! (Ver. 13.) (3) What a contrast—the apathy of the nation, now at the close of their experiment at king-making, to the enthusiasm at its commencement (ch. xii. 20)! How seldom do revolutionists adequately consider the end! They often anticipate a paradise and find a hell.

II. THAT WE SHOULD, THEREFORE, SO LIVE THAT SUCH REFLECTIONS MAY PROVE GRATEFUL. To this end our policy should be—1. *Pure*. (1) Such was not the policy of Jeroboam. When his people became restive under his rule, and he feared they would return to Rehoboam, instead of looking to God, he forsook Him and made Israel to sin. (2) The policy of purity is the policy of faith. Faith in God—in Christ—in truth. 2. *Peaceable*. (1) Peace is kin to purity (James iii. 17). God made peace for Jeroboam before he had departed from Him (see ch. xii. 21—24). So does He still undertake for His people (Prov. xvi. 7). (2) Wars are born of evil lusts (James iv. 1). When Jeroboam forsook the Lord, then commenced an embroilment in hostilities from which he was never free. First with Rehoboam (ver. 30), then with Abijah (2 Chron. xiii). 3. *So shall we avoid disaster*. (1) By pursuing an opposite policy Jeroboam brought disaster upon himself. His body was smitten by God. There is no evidence of any repentance to the saving of his soul. (2) He brought disaster upon his family. The best of his sons died prematurely for his sin. Two years later he perished himself. Still two years later and his race became exterminated with violence. (3) He brought disaster upon his people. Impatient of taxation under Rehoboam, they made him king, but got no relief, having to build palaces and sustain wars. And by their complicity in his idolatry they filled up the measure of their iniquity and incurred the anger of God, which involved them in the miseries of foreign invasion and captivity. What profit is there in a crown that is retained by the policy of sin? The whole world is dearly purchased with the loss of the soul.—J. A. M.

Ver. 13.—*Early Piety in an Unexpected Place*. (A Sermon to Young People.) Jeroboam had married in Egypt a princess named Ano. She was the elder sister of Tahpenes, the wife of Shishak, king of Egypt. Their home had been gladdened by the birth of a child, whom they brought with them on Jeroboam's return to his own tribe and country. This child, Abijah, on whom their affections and the hopes of the people were fixed, was stricken by illness, and seemed likely to die. Then the parents turned to the Lord in their trouble, for the calves at Bethel and Dan, they knew, were powerless to help them. [Note the frequency with which those who in theory deny God, or in practice forget Him, seek His help in their time of fear and grief.] They would not send to the temple at Jerusalem for several reasons; but Jeroboam remembered the old prophet, Ahijah, who had spoken to him in the field some years before (ch. xi. 29—31), and foretold that he should rule over the ten tribes of Israel. Accordingly, Queen Ano secretly set out for Shiloh (the ancient sanctuary), where, in a humble home, the prophet lived. She disguised herself as a poor woman, and took a present such as a peasant would offer—ten loaves, two rolls for the children of the prophet, a bunch of raisins, and a jar of honey. Jeroboam hoped he might, by this deceit, get a word of hope about the dying boy, for he knew that he could not expect comfort from Ahijah, because he had grievously disobeyed his command. He feared, therefore, that if the man of God recognized Ano he would rebuke this sin. The attempt was vain. The prophet, nearly blind though he was, knew by revelation who was coming. Terrible were the words of doom he uttered about the house of Jeroboam; and the only gleam of comfort for the parents was that in Abijah “there was found some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel,” so that he should not have the curse of living to see and share the woe and shame which were coming. Abijah gives us an example of piety which is worthy of consideration, especially by the young.

I. ABIJAH'S PIETY WAS EARLY. 1. *Define piety*. It is right disposition toward God, resulting from the secret influence of God's Holy Spirit. It reveals itself in desires after what is good, and pure, and true; in resolutions to seek these; in

prayers, through which the heart pours out its love and longing towards God. This should be more natural to us than to Abijah. He knew of God's power, we know of His love. He had heard of the Shekinah; we have heard of Jesus Christ, who says, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Children ran to Jesus once, and found rest and gladness in His love; why not now? 2. *Describe early piety.* Show how it is cultivated, hindered, and revealed. Urge upon parents and teachers the importance of expecting it. We overlook the "blade," and then wonder we do not see later "the full corn in the ear." If we accept the teaching of Jesus Christ, it is evident that a child is naturally more likely than an adult to enter His kingdom. To be a child is a necessity; to "become a child" is an arduous struggle, and sometimes a sore humiliation. The door of mercy is so low that children can most easily pass through it. Happy is the home which is adorned by the presence of a child-disciple. There are those now estranged from God who may have a fulfilment of the words, "a little child shall lead them."

II. ABIJAH'S PIETY WAS SINCERE. 1. *Some good thing was in him*—that is, in his heart. It was not something put on and off, like a garment; but an abiding principle, influencing the thoughts as well as the life. Nothing is more offensive to God than pretended piety. The long-faced visage which never smiles, the cant phrases which express what cannot really be honestly felt by a child, are hideous to man and God. 2. *This good thing was "toward the Lord God of Israel."* It reminds us of the phrase, "repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." We may turn from sin to respectability, but that is not repentance towards God. We may love to do right things because they please men, but this is not piety towards God. "The Lord seeth not as man seeth: for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Sam. xvi. 7).

III. ABIJAH'S PIETY WAS DISCERNIBLE. "It was found in him." 1. *God saw it.* He spoke of it to His servant Abijah, as of something He rejoiced to find. God is ever looking for what is good, in the world and in your heart. Though the world is corrupt, and men have done abominable works, the Lord looks down from heaven to see if there are any that understand and seek God. See Psa. xiv. 1, 2. Compare this with the Lord's parables of the woman seeking the lost piece of silver, and of the father going out to look for and meet the returning prodigal. Not only your faults and sins, but your good wishes and holy thoughts and silent prayers are recognized by God. 2. *Man saw it.* Abijah did not proclaim his piety—that would have been offensive, especially in a child—but it was "found" in him. He was so young that he could take no active part in the service of God, and was unable publicly to oppose his father's idolatry; but his parents, and the courtiers, and the servants must have been sometimes shamed by his earnest eyes. A noiseless violet makes the hedgerow fragrant. It bewrays itself by its sweetness.

IV. ABIJAH'S PIETY WAS UNEXPECTED. He belonged to the house of Jeroboam, who made Israel to sin. His mother was probably still a heathen; his father was ambitious, cruel, and irreligious, and, so far as we know, this little boy alone, in all the court, loved the "God of Israel." His piety was the more conspicuous on this account, just as the stars are brightest when the sky is dark, and the cedars are most beautiful when surrounding trees are leafless. Describe the position of children in a godless home, with irreligious companions, &c. Even there it is not impossible to love and serve the Lord.

CONCLUSION. *It seems at first sight, especially to children, a strange reward that was given to Abijah—to die young.* But there were peculiar reasons for this. He was delivered from a sinful world, a distracted country, and evil influences; nor did he ever see those dear to him murdered and dishonoured. He was "taken away from the evil to come." If the veil were rent, and we could see the heavenly home in its beauty and sinlessness, we should understand what Paul meant when he said, "To depart and to be with Christ is far better." Every parent whose child dies in the Lord may hear amidst his sobs the words of Jesus, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

“Little one, precious one,  
 Summoned away,  
 Ere life's uprising sun  
 Dawned into day,  
 Gone from thy mother's arms,  
 Gone to the Saviour's breast,  
 Safe from life's rude alarms,  
 Blissful thy rest.”

A. R.

**Vers. 17, 18.—The Dead Child.** Following the order of events as they appear in the Hebrew text rather than in the Septuagint, we regard this as the first of the calamities that befell the house of Jeroboam, until it became extinct on the death of Nadab (ch. xv. 29), as the penalty of his transgression in violating the religious unity of the nation. So soon was he made to feel that he was in the grasp of a Power that could not be mocked or trifled with, and against which it was vain for him to rebel. The narrative is full of touching interest, and has many points of moral teaching. It illustrates—

I. **THE TENDERNESS OF NATURAL AFFECTION EVEN IN A BAD MAN.** We have no reason to doubt that genuine parental feeling prompted both Jeroboam and his wife in their appeal to the prophet. One cannot but sympathize with them in their distress at the fatal sickness of their child. Human nature in its deepest degradation is not altogether lost to the touches of tender emotion. The thrill of parental love may be found in hearts so debased and hardened that nothing else can move them. The most ferocious savage will defend his own, and “barbarous people” are capable of “showing no little kindness” even to strangers (Acts xxviii.) But in many cases there is no real moral worth in these affections and amenities. They can scarcely be called “redeeming qualities.” Parental feeling is often little else than an animal instinct. It may exist side by side with the most grovelling passions and the most complete moral obliquity. Jeroboam loved his child, and yet, in proud self-will and impious defiance of the Divine authority, he could secure his own carnal ends at the cost of the utter spiritual degradation of the people.

II. **THE BLINDNESS OF A SINFUL INFATUATION.** The king flies in his distress to the prophet whom he has long slighted and ignored. He sought no counsel from him in the setting up of the golden calves at Dan and Bethel. But now, as if he had himself fulfilled all the conditions of the Divine promise, he thinks to get from the prophet a word to confirm his hope of a “sure house” (ch. xi. 38). Such is the folly of human nature. When the shadow of adversity falls on men they try, with something like a superstitious impulse, to get consolation from religious sources which, in the time of their prosperity, they neglected and despised. But what could Jeroboam expect from the oracle of a God whom he sinned against so grievously but “heavy tidings” respecting his child? He bids his wife “feign herself to be another woman;” but how could he dream that a prophet, who had power to read the future, would not be able to penetrate the false disguise? Thus, when men's hearts are “set in them to do evil” do they resort to vain subterfuges, and flatter themselves with a delusive hope. Thus do they often rush blindly on their own condemnation and ruin; provoking, and even antedating, the very calamities they have so much cause to dread.

III. **THE CURSE OF SIN ON THE SACRED RELATIONSHIPS OF LIFE.** It is terribly expressive of the hatefulness, in God's sight, of Jeroboam's impiety that the very flower and crown of his house should be thus stricken—the fairest and the best, the one who seemed likely to justify his name Abijah (“Jehovah is my Father”)—because already in his young heart there was found “some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel.” So is it often in the course of human history. The evil men do comes back to them, not only in divers forms of retribution, but often in the form of penalties that pierce them in the tenderest part. The dearest ties of life are broken. Or they see their own moral deformity reflected in those whom they would fain shield from its bitter consequences. Or their brightest hopes are withered at the root, and that which might have been, and was intended to be, the source of the purest earthly joy becomes the occasion of keenest sorrow.

**IV. THE BLENDING OF AN ELEMENT OF MERCY WITH GOD'S SEVEREST JUDGMENTS.** We see here how the innocent suffer with the guilty. The iniquity of the fathers is visited upon the children (Exod. xx. 5). Yet to the child himself, in this instance, it was a gracious visitation. (1) He was emphatically "taken from the evil to come." (2) His incipient piety was recognized and crowned by this translation to a happier sphere. (3) It was his special privilege to die a natural and not a violent death—the only one of the house of Jeroboam who should "go to the grave in peace." Thus in the darkest Divine judgment there is a gleam of mercy. There is "light in the cloud." It has a "silver lining." The sufferings of innocent children, and the fact that so large a proportion of the human race die in infancy, are dark mysteries to us. But even here we see the dispensation of an all-wise Love, remembering Him who said, "It is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should perish" (Matt. xviii. 14). "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark x. 14).—W.

Vers. 1—20.—*Affliction and judgment.* I. **THE STRICKEN KING.** Abijah seems to have been heir to the throne, and to have been alike the king's and the people's hope. The father's heart was touched: the king saw the dynasty threatened, to establish which he had ventured so much. The voice of God, against which the ear was closed, will be heard again in the quietness of the sick chamber, in the silence of death. God follows us through deepening sorrows, if haply we may turn ere we are overwhelmed by the waters of destruction.

II. **THE RESORT FOR HELP.** 1. *His trouble drives him towards God.* It is meant to do this. It is the touching of God's hand that we may look up and live.

"Eyes which the preacher could not school  
By wayside graves are raised,  
And lips cry, 'God be pitiful,'  
Which ne'er said, 'God be praised.'"

2. *He is drawn by the remembrance of past mercy.* "Behold, there is Ahijah the prophet, who told me that I should be king over this people." The remembrances of mercies are cords to draw back straying hearts to God. The thought of what God has done makes a holy place for faith, and rears an altar whence may rise the incense of accepted prayer. 3. *His hope is defeated by his own deceit.* "Disguise thyself, that thou be not known as the wife of Jeroboam." He thought he might find help without owning and yielding his sin. How many prayers are like Jeroboam's embassy! Men wish to find mercy and yet cling to their sinful life, and imagine that because their wicked practices are kept behind their back they are not there in God's sight! 4. Gifts (ver. 3) could not make up the lack of a true, penitent heart.

III. **THE LORD'S ANSWER.** 1. *Disguise is impossible before God* (vers. 5, 6). We can conceal nothing from Him; and one word of His ("Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam!") is enough to rend every veil of pretence from the soul and overwhelm it with shame. We may now close the ears to the voice of accusing conscience, but we go onward, as she went, to where the Judge will name us. 2. *God's name.* "The Lord God of Israel." Not only will the covering be torn from the sinner's heart and life; God will be revealed. He is the mighty avenger of those who have been seduced and sinned against. 3. *Jeroboam's ingratitude* (vers. 7—9). He was taken from among the people, and yet he had shown no anxiety to discharge aright the duties of the high office committed to him. (1) Human patterns were despised ("Thou hast not been as my servant David"). (2) God Himself was cast behind his back. 4. *The doom.* (1) There was deepest dishonour for him. His house was overthrown and removed as the vilest refuse. (2) There was destruction for his people. For the impenitent and all who are led by them there is, and can be, only utter and eternal ruin.

IV. **THE SHADOW OF FALLING JUDGMENT** (vers. 17—20). 1. *Abijah's death.* The light of the home, the hope of the land, is taken. 2. *Jeroboam's death.* "The Lord struck him and he died" (2 Chron. xiii. 20). The clear intellect and the strong

hand are smitten and removed. Slowly but surely the word advances to its accomplishment. Are there no shadows of judgment on thy path? Have no words come true that make thy heart tremble because of those other words which God's lips have also spoken?—J. U.

## EXPOSITION.

## CHAPTER XIV. 21—31.

**THE REIGN OF REHOBOAM.**—Ver. 21.—And Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, reigned in Judah. Rehoboam was forty [or twenty. See on ch. xii. 1] and one year old [when he began to reign, and he reigned [this reign is related at greater length in 2 Chron. xi., xii.] seventeen years [cf. ch. xv. 1] in Jerusalem, the city which the Lord did choose [cf. ch. xi. 36; Psa. lxxviii. 68; Neh. i. 9] out of all the tribes of Israel [cf. 2 Chron. vi. 6; 2 Kings xxi. 7] to put his name there. The historian reminds us that Jerusalem was by God's appointment the religious centre of the land; that Bethel and Dan were no sanctuaries of His choosing; and that, however much the realm of Rehoboam was restricted, he still reigned in the capital of God's choice. It is possible the words have some reference to the next verse, and imply that, though it was the holy city, yet even there they fell away from God (Bähr). **And his mother's name was Naamah** [or, according to the LXX., Naanan. See on ch. xii. 24], an [Heb. *the, i.e., the well-known*] Ammonitess. [The name of the mother is given with every king of Judah, principally because of the position of influence she occupied in the kingdom. See on ch. ii. 13, and ver. 31 below.]

Ver. 22.—**And Judah did evil in the sight of the Lord** [not, however, before the fourth year of Rehoboam's reign. For the first three years the nation remained steadfast in the faith, and the kingdom was greatly strengthened and consolidated. The defection commenced when Rehoboam began to feel himself secure (2 Chron. xii. 1). It is to be observed, however, that the historian says "Judah" (not Rehoboam) "did evil," &c. It is probable that a considerable section of the people approved of the idolatrous practices introduced in the preceding reign, and that Rehoboam was unable to repress them. It was his misfortune to have to reap the bitter fruits of Solomon's unfaithfulness], and they provoked him to jealousy [Heb. *made him jealous*. Same word, Exod. xx. 5; xxxiv. 14; Num. v. 14. The words of the covenant proclaimed the Lord a "jealous God." This is of course anthropomorphic language. The nation was regarded as the bride of Jehovah, and God

is said to be made jealous, because idolatry was unfaithfulness to Him. The worship of Baal and Ashtoreth, it must be remembered, involved unutterable *immoralities*, hence the special fitness of the word, which is only used of idolatry of one kind or other] with their sins which they had committed [Heb. *sinned*] above all that their fathers had done.

Ver. 23.—For they also [*i.e., they as well as the ten tribes*] built them high places [*i.e., houses of high places*. See on ch. iii. 2 and xiii. 32] and images [Heb. *pillars or statues* (תְּבִלִּים; LXX., στήλας). These were, no doubt, originally memorial pillars or stones, erected to commemorate some Divine manifestation, and with no thought of idolatry (see Gen. xxxi. 13; xxxv. 14, 20; xxviii. 18). But the Canaanites erected pillars, which were also statues or images, to their god, Baal. Hence we read of the "image" (תְּבִילָה) of Baal (2 Kings iii. 2;

x. 26, 27; cf. xviii. 4; xxiii. 14); and hence also we find such images frequently mentioned side by side with the so-called "groves," *i.e., the "Asherahs"* (ver. 15; Exod. xxxiv. 13; Deut. vii. 5; xii. 3; xvi. 21, &c.) Both the *Mazzebah* and the *Asherah*, consequently, was an upright pillar or post, but the former was of stone, the latter of wood; the former dedicated to Baal, the god of nature, of generation; the latter to Ashtoreth, the goddess of nature and productive power. The gradual transition of the memorial pillar into the Baal statue is hinted at in Levit. xxvi. 1. It is observable that these idolatrous and immoral rites seem to have found a home in Judah before they were introduced into Israel] and groves [*Asherahs*, idols; see on ver. 15. This verse proves conclusively that the translation "grove" is a mistaken one] on every high hill, and under every green tree. [The phrase is from the Pentateuch, Deut. xii. 2; cf. Jer. ii. 20; iii. 6; Hosea iv. 13. "Probably the evil example of Maachah, his favourite wife (2 Chron. xi. 20—22), whose idolatrous tastes were displayed under Asa (2 Chron. xv. 16), was not without a pernicious effect on Rehoboam" (Wordsworth).]

Ver. 24.—**And there were also Sodomites** [תְּבִילִים, a collective noun = יָדֵי תְּבִילִים (ch. xv. 12) = consecrated persons or devotees, because they were set apart to the service of

**Astarte, the Dea Syria.** It is clear from Deut. xxiii. 18 (Heb.) that male prostitutes are here spoken of, the name of the female being אֲשֵׁרָה. The former is described in ver. 19 *l.c.* as a dog, the latter as a whore] in the land [cf. ch. xv. 12. It is highly probable that these infamous persons were of Canaanite or Phœnician origin (this being a Phœnician superstition, Movers, "Phôniz." i. 671), but it is somewhat precarious to found an assertion to that effect on these last words (as Bähr)], and [Heb. omits *and*] they did according to all the abominations of the nations [see Levit. xviii., xx.; Deut. xviii. 9—12] which the Lord cast out before the children of Israel. ["Here we see a reason for God's command, requiring the extirpation of the Canaanites" (Wordsworth).]

Ver. 25.—**And it came to pass in the fifth year** [that is, two years after king and people forsook the law of the Lord (2 Chron. xii. 1). Retribution seems to have overtaken Judah sooner than Israel. They had the less excuse, and they seem to have plunged deeper into idolatry and immorality (see Homiletics, p. 335)] of King Rehoboam, that Shishak king of Egypt [to whom Jeroboam had fled (ch. xi. 26, 40)] came up against Jerusalem. [This expedition is related with somewhat more of detail in 2 Chron. xii. 2—4. For Shishak, see ch. xi. 40. It was in the twentieth year of his reign that Shishak, once Jeroboam's protector and friend, invaded Palestine. It has been conjectured (Ewald, *al.*) that he was incited so to do by Jeroboam, and that the two kings waged war against Judah in concert (see on ver. 30). But as to this Scripture is silent; and moreover, if Jeroboam summoned Shishak to his assistance, it is certain that his own kingdom did not altogether escape invasion; and it is perhaps more probable that the divided and weakened state of the country seemed to promise the Egyptian king an easy capture of Jerusalem, of the treasures of which he had doubtless heard. It is well known that a record of this expedition exists in the sculptures and inscriptions of the great temple at Karnak. The *bassi relievi* of the temple wall contain over 130 figures, representatives, as the names on the shields show, of so many conquered cities. Amongst these are found three of the "cities for defence" which Rehoboam had built, viz., Shoco, Adoraim, and Aijalon (2 Chron. xi. 7—10), while many other towns of Palestine, such as Gibeon, Taanach, Shunem, Megiddo, &c., are identified with more or less of probability. One feature in the list is remarkable, viz., the number of Levitical and Canaanite cities—cities of Israel

—which Shishak is said to have conquered. The usual inference is that such cities, although in Jeroboam's dominions, had nevertheless held out against his rule—the former for religious reasons; the latter, perhaps, in the effort to recover their independence. Mr. Poole, however (Dict. Bib., art. "Egypt"), accounts for the names on the supposition that Shishak directed his forces against the northern as well as the southern kingdom, and certainly this seems to agree better with the facts. It is hardly likely that Jeroboam, with the army at his command, would tolerate so many centres of disaffection in his midst. Besides, the Levites, we are told, had migrated in a body to Judah; and the Canaanites at this period can hardly have been in a position to defy any Hebrew monarch. The silence alike of our historian and of the chronicler as to the invasion of Israel is easily accounted for by the fact that Judah bore the brunt of the war.]

Ver. 26.—**And he took away the treasures of the house of the Lord** [The historian omits to mention the interposition of Semaiah (2 Chron. xii. 5—8). The account of the Chronicles is altogether much fuller], and the treasures of the king's house; he even took away all [rather, "*and everything* (sc. that he could lay his hands on) *he took away.*" The spoil must have been enormous]; and he took away all the shields of gold [cf. ch. x. 17] which Solomon had made.

Ver. 27.—**And king Rehoboam made in their stead brazen shields** [lit., shields of brass or copper; a striking token of the decadence of the kingdom; cf. ch. ix. 23; x. 22. "He changed his father's religion, as his shields, from gold to brass" (Hall)], and committed [Heb. *appointed*] them unto the hands of the chief of the guard [Heb. *commanders of the runners* (see on ch. i. 38)], which kept the door of the king's house. [Cf. 2 Kings xl. 6. The functions of the body-guard were very varied. A primary duty was, obviously, to supply sentinels and attendants for the palace.]

Ver. 28.—**And it was so, when the king went unto the house of the Lord, that the guards [runners] bare them** [Whatever idolatries Rehoboam tolerated or encouraged, it is clear that he maintained the temple worship with great pomp and circumstance. The state visits of the Sultan to the Mosque may perhaps be best compared with these processions. Ewald sees in this circumstance a proof of Rehoboam's vanity. The brazen shields were "borne before him in solemn procession, as if everything were the same as before"], and brought them back into the guard chamber

[Heb. "chamber of the runners." Solomon's golden shields were kept "in the house of the forest of Lebanon" (ch. x. 17). These shields of brass were of so little value that the guard chamber sufficed for their custody.

Ver. 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? [See on ver. 19.]

Ver. 30.—And there was war [cf. 2 Chron. xii. 15, "wars." Keil argues from the prohibition of war by Shemaiah (ch. xii. 23) that this must mean "hostility, enmity." But מלחמה surely implies more than angry feelings or a hostile attitude; and it is highly probable that, even if there were no organized campaigns, a desultory warfare was constantly carried on on the borders of the two kingdoms. It is also possible that Jeroboam took a part in the war of Shishak] between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all their days.

Ver. 31.—And Rehoboam slept with his fathers [The same formula as in ch. ii. 10; xi. 43; xv. 8, 24, &c. It is used of nearly all the kings of Judah], and was buried with his fathers [These words go to prove, against Gesenius, that the phrase "slept (lit., lay down) with his fathers" is not to be interpreted of Sheol, but of the grave; see on ch. ii. 10] in the city of David. And his mother's name was Naamah, an Ammonitess. [Same words as in ver. 21. The repetition can hardly be, as Bähr, Wordsworth, *al.*, imagine, designed, in order to show that the worship of Moloch was brought by her

to Jerusalem (ch. xi. 7), and that she exercised a sinister influence upon her son. As she is twice called "the Ammonitess" it can hardly be doubted that she was one of the "Ammonitesses" (ch. xi. 1, Heb.) who turned away Solomon's heart; and it is also certain that Rehoboam did not inherit his folly from his father. At the same time these words are more easily accounted for on the supposition that the historian found them in this position in one or more of the documents from which he compiled his history. It is also to be remembered that some of these chronological statements are manifestly by a later hand, and have been transferred from the margin to the text. See on ch. vi. 1.] And Abijam [elsewhere called Abijah (2 Chron. xii. 16; xiii. 1), or Abijahu (2 Chron. xiii. 21, Heb.) Some MSS. have Abijah here. The variation is not easily accounted for except as a clerical error. The supposition of Lightfoot that the name was designedly altered by the historian to avoid the incorporation of the sacred JAH into the name of a bad man is too fanciful, the more so as Abijam was by no means an exceptionally bad king. It is, however, approved by Bähr and Rawlinson. But it is as little probable that Abijam is the original form of the name (Keil). The form *Abijahu*, the LXX. Ἀβιοῦ, and the analogy of *Abiel* (1 Sam. ix. 1) all make against this idea. On the whole, it is more likely that Abijam results from an error of transcription, and the final D being easily confounded] his son reigned in his stead.

### HOMILETICS.

Ver. 25.—*The Invasion of Shishak.* Three years after the death of David, the foundations of the temple, the glory of that age—some have called it *orbis mirabilem*, the marvel of every age—were laid. Four years after the death of Solomon his son—some forty years, that is to say, after its foundation, three and thirty years after its completion, according to some only twenty years after its dedication—the treasures of that temple, its gold and gems, were carried off by an invader. A short time after his accession, again, Solomon made alliance with the strongest and proudest of the empires of that age, with Egypt, and a Hebrew, one whose forefathers were Pharaoh's bondmen, was gladly recognized as great Pharaoh's son-in-law. A short time after his death, this same Egyptian kingdom is become an assailant of Solomon's son, and Pharaoh is turned to be the oppressor and plunderer of his realm. For a great part of Solomon's reign it was the boast of the people that an Egyptian princess occupied one of his splendid palaces in Jerusalem, but he has not been long dead before those same palaces are rifled by Egyptian princes, and Jerusalem is environed by the legions of Shishak.

And yet that temple, the magnificence of which has been so short-lived, which was hardly completed ere it was despoiled, was built to the name of the Lord, and as a habitation for the mighty God of Jacob. And as such it was accepted by Him. That house had had a greater glory and consecration than of gold and precious stones, for "the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord" (ch. viii. 11). Why, then, is it, we may well ask, as the men of that

age would ask, that it is so soon left comparatively desolate? Cannot the Deity to whom it was dedicated protect it against spoliation. Or have His worshippers provoked Him to anger, so that He has "abhorred his sanctuary," and "delivered his glory into the enemies' hand"?

For we may be quite sure that there was a profound reason for this profound dishonour and disgrace. We cannot account for the fact that the temple of the Lord, the "house of the great God" (Ezra v. 8), was stripped bare and left a wreck within a few years of its erection, on the supposition that a chance happened to it, and that it only suffered as other shrines have done from the vicissitudes of fortune and the impartial, inevitable havoc of war. "*In rebus bellicis*," it has been said, "*maxime dominatur Fortuna*." But if we feel at liberty to interpret other histories by a theory of chance, that idea must be excluded in thinking of God's people. If their history was fortuitous, then the Old Testament is a delusion. No; we may not be able always to trace the finger of God in profane history, but it will be passing strange if we cannot recognize it here.

Now the *immediate* cause of the invasion was, no doubt, the divided and therefore weakened state of the kingdom. We might have been tempted to think that Jeroboam had summoned his patron Shishak to his aid, had we not proof that Israel as well as Judah suffered from this campaign. And of course it is possible that Jeroboam instigated a war which ultimately extended to his own kingdom. But it is obvious that Shishak would need no invitation to attack Jerusalem. The fame of its immense treasure is quite sufficient of itself to account for his advance. So long as it was guarded by the armies of Solomon it was secure. But Rehoboam, whose troops would not number a third of his father's, and who was paralyzed by the hostility of Israel crouching like a wild beast on his northern border, offered an easy prey to a general with 1,200 chariots and 60,000 horsemen, and "people without number" under his command.

We see, then, that it was the treasures of the Holy City—the vast accumulation of the precious metals—which excited the cupidity of the Egyptians, while their defenceless state suggested the idea of seizing them. Observe here—

I. THE RETRIBUTION OF SOLOMON'S SIN. 1. *Of his greed and pride.* He has "multiplied silver and gold to himself" only to provoke an invasion of his territory and the humiliation of his people. If he had obeyed the law; if he had been content to embellish the house of the Lord and leave the palaces alone; if his overweening pride and his insatiable thirst for fame had not prompted him to amass treasures which excited universal attention, it is probable that Judah would have escaped invasion. In this case "pride has gone before destruction." The very magnitude of his treasures led to their dispersion.

2. *Of his idolatry.* We have already seen how this sin (ch. xi. 5—8) was punished by the partition of his realm. In the plunder of his palaces, provoked and made possible by that division, we see a further recompense of his outrage and defiance of the Almighty. The hills on which his idol altars were erected now swarmed with idolaters, assembled not to sacrifice, but to slay. We are reminded here of the retribution which befell the Jerusalem of a later day. On one of the hills before Jerusalem the Jews raised a cross—they crucified the Prince of Life. On all the hills that are round about Jerusalem, the Romans raised crosses, the crosses of His murderers (Jos., Bell. Jud. v. 11. 1).

3. *Of his multiplication of horses.* For it is to be remembered from what quarter the retribution came. There is an exquisite judicial propriety in an invasion from Egypt, and an invasion of chariots and horses. This was *re-taliation* in the proper sense of the word; it was like for like. Why, there was almost a beaten track made for those same chariots by the horses and chariots which Solomon had imported in such prodigious numbers. Literally the trade horses paved the way for the horses of war. This illegal traffic had long since familiarized Egyptian charioteers with the shortest way to the Holy City.

4. *Of his multiplication of wives.* Solomon's lawful wife came from Egypt. Had he been true to her, he would probably have been true to his Lord God (ch. xi. 3), and so his realm would have escaped invasion. It is a kind of Nemesis

for the wrong done to his Egyptian consort that his harem was plundered by Egyptians. There are those who connect Napoleon's fall with the repudiation of Josephine. The "judge of the widow" (Psa. lxxviii. 5) is also the avenger of the injured and dishonoured wife (Heb. xiii. 4). Human laws seldom take cognizance of these, the deepest of wrongs, but the cry of the heart-broken woman goes up into the ears of One who has said, "I will repay."

II. THE PUNISHMENT OF REHOBOAM'S FOLLY AND SIN. 1. *Of his obstinacy.* For in the first place, but for his infatuation, humanly speaking, the kingdom would have escaped division, and the land would have escaped invasion. That infatuation, it is true, was the product of his breeding and his training, but that consideration does not wholly exonerate him from blame. No man can charge his parents or surroundings with his sin. The law does not excuse the thief on the ground that from infancy he has been taught to steal. Rehoboam was a free agent, and ought to have acted otherwise, and doubtless he knew it when it was too late.

2. *Of his pride.* It was his pride had rejected all compromise, and had prated of scorpions, &c. It had been humbled once in the dismemberment of his realm. It must be humbled again in the spoliation of his palaces. For observe, it was when he "had strengthened himself" (2 Chron. xii. 1) that Shishak came to prove his weakness. St. Paul is not the only one who has had to learn the lesson, "When I am *weak*, then am I strong." It is extremely probable that this vain-glorious prince, after losing most of his realm, still piqued himself on the abundance of his treasures. His trust was in his shields of gold. So he must be reduced to shields of pinchbeck.

3. *Of his infidelity.* "He forsook the law of the Lord" (2 Chron. i. c.) Much as his father had done before him. "What the old sing," says the German proverb, "the young chirp." That is to say, he still worshipped Jehovah (ver. 28; cf. ch. ix. 25), but he sanctioned, or did not suppress, idolatry. The son of an Ammonitess, he would find it difficult to trample on the gods of his mother (ch. xi. 5), and he was probably too much afraid of another insurrection to stamp out the abominations of vers. 23, 24.

III. THE RECOMPENSE OF ISRAEL'S IDOLATRIES. Though the chronicler informs us that Rehoboam "forsook the law and *all Israel with him*," yet it seems probable from vers. 22, 24, "*And Judah did evil*," &c., that he rather followed than led his people. He could hardly fail, at first, to see that his strength lay in a rigid adherence to the law; that his policy was one of piety. The Levites and others who streamed into Judah, shocked by the innovations of Jeroboam, cannot fail to have suggested that his rôle was orthodoxy. It is probable, therefore, that it was not until a large section of his people, infected with the superstitions and vices they had learned in Solomon's reign, clamoured for the tolerance of shameful shrines, that he yielded to idolatry. Ver. 25 seems to connect the invasion directly with the people's sin. But for the high places and images, &c., the land would have been spared this humiliation. It is to be carefully noted that, so long as king and people served the Lord, Shishak was held back from attacking them. Hence we understand why Judah receives earlier and greater stripes than Israel. It was Jeroboam made Israel to sin. It was Judah made Rehoboam to sin. The guilty people, accordingly, are punished by the invasion of their land and the spoliation of their treasure; the guilty king by the destruction of his house. And here again, let us observe, how significant that the chastisement should come from Egypt. Time was when God had punished the idolatries of Egypt through the instrumentality of the Jewish people (Exod. vii.—xiv.) Now the tables are turned, and Egypt is employed to avenge the idolatries of Judah. This was the first time that an Egyptian army had crossed their border—the first time, indeed, that the land had sustained the brunt of any invasion. It was the Sodomites and the like had drawn forth those swords from their scabbards. What a contrast between Exod. xiv. and 1 Kings xiv. Israel, who then "saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore," now feels the grip of Pharaoh at his throat, and the iron of Pharaoh in his soul.

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

**Vers. 21—24.—The Sin of Judah.** Having discoursed of Jeroboam and the kingdom of Israel, the sacred historian now returns to Rehoboam and the sister kingdom of Judah. To have found a better state of things here would have been refreshing, but in this we are disappointed. How fearful was the moral state of the whole world in those days!

**I. JUDAH HAD FALLEN INTO THE GROSSEST IDOLATRY.** 1. *He had multiplied high places.* (1) High places were not necessarily for idolatry. They were proper to the worship of the true God in patriarchal times. (2) Even after God had chosen Jerusalem to put His name there, the patriarchal use of high places was upon special occasions sanctioned by Him (see ch. xviii. 38). (3) In Judah there was little need for these, since the extremity of the kingdom was not very remote from Jerusalem. The distance to Beersheba would be about forty British statute miles. (4) But the high places of Judah were mainly designed for idolatry. Hence their association in the text with “images and groves” and rites of Sodomites and other Canaanitish abominations. 2. *He had built many temples.* (1) The term (מַצֵּבוֹת) here translated “images” is elsewhere commonly rendered *pillars* (see Gen. xxviii. 18; xxxi. 51; xxxv. 20; Exod. xxiv. 4; Isa. xix. 19). It is far from evident that this word is ever used for any image or figured thing. In places where it is construed “images,” *pillars* would give as good sense (see Exod. xxiii. 24; 2 Kings x. 26, 27). Marginal readings bear this out (see Deut. vii. 5; xvi. 22). (2) It is probable these pillars were distributed in ranks, as those of the Druids at Stonehenge and Abury, to serve as temples in which the powers of the material heavens were worshipped. 3. *He had enshrined idols in these.* (1) The *Asherim* (אֲשֵׁרִים) are here evidently misrendered “groves;” for how could groves be planted “under every green tree”? (See Homily on vers. 15, 16, *supra*.) (2) They were idols apparently in figure like goats. For Jeroboam “ordained him priests for the high places and for the devils (טֹעֲמִים) goats,” and for the calves which he had made” (2 Chron. xi. 15). Here we have no mention of *Asherim*; of *goats*, however, we have mention. But when Josiah destroyed these things, there is mention of the *Asherah*, but no mention of the *goat* (compare 2 Kings xxiii. 15). The *Asherah* destroyed by Josiah appears, then, to be the goat which Jeroboam had set up. (3) These *Asherim*, or *Asheroth*—for they appear to have been male and female idols—were supposed to convey blessings to their worshippers, and hence their name (from אָשַׁר to proceed, to bless). 4. *His idolatry was attended with shocking rites.* (1) They were the very abominations for which the land had spewed out the Canaanites as with abhorrence (see Levit. xviii. 28; xx. 22, and contexts). (2) Conspicuous amongst these were the Sodomites, whose orgies were intimately connected with the *Asherim*, and to encourage which the women wore hangings (see 2 Kings xxiii. 7). How fruitful in inventions is the wickedness of the heart! (Eccles. vii. 29.)

**II. FOR HIS DEGENERACY HE WAS WITHOUT EXCUSE.** 1. *He had Jerusalem for his capital.* (1) This was the city chosen of God out of all the tribes of Israel to put His name there. The temple of Jehovah was there, and the Shekinah of Jehovah was in it. (2) Every appliance for acceptable worship was there at hand. The altars were there; the priesthood was there; the appointed assemblies, festival and ferial, were there. (3) They sinned, therefore, “before the face of the Lord,” as in His very presence. Even more so than Israel, who could not now claim Jerusalem for his capital, though he was still bound to go there to worship. Let us remember that God is ever near us; this thought will restrain our trunancy. 2. *He had a son of David for his king.* (1) The mother of Rehoboam, indeed, was an Ammonitess. This is emphatically (twice) mentioned. She was one of those strange women who had turned the heart of Solomon from the right way. The abomination of her country was Milcom or Molech, whose rites were most ferocious and demoralizing. (2) But against these influences were noble traditions on the other side. His father, in the beginning of his reign, was illustrious in

wisdom and zeal for the God of Israel. The memories of his grandfather were glorious. To this must be added the most material circumstance that the Covenant was with his house; for Messiah Himself was to be the Son of David. (3) These things were not without their influence. For three years after the revolution under Jeroboam, Rehoboam governed Judah in the fear of God, and so established his throne (see 2 Chron. xi. 17). (4) When, after this, Rehoboam "forsook the law of the Lord," his subjects should have dissuaded him and, if necessary, resisted him. But they went "with him" (2 Chron. xii. 2). (5) To such excesses did they go that they "sinned above their fathers in provoking the Lord to jealousy."—J. A. M.

Vers. 25—31.—*The Entailments of Sin.* During the three first years of his reign in Judah, Rehoboam walked in the steps of Solomon and David, enjoyed peace, and became established in his throne. Afterwards he gave himself up to idolatrous abominations, and brought evil upon himself and upon his people. The entailments of their sin were—

I. TROUBLE. 1. *There was continual war between the kingdoms.* (1) While they remained faithful to God they had peace. God interposed to preserve peace by the hand of Shemaiah (ch. xii. 21—24). (2) But when they forsook the Lord, they soon got to strife, which continued as long as the kings lived (ver. 30). This strife was also handed down to their successors. (3) Thus sinners become God's instruments to punish one another. So it is seen to this day in the contentions and litigations of individuals. Men are slow to see the hand of God. 2. *Shishak aggravated the mischief.* (1) The influences which brought him upon the scene may be discerned. Hadad, who occasioned so much trouble to Solomon, was Shishak's brother-in-law. Shishak was thus disposed to give asylum to Jeroboam when he fled for his life from Solomon. Shishak now conspires with Jeroboam to ruin Rehoboam. (2) The array brought against Judah by Shishak was formidable (see 2 Chron. xii. 3). It would have been crushing had not Rehoboam and his people, in their extremity, humbled themselves before God (2 Chron. xii. 7). (3) But they still had to feel the smart of their sins.

II. FORFEITURE. 1. *In war there is always loss.* (1) Necessarily there is the forfeiture of peace. Who can estimate the value of peace? Perfect peace is the resultant of perfect harmony as the white light is composed of all the colours in the iris. (2) There is the loss of property. Labour is the source of wealth: the labour withdrawn from industry to wage war is so much loss of wealth. The soldier also is a consumer. When he does not provide for his own sustenance, the labour of others must be taxed to feed him. (3) There is the loss of life. War is seldom bloodless. Often the slaughter is fearful. Wellington is reported to have said that the calamity next in severity to a defeat is a victory. 2. *Shishak despoiled the temple of its treasure.* (1) The booty here was enormous. The spoils of David's victories were there; also the accumulations of Solomon's peaceful commerce. (2) The shields of gold that Solomon had made are particularly mentioned. It is added that Rehoboam had brazen shields made to replace them. How sin reduces the fine gold to brass! 3. *Shishak also rifled the palace.* (1) The treasures here also were immense. Perhaps there never was such plunder as this in human annals. (2) Rehoboam handed down a diminished inheritance to his son. By his folly he alienated ten tribes of his nation from his kingdom. Abijam likewise succeeded to a kingdom greatly impoverished. He became heir also to embroilments. The entailments of sin pursue the spirit into the invisible world. Forfeiture. Trouble.—J. A. M.

Vers. 21—31.—*Unfaithfulness and its rebuke.* I. JUDAH'S SIN. 1. *The nature of the transgression.* The grossest idolatry was set side by side with the pure worship of God. The temple and its services were still His (ver. 28), but on every high hill and under every green tree were the images and altars of the false gods. The preservation of the pure worship of God is no proof that all is yielded which God demands. The heart may be full of the world's idolatries, of its covetousness and lust and manifold sin. 2. *Its enormity.* (1) It was wrought in Jerusalem,

“the city which the Lord did choose,” &c., and this, too, in the face of the defection of the ten tribes. It is high treason against Jehovah when those whom He has called and honoured are faithless to the trust committed to them. It is the darkest crime against God and man to betray the last earthly refuge of the truth. (2) It was done after an interval of repentance and religious zeal (2 Chron. xi. 17; xii. 1). They had known and yet forsaken the better way. (3) Their idolatry was more unrestrained and daring than any that Israel had ever known (ver. 22). 3. *Its fruits* (ver. 24). Errors in worship become vices in life. The soul that is cut off from the fountain of life must needs break out into corruption.

II. JUDAH'S CHASTISEMENT. It inflicted deep humiliation and loudly proclaimed God's indignation. 1. *It was inflicted by an old and beaten foe.* Their temple songs, celebrating the ancient triumph over “Rahab,” must have deepened their shame. 2. *The holy city and the temple itself were spoiled.* God loathed their holy things. We need not marvel that rationalism and infidelity are rampant in a faithless, worldly Church. It is God's way. Israel's idolatry is punished by Egypt's triumph. 3. *It left its mark in enduring poverty* (vers. 26—28). The splendour passed away from the royal pomp, and doubtless also from the temple service. The nation and Church which Egypt has spoiled, whose faith has been shaken by doubt, or swallowed up in unbelief, have lost their strength and glory. They are but the shadows of what a true and pure faith once made them.—J. U.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER XV. 1—24.

#### THE REIGNS OF ABIJAM AND ASA, KINGS OF JUDAH.

##### *The Reign of Abijam.*

Ver. 1. — Now in the eighteenth year of king Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, reigned Abijam [see note on ch. xiv. 31. It is implied in 2 Chron. xi. 20—22 that he was not the first-born among Rehoboam's twenty-eight sons, but the eldest son of the favourite wife. As he left behind him thirty-eight children (2 Chron. xiii. 21) at his decease, some three years later, he must have been of considerable age at his accession. This consideration rather favours the idea that Rehoboam was “forty and one years old when he began to reign” (ib., xii. 13)] over Judah.

Ver. 2.—Three years [The Alex. LXX. says *dekateē*, sixteen. The “three years” are not to be interpreted strictly. As he ascended the throne in the eighteenth and died in the twentieth year of Jeroboam's reign, he cannot have completed three years. But it does not follow that “he cannot have reigned much more than two years” (Rawlinson, and similarly Keil). He may have reigned all but three] reigned he in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Maachah [in 2 Chron. xiii. 2 called *Michaiah*, Heb. *Michajahu*. That the same person is meant is proved as well by the context as by 2 Chron. xi. 21, where the name is given as here. Keil (cf. Dict. Bib. ii. 162) ascribes the discrepancy to an error of the copyist; but the names are so unlike in the original as to discountenance this assump-

tion. I venture to suggest that *Michajahu* was the significant form—the word means “Who is like Jehovah?”—which the name Maachah, “oppression,” borne by the Geshurite princess who married David (2 Sam. iii. 3) assumed when she joined the Lord's people, and embraced, as no doubt she would do, the religion of Jehovah. Such a change would be quite in accordance with the genius and traditions of the Semitic races (Gen. xvii. 5, 15; xxx. *passim*; xxxii. 28; xli. 45; Exod. vi. 3, &c. Cf. 2 Kings xxiii. 34; xxiv. 17; Hosea i. 4, 6), and there may well have been special reasons in this case, apart from the piety of David, why it should be made. For the name Maachah appears to have been taken from the town and district of that name near Geshur—a part of Syria was called *Syria Maachah* (1 Chron. xix. 6; cf. 2 Sam. x. 6—8). In 2 Sam. xx. 14, 15 we read of a district of *Beth Maachah*—and it not improbably witnessed to unhappy memories. How natural it would be that David's bride should take a name of better omen and of a religious import, and how natural that the grand-daughter who bore her name should be called by that name in both its forms. Since writing the above, I find that a somewhat similar idea has occurred long since to others. Both Kimchi and Jarchi hold that she had two names. It is supposed by some that she assumed the name *Michaiah*, as more dignified, on becoming queen. Wordsworth thinks that *Michaiah* was her real name, and that it was degraded into Maachah when she was deposed for idolatry. This latter view dovetails with the one suggested above. It

would be quite in accordance with Jewish usages and habits of thought that the name which had been changed into *Michaiah* when the grandmother became a proselyte, should be changed back into *Maachah* when this princess apostatized], the daughter [rather, grand-daughter. מַאֲכָה includes all female descendants, as מִנָּה (see ver. 10) all ancestresses] of Abshalom. We can hardly doubt that Absalom, the son of David, is meant here. We have (1) the express statement of 2 Chron. xi. 21, "Rehoboam loved Maachah, the daughter of Absalom," &c. (2) The fact that two of Rehoboam's other wives were of the family of David, which shows that it was part of his policy to marry the daughters of that house. (3) The mother of Absalom was named Maachah (2 Sam. iii. 3). (4) The name is so uncommon—in fact, it is *ἄπαξ λέγεται*—that another person can hardly be intended. Moreover, the variation in spelling is extremely slight. It has been held, however, that a different person is designated by the name, principally because Absalom had but one daughter whose name was Tamar (2 Sam. xiv. 27), whereas Abijah's mother is said to have been the daughter of Uriel of Gibeah (2 Chron. xiii. 2). But this difficulty admits of an easy solution. Tamar was doubtless married to Uriel, and Maachah was the fruit of this marriage. And with this explanation agrees the account of Josephus (Ant. viii. 10, 1).

Ver. 3.—And he walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him [sins, *i.e.*, from the theocratic standpoint. See ch. xiv. 22, 25. It does not appear that either Abijah or Rehoboam was a vicious man, and from his pious language on Mount Zemaraim (2 Chron. xiii. 10—12) we should certainly have thought that Abijah was a god-fearing prince. But ver. 13 proves that he had sanctioned idolatry, and this was no doubt his principal sin, as the next words explain]: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord and his God, as the heart of David his father [the words used of Solomon, ch. ii. 4].

Ver. 4.—Nevertheless [ἔτι *but, sed, sondern*, Gesen. 393] for David's sake did the Lord his God give him a lamp [Better than margin, *candle*. The word is "always used figuratively of progeny." See note on ch. ii. 26; and of 2 Sam. xxi. 17; Job xviii. 5, 6; Psa. xxxii. 17] in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him, and to establish Jerusalem [But for David's piety, that is to say, his family would have been dethroned, if not destroyed, as was that of Jeroboam (1 Kings xiv. 10), of Baasha (ch. xvi. 2), of Ahab (2 Kings x. 11), &c. Abijah was

the third prince of that line who had permitted idolatrous worship, so that that dynasty had richly deserved to forfeit its position. The stability of the family of David on the throne for nearly 400 years, amid all the changes and chances of that period, and whilst in Israel there were "nine changes of dynasty within 250 years" is, as Rawlinson remarks, very "difficult to account for on mere grounds of human reason"]:

Ver. 5. Because [בְּשָׂא, here causative for 'N בְּשָׂא. Comp. *quod*] David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from anything that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. [2 Sam. ii. 4. But this last clause is not found in the LXX., and such a statement was more likely to be inserted by transcribers, having first appeared in the margin as a gloss, than to be omitted, had it ever formed part of the text. And in support of this view it may be alleged that (1) the matter of Uriah was by no means David's only sin, and (2) it is not the manner of our writer thus to qualify his words. See next verse.]

Ver. 6.—And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all the days of his life. [Practically identical with ch. xiv. 30, where see note. Thenius thinks the insertion of the words were due to the carelessness of some copyist, and Bähr admits that our present text is possibly not the original one. For Rehoboam, some MSS., with the Syriac and Arabic, read *Abijah*, but this is clearly an emendation, which in turn begets another repetition (ver. 7), and there is really no need either to alter or suspect the text. Such repetitions are quite in accordance with Eastern usage, and Rehoboam here stands for the house of Rehoboam, or the cause and kingdom which Rehoboam represented. The object of mentioning his name can hardly be "to remind the reader that Abijah inherited this war from his father" (Rawlinson), for it was only on Rehoboam's death that the slumbering hostility blazed out into actual war. That there was warfare between Abijah and Jeroboam we know not only from ver. 7, but from 2 Chron. xiii. 3—20 also.

Ver. 7.—Now the rest of the acts of Abijah and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles [see note on ch. xiv. 29. The marginal reference to 2 Chron. xiii. misleads the casual reader] of the kings of Judah? And there was war [not only hostility, but open war (Vulgate, *praelium*), hence the repetition] between Abijah and Jeroboam.

Ver. 8.—And Abijam slept with his fathers; and they buried him in the city of David [This fact alone should negative Lightfoot's theory as to his name; see note on ch. xiv. 31]: and Asa his son reigned in his stead.

*The Reign of Asa.*

Ver. 9.—And in the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel reigned Asa [Gesén. interprets the name to mean "physician"] over Judah. [This reign is related at much greater length in 2 Chron. xiv.—xvi. We are there told of the Ethiopian invasion, of the prophecies of Azariah and Hanani, of the league with Syria, &c.]

Ver. 10.—And forty and one years reigned he in Jerusalem [Corn. à Lapidé points out that Asa saw eight kings of Israel on the throne, Jeroboam, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Tibni, Omri, and Ahab]. And his mother's [or grandmother's, as margin] name was Maachah, the daughter of Abishalom. [The same words as in ver. 2, and the reference can hardly be to a different person. Bähr indeed questions whether אִשָּׁלֹם can here stand for grandmother, (1) because in every other case it designates the king's mother, (2) Because the mother of the king, and not the grandmother, enjoyed the dignity and position of *Gebirah* (ver. 13; 2 Chron. xv. 16). Some would read for Abishalom, *Uriel of Gibeah*; others, strengthened by the *Michaiah* of 2 Chron. xiii. 2, think the historian mistaken in mentioning the name of Abijam's mother (ver. 2; 2 Chron. xi. 21) as *Maachah*. The difficulty by no means admits of a ready solution, but perhaps the best explanation is that the grandmother, Maachah, Rehoboam's favourite wife, retained her position, possibly by force of character, or because Asa's mother was dead. It is not certain, however, that if the latter had lived she would have displaced Maachah, of whose influence and imperious temper we have several indications; e.g., in the appointment of her son, though not the first-born, to succeed his father, and in her open maintenance of idol-worship, and above all in the fact that she was publicly deposed by Asa.

Ver. 11.—And Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did David his father. ["It is a wonder how Asa should be good, of the seed of Abijam, of the soil of Maachah" (Hall).]

Ver. 12.—And he took away the Sodomites [see on ch. xiv. 24, and Rom. i. 23—27. It appears from ch. xxii. 46 that this abomination was not wholly suppressed] out of the land, and removed all the idols [אֱלֹהִים] from בְּזֵזָה *vobis*. A term of contempt (see

Deut. xxix. 17, where it is coupled with "abominations;" Ezek. xxiii. 37); but whether the word is to be interpreted by בְּזֵזָה a ball of dung, in which case these idols (*Dei stercorei*) would have a designation like Beelzebül ("the lord of dung"), or with בְּזֵזָה a heap of stones (Gen. xxxi. 46, 48), *Dei lapidei*, is uncertain. Keil would translate *logs*, Gesenius *trunks*, *stocks*, which from being rolled might well bear this name] that his fathers had made.

Ver. 13.—And also Maachah his mother, even her he removed from being queen [Rather, *queen-mother*. *Gebirah*, as already pointed out on ch. ii. 19, answers to the *Sultana Valide*. The Vulgate reads, *Ne esset princeps in sacris Priapi*. Wordsworth reminds us of the position which the queen-mother Atossa holds in the *Persæ* (vers. 159—850). A queen consort is hardly possible in a polygamous household; see Kitto, iv. 177] because [Heb. *which*, as in ver. 5] she had made an idol [אֱלֹהִים] from בְּזֵזָה *terruit*, signifies an object of fear, *formido*—not *pudendum*, a thing of shame, as the Rabbis and others have held, i.e., a phallic image (*simulacrum obscœrum*, Jerome), but *horrendum*. The devout Jew could not but regard such objects with horror] in a grove [Heb. *for* (i.e., to serve as) an *Asherah*. See note on ch. xiv. 15, 23. *Asherah* is not the name of the goddess (= *Astarte*), as Wordsworth thinks, but of the image], and Asa destroyed [Marg. *cut off*, Heb. simply *cut*, which here must mean *cut down*. The image was, no doubt, planted erect in the ground] her idol [horror, as above], and burnt it [this shows that it was made of wood] by the brook Kidron. [Cf. Exod. xxxii. 20. Here, as in ch. xvii. 3 (where see note), our translators have been unable to adhere strictly to the original "in the brook," &c.,

from not knowing that בְּרֵזָה, which primarily means "brook," also means "watercourse," *wady*. It is probable that the brook was at this time flowing, and that the ashes of the wooden *Asherah* were cast into it; but the burning also took place in the *Wady*, or valley. We read of another similar burning in 2 Kings xxiii. 4, 6; but in this case the ashes were either carried to Bethel or cast upon the graves, to defile them. It is a fair inference that on this latter occasion the Kedron was dry. The valley, "the fields of the Kedron" (ver. 4 *l.c.*), is conveniently placed for such a purpose.]

Ver. 14.—But the high places [evidently such as are referred to in ch. iii, i.e., unauthorized shrines of Jehovah; cf. 2 Kings xiv. 4] were not taken away [lit., *de-*

parted not. Yet we read in 2 Chron. xiv. 3, that Asa "took away the high places (cf. ver. 5). But it is clear, even from 2 Chron. xv. 17, that *all* of them were not removed, and the discrepancy arises from the well-known Eastern idiom of putting the whole for the part, of which we have instances in Gen. vii. 19; Exod. ix. 25, &c. Cf. ver. 32; 2 Kings xix. 35, and see below. Asa probably aimed at removing all, and he may have removed all out of the *cities* (2 Chron. xiv. 5), but some remained in the country districts or in remote places. Or he may have swept them away for a short time, and they may have been stealthily and gradually re-introduced. It may be interesting to remark here that down to the present day the *cultus* of the high places exists—under a modified form, it is true—in Palestine. Every traveller will remember the *Mukâms* which crown almost every hill. The religion of the Fellahin, though nominally Mohammedan, is really, like that of China, a worship of the dead. "In almost every village of the country a small building, surmounted by a whitewashed dome, is observable, being the sacred chapel of the place; it is variously called *Kubbah*, "dome," *Mâzor*, "shrine," or *Mukâm*, "station," the latter being a Hebrew word, used in the Bible for the places of the Canaanites (Deut. xii. 2). . . . Just as in the time of Moses, so now the position chosen for the *Mukâm* is generally conspicuous. . . . This *Mukâm* represents the real religion of the peasant" (Conder, pp. 304 sq.): nevertheless Asa's heart was perfect with the Lord all his days. [We have here a notable instance of the Oriental exaggeration just referred to. For the very same expression is used by the chronicler (2 Chron. xv. 17), who in the next chapter (ch. xvi. 7—12) tells us of Asa's unfaithfulness in his old age.]

Ver. 15.—And he brought in the things which his father had dedicated [Heb. *the holy things of his father*. These were probably the spoils Abijah had taken in his war with Jeroboam (2 Chron. xiii. 18)], and the things which himself had dedicated [These were probably the spoils of the Ethiopians (2 Chron. xiv. 15; cf. xv. 11)], into [the Hebrew omits this word. Keil says that "house" is an accusative governed by "brought"], the house of the Lord, silver, and gold, and vessels.

Ver. 16.—And there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days. [This statement must be compared with 2 Chron. xiv. 1, 6, from which we gather that during the first ten years of Asa's reign there cannot have been war, properly so called, between them. Indeed, it would seem from 2 Chron. xv. 19, xvi. 1, that it

was not until the 36th year of Asa's reign that it first broke out. But these numbers have clearly not escaped corruption (see note there), as at the date last mentioned Baasha must have been dead (cf. ver. 33 below). It is probable that war is to be taken here, as elsewhere (cf. xiv. 30), in the sense of hostility, and in any case we have here another instance of the hyperbolic habit of the Eastern mind.]

Ver. 17.—And Baasha, king of Israel, went up against Judah [This statement probably refers to the reconquest of the three cities which Abijah had taken from Jeroboam (2 Chron. xiii. 19), as Ramah could hardly have been rebuilt whilst Bethel remained in the hands of Judah], and built Ramah [Heb. *the Ramah*, i.e., "the elevation," or "high place." Now *er Râm* (=the height), in Benjamin (Josh. xviii. 25; Judg. xix. 13, 14), five miles distant from Jerusalem, near the frontier of the two territories, and also then, as now, on the great north road. It was the key, consequently, to both kingdoms. Hence the struggles to possess it, vers. 21, 22; 2 Chron. xvi. 1, &c.], that he might not suffer any to go out [Heb. *not to give any going out*, &c.] or come in to Asa, king of Judah. [The object of Baasha in fortifying this place is evident. It was not merely to have an advanced post as a menace to Jerusalem (Rawlinson), but primarily, by its command of the high road, to prevent his subjects from falling away to the kingdom of Judah, or even from going up to Jerusalem to worship; in fact, to isolate Judah and to blockade its capital. That there was a great defection to Asa at this time we know from 2 Chron. xv. 9. This was an exodus which Baasha felt must be checked. Blunt ("Coincidences," pp. 176—8) has happily shown from 2 Chron. xvi. 6, &c., how the primary object must have been to "stop the alarming drainage of all that was virtuous out of their borders." Rawlinson sees in the fortification of this place "the first step towards a conquest of the southern kingdom." But as to this the text is silent, or rather it assigns an entirely different reason.]

Ver. 18.—Then Asa took all the silver and the gold that were left [LXX. *ὅ ἐπέθην*, which Rawlinson thinks points to a corruption of our text. He says, "The Jewish treasures should now have been tolerably full," because (1) of the long peace (2 Chron. xiv. 1—6), and (2) the "very much spoil" they had taken from the Ethiopians (*ib.*, ver. 13). Compare ver. 15 above. But the historian has in mind the depletion of the treasury by Shishak (ch. xiv. 26). It is true there was nothing

"left" on that occasion, but the treasures since accumulated are referred to under this term. It may be the phrase is not strictly accurate, but the LXX. reading looks suspiciously like an emendation] in the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house, and delivered them into the hand of his servants: and king Asa sent them [cf. 2 Kings xvi. 8. For this act of faithlessness he was reproved by Hanani the seer (2 Chron. xvi. 7): "O Asa, where was thy piety, while thou robbedst God to corrupt an infidel for the slaughter of the Israelites?" (Hall)] to Ben-hadad ["the son of the sun" (see note on ch. xi. 23)]. Three kings of Damascus at least bore this name, viz., this king, his son (ch. xx. 1), and the son of Hazael (2 Kings xiii. 24)], the son of Tabrimon [the name means, *Good is Rimmon*, as to which deity see note on 2 Kings v. 18], the son of Hezion [by some identified with Rezin (ch. xi. 23), but on insufficient grounds] king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus ["The centre of the Aramaean power west of the Euphrates" (Ewald)], saying,

Ver. 19.—There is a league [Rawlinson would render, "Let there be a league . . . as there was," but the A.V. is equally good. Asa claims that a league does exist, and, in fact, has never been broken] between me and thee, and between my father and thy father [Syria would seem to have been the first of the possessions of Solomon to regain its independence (ch. xi. 24)]. Its friendship would naturally be sought by Judah, as a counterpoise, perhaps, to the alliance between Israel and Egypt (Ewald): behold, I have sent unto thee a present [elsewhere a *bribe*. Psa. xv. 5; xxvi. 10; 1 Sam. viii. 3] of silver and gold; come and break [Heb. *come, break now*, ἵ cohortative] thy league with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me. [Heb. *go up from upon me*.]

Ver. 20.—So [Heb. *and*] Ben-hadad hearkened unto king Asa, and sent the captains [or *princes*; same word as in ch. xxii. 31; cf. xx. 24] of the hosts which he had against the cities of Israel, and smote Ijon [now represented by *Tell Dibbin*, a mound near the north end of the *Merj 'Ayin* (which probably preserves the name), a "meadow of fountains," a few miles north-west of Dan. This hill would offer a commanding site for a stronghold, and traces are found there of a large and ancient city (Robinson, iii. p. 375; Diet. Bib., i. p. 863), and Dan, [near the northern extremity of Palestine (ch. iv. 25; 1 Sam. iii. 20, &c.)] Now certainly identified with *Tell el Kadi* the "hill of the Judge" (which preserves the *meaning* of the name), near the main source of the

Jordan. The Tell, apparently an extinct crater, is covered with ruins. Stanley, S. and P., p. 395—6. Thomson, "Land and Book," i. p. 320. Van de Velde, ii. p. 420. The situation is described as superb, and the country as extremely fertile. This is the last mention of the place in Scripture. Retribution has soon fallen on one of the centres of Jeroboam's schism, and Abeldeth-maachah [now known as *Abil el Kamh* (Robinson, iii. p. 372; but see Stanley, S. and P., p. 390, note 6; Thomson, i. p. 324. Rawlinson argues from 2 Sam. xx. 14 that there were originally *two* towns, but ver. 15 leads us to question the present text of ver. 14. Ver. 19 shows it to have been a place of considerable importance. In 2 Chron. xvi. 4. it is called *Abel Maim*, "the meadow of the waters," not only, it is probable, because of the lake, but of the huge marsh, the *Ard el Huleh*, which drains into it (see Stanley, *l.c.*) All these towns are in the neighbourhood of Lake Huleh (Merom), and all being in the extreme north, bore the brunt of the invasion. The name *Maachah* is to be noticed in connection with ver. 2], and all Cinneroth [in Num. xxxiv. 11; Deut. iii. 17, *Cinnereth*; in the New Testament, *Gennesaret*."] "The expression 'all Cinneroth' is unusual, and may be compared with 'all Bithron,' probably like this, a district and not a town" (Grove, Diet. Bib., i. p. 330). It is the district on the western shore of the lake of Galilee, north of Tiberias, which gave its name to the adjoining sheet of water. A city Chinnereth, perhaps the capital of the district, is mentioned Josh. xix. 35], with [𐤆𐤃 not uncommonly has this meaning. Cf. Gen. xxxii. 12 (Heb.), "the mother *with* the children;" Exod. xxxv. 22, "men *with* women."] all the land of Naphtali [Not only were the fortresses of Naphtali just mentioned smitten by the Syrians, but they laid waste all the surrounding district.]

Ver. 21.—And it came to pass, when Baasha heard thereof, that he left off building of Ramah [He could not prosecute it when he had enemies on every side. He at once assumes the defensive], and dwelt in Tirzah. [Ch. xiv. 17. He retired to his capital. It is not implied that he had entertained the idea of dwelling at Ramah.]

Ver. 22.—Then king Asa made a proclamation [Heb. *made all to hear*] throughout all Judah; none was exempted [Heb. *none free*], and they took away [Heb. *took up*] the stones of Ramah, and the timber thereof, wherewith Baasha [It is noticeable that it is generally "king Asa," but never "king Baasha"] had builded; and king Asa built with them Geba of Benjamin

[Sometimes "the Geba," *i.e.*, height; in Josh. xviii. 24, *Gaba*; now *Jeba*, only 45' north-east of Ramah. This was the northern limit of the southern kingdom (2 Kings xxiii. 8). It occupied a striking position, standing on a rocky knoll on the south side of the great gorge of Michmash (now known as the *Wady Suweinit*), a "great crack or fissure in the country, with vertical precipices some 800 feet high" (Conder, p. 254; cf. Dict. Bib., i. p. 658 and Porter, i. p. 214). As Geba would command the pass, it is easy to understand why Asa fortified it, the more so as this defile "appears to have been more than once the meeting-place between the Jews and their enemies" (Conder)], and Mizpah. [Heb. *the Mizpah*, *i.e.*, *watch-tower* (Gen. xxxi. 49). The name points to an eminence, but it is remarkable that while so many sites of minor importance have been recovered, this old gathering-place of the tribes (Judg. xxi. 1; 1 Sam. vii. 5; x. 17—25), and the seat of Gedaliah's government (Jer. xl. 6), cannot be identified with certainty. It has been conjectured that it is now represented by the commanding eminence of *Nebi Samuil* (Robinson, ii. p. 328; Van de Velde, ii. p. 53), but Stanley (S. and P., ii. p. 213—4) and Grove (Dict. Bib., ii. p. 389) argue in favour of Scopas, and "the survey has done little to throw light on this question" (see Conder, pp. 257—9). It is to be hoped that the "pit," or well, which Asa made (Jer. xli. 9), probably "to provide Mizpah with a plenti-

ful supply of water in case of a siege" (Ewald), may yet be brought to light.

Ver. 23.—And the rest of all the acts of Asa, and all his might [see 2 Chron. xiv, xv.], and all that he did, and the cities which he built [during the peace in the earlier part of his reign (2 Chron. xiv. 5, 6)], are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? Nevertheless [Heb. *only*. There was one exception to his otherwise happy and prosperous reign] in the time of his old age [see notes on ch. i. 1; xi. 4. "Old age" means here, as there, the end of life. Asa cannot well have been more than fifty. It was in the 39th year of his reign (2 Chron. xvi. 12) that this disease attacked him] he was diseased in his feet. [It is generally supposed that this disease was the gout. In the Chronicles (*l.c.*) he is reproached for seeking "not to the Lord but to the physicians." We must remember what the art of medicine at that day was like (see Kitto, "Daily Bib. Illus.," iv. 195 sqq.), and that the Jews regarded sickness and healing as alike the *immediate* acts of God.

Ver. 24.—And Asa slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers ["in his own sepulchre which he had made for himself" (2 Chron. xvi. 14, which also notices "the bed filled with sweet odours," in which he was laid and the "very great burning" made for him)] in the city of David his father: and Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his stead.

## HOMILETICS.

**Vers. 11—26.**—*The Reign of Asa.* Though this prince reigned forty and one years—a longer period than any of his predecessors, and, with two exceptions, a longer period than any of the kings who came after him—yet his reign, so far as it is recorded here, may be summed up in few words. "Happy is the nation," it has been said, "which has no history." But happier still the nation whose history, like that of Judah in the time of Asa, may be comprehended under these two heads—*internal reforms, and external discipline.*

**I. INTERNAL REFORMS.** Two questions present themselves for consideration here. First, What were Asa's reforms? Secondly, In what way were they accomplished?

1. His reforms were practically of two kinds: (*a*) *Moral*, and (*b*) *Religious*. It is not implied that he either put morality before religion, or believed that the one could be separated from the other. It may be a question in these days—it is at least hotly disputed—whether morality can long support itself without a religious basis and religious sanctions; but it was no question in that dark age, or for many hundred years afterwards. Then it was a choice between the one true religion and the most shameful immoralities practised under the name of religion. All that is meant here, therefore, is that Asa's reforms resulted in purging and raising the tone of public morality by suppressing the idolatry which sanctioned and consecrated impurity.

(1) *The moral reformation* is suggested to our minds by the words "He took away the Sodomites out of the land" (ver. 12). What an abyss of corruption does this one brief sentence reveal to us. "It is a shame even to speak of those things

which" were "done of them in secret" (Eph. v. 12). And this among the holy people, the bride of the Lord! No wonder that Asa's first effort was directed against these horrible enormities. This suppression of the Sodomites was a first step towards—

(2) *The religious reformation.* He next "removed all the idols that his fathers had made." "His fathers." Solomon, as well as Rehoboam and Abijah. Probably none of the three had himself reared idol shrines. But all the three had, to say the least, permitted idolatry, and connived at it. It was sin enough that they had not vigorously and promptly suppressed it. They were, each in his turn, the representative of the mighty God of Jacob. What were they doing that they permitted any rivalry between the bestial gods of the heathen and the Holy One of Israel? But probably we see here the bitter fruits of Solomon's sin—so true it is that "the evil that men do lives after them." When that powerful prince had once granted to foreign deities and shameful superstitions a footing in Immanuel's land, it was more than his comparatively feeble successors could do to dislodge them. The people loved to have it so, and neither Rehoboam nor Abijah was strong enough to say them nay. Thus did Solomon, down to Asa's days, yes, and down to the time of the captivity (2 Chron. xxxvi. 14), go on sinning in his grave.

And let us notice here an instructive contrast between Asa and Solomon. It was the wise king, the most magnificent of the monarchs of the earth, at the height of his prosperity, and towards the end of a long and peaceful reign, built altars for the abominations of neighbouring nations. It was a young prince, unknown to fame, with no special gifts or endowments, with a restricted dominion, and encompassed with difficulties, who was the first to stem this tide of sin and shame with which his great ancestor had flooded the land. "The first last, and the last first." Compare 1 Cor. i. 27—29. Wealth has greater dangers than adversity.

2. But let us now consider the way in which these great reforms were brought about.

(1) *He began at the right place.* "Even Maachah his mother he removed," &c. The *Gebirah*, the first lady in the land, whose conduct would of course be an example to all the women of his realm (Esther i. 17, 18), was deposed from her lofty station. The history of Israel shows repeatedly how the country took its tone, as indeed every country must do, more or less, from the court. It is not only in dress that the queen sets the fashion. The Japanese have a striking proverb, "Fish begin to stink at the head." If the court be corrupt, profligate, irreligious, the commonalty will soon follow suit, for we all imitate our superiors. In this sense is that word true, *corruptio optimi pessima*. It would consequently have been of little use for Asa to put down idols elsewhere had he tolerated them in the harem, the nursery of his successors. This hydra could not be slain by hewing its feet, or piercing its body; it was only mortal in its *head*. Maachah's "horror" must be destroyed or idolatry will live and flourish. Moreover, in beginning with her, Asa shows that he appraised aright the power of female influence. He might have realized that those who "rock the cradle, rule the world." The sinister influence of the harem had ruined Rehoboam; it should not ruin Jehoshaphat. Here, again, let us mark the contrast between the conduct of Asa and that of Solomon; between the cases of Maachah and Naamah. Solomon built idol altars for his wives: Asa burnt the idol of his mother. The strong king was brought into subjection by weak and foolish women; the weak king humbled and degraded the proudest and strongest woman of her time. The former could not resist the blandishments of one of his many foreign mistresses when she petitioned for the gods and rites of her native country; the latter was deaf to the entreaties of his mother when she prayed to retain, not her idol, but her place. It must have cost him an effort to deal with the queen-mother who had exercised so great an influence in former reigns. It has been said that the devil often "comes to a man in the shape of his wife and children" (J. Hinton), and truly a man's real foes are not unfrequently those of his own household. Just as their flattery is the most insidious and mischievous (Whately), so are their faults too often considered venial, and their sins, when manifest, are the hardest to reprove (cf. ch. i. 6; 1 Sam. iii. 18). These are the

“hand” and the “eye,” which cause men to offend, and which they must cut off or pluck out and cast from them (Matt. v. 29 sqq.) Hence the charge of Deut. xiii. 6 sqq.; cf. Matt. x. 37.

And the moral effect of this act, the public deposition of the queen-mother, can hardly be over-estimated. It showed the country that the king was in real earnest; that he was no respecter of persons; that no idolatry could expect tolerance at his hands. Probably but for this he could neither have taken away the Sodomites nor removed the idols. Possibly it was because neither Rehoboam (see 2 Chron. xi. 21) nor Abijam dared to deal with the idolatries of Maachab, who would seem to have been a woman of imperious will, that these foreign superstitions had defiled the land so long. Asa struck at their root in removing her from being queen.

(2) *He did not stop half-way.* He destroyed “with both hands earnestly” (Micah vii. 3). He not only cut down her idol, he burnt it in the valley of the Kedron. There was no place left her for repentance. He had burnt his ships behind him; had destroyed the nests, so that the rooks might not return. This public burning, witnessed, no doubt, by crowds of spectators, spoke louder than any words or ordinances could do. When they saw the “horror” reduced to ashes, and the ashes cast into the brook, they could have no doubt as to the purpose of their king. They would remember how Moses had acted before (Exod. xxxii. 20).

(3) *He did what he could.* It is no reproach to him that “the high places were not removed” (ver. 14), for the chronicler (chs. xiv. 5; xv. 12, 13, 17), as well as our author, testifies that this was no fault of his. “His heart was perfect all his days.” He did what in him lay, and his service was accepted accordingly (2 Cor. viii. 12). “The fleetest horse cannot escape from its tail.”

(4) *His reformation was followed by a restitution.* It was not merely destructive, as too many so-called reforms have been. (1) He gave up to the sacrists of God the silver and gold he had taken from the Ethiopians. It was his happiness to restore to it some of the treasure of which it had been denuded in the reign of Rehoboam. (Observe: When idolatry came in, the treasures went out of the land. When idolatry was expelled, prosperity returned. Godliness has the promise of the life that now is.) His, consequently, was no cheap reform. He offered of that which cost him something (2 Sam. xxiv. 24). He might have converted his spoil into drinking vessels of pure gold (ch. x. 21), but he surrendered it to the service and keeping of the Most High. (2) He induced his people to dedicate *themselves* anew to the Lord (2 Chron. xv. 12 sqq.; cf. 2 Cor. viii. 5). This was the crown and blossom of his reformation. “They swore unto the Lord with a loud voice.”

And, as the fruit of this righteous policy, we find that he enjoyed, for a part of his reign at least, (1) *quietness* (2 Chron. xiv. 1), “The Lord gave him rest” (ver. 6)—the effect of righteousness is quietness and assurance (Isa. xxxii. 17); (2) *prosperity* (ver. 7), and (3) *growth*, in the shape of a large accession of God-fearing, law-abiding subjects. “They fell to him out of Israel in abundance when they saw that the Lord his God was with him.” Not all the numerical superiority of Israel, not all its fruitful territory, availed against the attraction of a realm, in one sense a rival kingdom, where respect for God’s law promised security, liberty, and peace.

But let us now observe that these reforms and this courageous piety did not exempt him from—

II. **EXTERNAL TROUBLES.** The quiet only lasted ten years. His fenced cities did not save him from invasion. He had to encounter, first, the invasion of Zerah (2 Chron. xiv. 9), and secondly, the aggression of Baasha (1 Kings xv. 17). He may have been tempted to think when that overwhelming host of swart barbarians marched against him that his piety profited him nothing. He may have argued, when he saw the fortress of Ramah threatening his very capital—the city God had chosen to put His name there—that God made no difference between the righteous and the wicked, between His faithful people and the calf-worshipping Israelites. But observe: both these troubles were really blessings in disguise. Afflictions and adversities may be either punitive or disciplinary. Solomon’s were of the former, Asa’s of the latter class. For (1) when Asa had learned his own weakness, and learnt whither to look for help (2 Chron. xiv. 11)—lessons both of them of singular blessed-

ness—the Lord smote the Ethiopians. This invasion resulted in the enrichment of the country. The spoil was enormous. And the victory ministered, not to pride, but to piety (*ib.*, xv. 8). (2) The only result, so far as we know, of the menaces of Baasha was that that king drew upon himself an invasion of Syrians (in which it is to be observed, Dan, one of the seats of the calf-worship, was smitten), and Asa gained two fortresses as a protection against future inroads (ver. 22). It is true that Asa betrayed a want of faith in taking the consecrated gold and silver wherewith to bribe the northern barbarians (2 Chron. xvi. 7, 8), and that he was chastised for the deed (ver. 9), but, all the same, his generally “perfect heart” was rewarded by more than deliverance. If he ever cried with Jacob, “All these things are against me,” he must have subsequently exclaimed with Joseph, “Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good” (Gen. 1. 20). His troubles must have taught him this lesson, “Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all” (Psa. xxxiv. 19).

And so we see in the dangers and assaults which this reformer underwent proofs of the loving discipline of God—trials intended for *his* reformation and for the chastening of his country. It is difficult at first sight to see how so brutal and hateful a thing as war can ever be for the good of any people, especially when we remember that a “victory is the next worst thing to a defeat.” But those have some reason on their side who tell us that war is the purgatory of nations, and that battles in the moral are something like thunderstorms in the physical world. There are victims in either case—what hecatombs of victims in some cases—but the atmosphere is all the clearer afterwards. The campaign of Zerah probably taught him and his people to bridle their ambition, and to leave their neighbours alone; it certainly taught Asa and Israel to trust in the Lord and to cling closer to Him. They learned that “Providence does” *not* “always help the biggest battalions”—that everything turns on the blessing of God.\* They proved the truth of that promise, “Five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight,” &c. (Levit. xxvi. 8). Psalm xx. might have been penned with reference to this war. It certainly breathes the spirit of that time. “*Deo adjuvante*”—this is its keynote. And this, too, is the burden of Asa’s prayer (2 Chron. xiv. 11), of Azariah’s prophecy (*ib.*, xv. 2 sqq.), of Judah’s praises (vers. 12, 14, 15).

It has been remarked that in the history of the covenant people we may see portrayed the trials, deliverances, &c., of the covenant soul (Kebble). And certainly the prosperous reign of Asa is a picture of what a truly Christian life involves. Happy are those whose lives, in their main features, may be thus characterized: “Internal reforms,” “external discipline.” The three things which, Luther said, made the minister also make the man, “Prayer, meditation, and temptation.” The idols must be utterly abolished by “the expulsive force of a new affection;” “the horror,” the fear and horrible dread that possesses the unreconciled, must be cast out by perfect love; “everything that defileth” must be consumed by its ardent flames; the heart must be “dedicated,” and then the loving correction of God will do the rest, and after we have suffered awhile, in the battle of life, in the chamber of sickness (ch. xv. 23), will **make us perfect** (1 Peter v. 10), and grant us “quietness and assurance for ever.”

Ver. 22.—*Church and Dissent.* The building and subsequent demolition of Ramah—its building by Baasha to check the defection of his subjects to the southern kingdom and the Jewish Church; its removal by Asa in order that the highway to Judah and the temple of Jerusalem might be open to returning schismatics—this incident may serve to introduce a comparison between the kingdom of Asa and the kingdom of Christ; or rather, the history and relations of the *two* kingdoms of Palestine after the schism may suggest some thoughts as to the proper attitude and relations of the Catholic Church towards her separated children.

And that our view of those relations, so far as it is disclosed to us by this history,

• “In Gottes Scgen ist alles gelegen.”

may not be partial and incomplete, it is proper that we should begin the survey, not with the accession of Asa, but some two decades earlier; in fact, with the commencement of the schism. And we may learn—

I. THAT IT IS NOT TO BE WONDERED AT THAT HERESY SHOULD BE STRONG AND AGGRESSIVE. Ten tribes worshipped the calves; only two were faithful to the Lord. Jeroboam's novelties carried "all Israel" away after them. Even so "the churches of Jerusalem, Alexandria, Antioch, and Rome have erred" (Art. xix.) Donatists, Montanists, Arians, Apollinarians—how many were the sects of the first days! And now, out of the two hundred millions of Christendom, how many are there whom with the profoundest sorrow we must pronounce either heretical or schismatical. And no wonder, for

"The search for truth is not one half so pleasant,  
As sticking to the views we hold at present."

Most of our schisms have had their origin in pride and emulation; most of our heresies spring out of our corrupt human nature. It is every way pleasanter to choose among doctrines than to take them as revealed by God.

II. THAT THERE MUST, NEVERTHELESS, BE NO FIGHTINGS AMONGST CHRISTIANS. The armies of Judah were solemnly forbidden to attack those of Jeroboam (ch. xii. 24). Though a host of near two hundred thousand armed men had mustered for battle, yet they must "return every man to his house." They were reminded that the children of Israel were their "brethren," and that the division in the kingdom—not that in the *Church*—was ordained of God. A special messenger is entrusted with a special revelation (ver. 22) to prevent the unseemly spectacle of brethren, the children of the same Father, meeting in the shock of battle. And observe that, though there was undoubtedly war at a later period between the divided branches of the Hebrew family (ch. xiv. 30; xv. 6, 16, &c.; 2 Chron. xiii. 3), yet it is by no means certain that these wars ever had the Divine sanction. Observe, too, that hostility and antagonism, short of actual organized warfare, is here described as "war" (ch. xiv. 30, note). Now may we not justly infer—what, indeed, is certain on other grounds—that, whatever their heresies, there must be no *hostilities* between the divided sections of the Christian family? There have been "wars and fightings" amongst them, it is true, but this is against the will and prayer of their head (John xvii. 21; xiii. 35; cf. 1 Cor. i. 11; xi. 18; James iv. 1). For they are "brethren" (Matt. xxiii. 8) by a much closer bond than were the Jews. Spiritual ties are far more real and binding than those of flesh, of mere matter (Matt. xii. 48, 49; Rom. xvi. 13; Titus i. 4; Philem. 10). And if it was unseemly and unnatural for Jew to lift up hand against Jew, how much more for members of the same body (Eph. v. 30; Rom. xii. 5), professors of the same gospel of love? And not only the hand, but the tongue. There must be no stabbing and wounding of brethren by words any more than by swords. "There is nothing," says Whiehote, "more unnatural to religion than contentions about it." Christians have fighting enough to do without falling upon each other. There are the common enemies of the Christian life—the world, the flesh, and the devil. There are the enemies of the faith, the hosts of devilry, and uncleanness, and unbelief, and indifference. It is well when disputing about "modes of faith" that we should remember that there are untold millions of men still worshipping cows and even demons. It is well, too, that we should consider that we are none of us infallible, and may easily confound friends and foes. It has been justly said that many of our disputes are like that midnight conflict at Syracuse, where each party mistook the watchword of the other, and all was hopeless confusion (Stanley.) We must "contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered," &c., it is true, but there are two ways of doing that. "It is not the actual differences of Christians that do the mischief, but the mismanagement of those differences" (P. Henry). "Nous avons eu assez de *polémique*," said a French ecclesiastic; "il nous reste à avoir un peu d'*irenique*."

III. THAT THERE MUST BE NO SACRIFICE OF TRUTH OR COMPROMISE OF PRINCIPLE FOR THE SAKE OF CONCILIATING HERETICS. Asa, like Rehoboam, was only too glad

to welcome deserters from Jeroboam's Church and kingdom; his action with respect to Ramah proves that. But neither of them ever thought of accommodating the worship or polity of Jerusalem to suit the wishes or prejudices of the schismatic Israelites. To neither of them did it occur to allow that calf-worship was right worship; neither would admit that there was any true Church but that of Judah, or any sanctuary but that of Jerusalem; neither could or would recognize the orders or ministrations of Jeroboam's man-made priests. In fact, it would have been impolitic, as well as unfaithful, to have done so. It was because Judah was true to its convictions, and consistently repudiated the schism, and stood resolutely on the old paths, that such numbers of pious Israelites came over to its side. Even so now, nothing but harm can come of sacrificing one iota of principle for the sake of the union of Christendom. We may be branded as illiberal and bigots if we ask for the credentials of every *soi-disant* minister of Christ; if we deny the name of "Church" to each of the manifold sects and societies of human origin; if we repudiate an inorganic Christianity, a religion of mere emotionalism. But all the same, we have no right to exercise a spurious charity and to give what is not ours; we have no right to surrender one jot of Catholic truth for the sake of conciliating outsiders. That would be indeed to "make a solitude and call it a peace." In that way our religion might soon be watered down so that truth and life and efficacy would all be gone, and the thin residuum would be stale, flat, and unprofitable. Only the infidel could ultimately gain by such a process. Our answer, then, to the separatist must be this: "All that thou desirest of me I will do, but this thing I may not do." Deeply as we desire unity, we dare not purchase it at such a price. "*Amicus Plato, amicus Socrates, sed magis amica veritas.*"

IV. THAT THERE MUST BE NO CALLING IN THE AID OF UNBELIEVERS AGAINST SEPARATED BRETHREN. This was done more than once in Jewish history, but the result was always disastrous. If Jeroboam called in the aid of Shishak against Rehoboam, he suffered himself, as we have seen (note on ch. xiv. 25), from the Egyptian invasion. Nor was Asa's appeal to Ben-hadad less ill-advised. In the first place, it betrayed a lack of faith in God; then (2) he had to rob the Lord's treasury of the gifts he had recently dedicated thereto; and (3) the bands of Syria, having once tasted the sweets of conquest, were ever afterwards threatening or ravaging (chs. xx., xxii.; 2 Kings v. 2; vi. 8, &c.) the Holy Land. Asa's son, Jehoshaphat, found it necessary, as he thought, to join forces with those of Israel against this very power which Asa invoked. And how often have Christians pursued the same policy. How often have the armies of the Ottomans, *e.g.*, been employed by Christians against Christians. The cannon by means of which Constantinople was taken were cast by Christian engineers. For four centuries have Mussulman legions been largely officered by Christian renegades, and recruited from Christian lands—Albania, Wallachia, &c. The "unspeakable Turk" has only been tolerated in Europe because of the divisions of Christendom. And is not the same thing being done in another way at the present time? There are Christians who think it right to make common cause with atheists, secularists, &c., against their brethren. If the example of Asa (2 Chron. xvi. 7—9) is not decisive against such a proceeding, surely that of Jehoshaphat (*ib.*, xix. 2) and Amaziah (*ib.*, xxv. 6—10) prove that we should neither help, nor seek help from, the ungodly. The result of such alliances, as Asa found to his cost, will be, "From henceforth thou shalt have wars." The mercenaries we have hired against one another will end by doing battle against all who bear the Christian name. The Britons who called in the Saxons to their aid presently found their new allies settled in their homes and themselves driven forth into the wilderness.

V. THAT NO OBSTACLES MUST BE RAISED IN THE PATH OF REUNION. That this should be done by the separatists need cause us no surprise. Baasha could not afford to have the highway to Judah open. His occupation would be gone if the breach were healed and the nation or the Church again became one. And, alas! there are similar "vested interests" in the perpetuation of division amongst Christians. But just as it was Asa's care to pull down the frontier fortress of Ramah, just as the stones and timber were carried away bodily by the labour of all his

subjects, so should it be the great concern of the Church and of every Christian to remove the barriers which separate those for whom Christ died. The national Church, for example, should be as wide and comprehensive as possible. Sects must of necessity have narrow and restricted boundaries; for their *raison d'être* is almost invariably to be found, not in the propagation of error, but in the assertion of some forgotten or neglected truth, which they have made their *peculium*, and treat as if it were the sum total of revelation to the neglect of the "proportion of faith." But why should we multiply our tests and articles of membership? The Apostles' Creed was thought to embody everything of necessity to salvation in the first age of the Church; and when at a later period truth had become mixed with error, the Nicene symbol was still the only test of the Christian layman. Why should it not be a sufficient test of Catholicity now? Why must we refine and define, and so make intercommunion almost impossible?

"Must it be Calvin, and not Christ?  
Must it be Athanasian Creeds,  
Or holy water, books, and beads?  
Must struggling souls remain content  
With councils and decrees of Trent?"

It is partly because we have built Ramahs round our Zion that our schisms are so many. We have insisted on forcing our shibboleths on those who could not receive them, forgetting that, however true any dogma may be in itself, still, if it is not of necessity to be believed, and we make it an essential part of our system of doctrine, it may straightway become a source of discord and division. There are many such barriers and obstacles of our own creation—sometimes in the shape of practical abuses—which require to be removed, and no Christian should be "exempt" from the work of "building silver bridges for flying enemies and golden bridges for returning friends."

VI. THAT, INSTEAD OF RAISING BARRIERS BETWEEN BRETHREN, WE SHOULD STRENGTHEN OUR DEFENCES AGAINST THE COMMON ENEMY. The stones and timber of Ramah, Asa used to build Geba of Benjamin and Mizpah. Thereby the road to Jerusalem was left open to friends, whilst these two fortresses commanded it against foes. Against Baasha, if he would wage war against his kinsmen; against the Assyrian at a later date (Isa. x. 23, 29). And is there no lesson for Christians here? Too often they are fighting amongst themselves about the "infinitely little"—about the date of Easter, about unleavened bread, about the "five points," about lights and vestments, about wafer bread, or about unfermented wine in the Holy Communion—while the enemy is marshalling his forces. Intemperance, sensuality, devilry in every form, are destroying the Church's children by thousands, and her watchmen the while are fencing with each other. The siege of Jerusalem (Jos., Bell. Jud. v. 1) is reproduced amongst ourselves. The enemy is thundering at our gates, and the Church is paralyzed by factions. We keep raising barricades in the streets of Zion whilst hostile legions are swarming on the adjoining heights. We have our Geba, our Mizpah to build, and we perversely build Ramahs instead.

VII. THAT A HOUSE DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF CANNOT STAND. First Samaria, then Jerusalem fell before the enemy. Christianity is now comparatively powerless for aggressive purposes; indeed, it hardly keeps pace with the population; and its enemies are asking how much longer it can stand on its defence. *Divide et impera*, thus have many empires fallen. True, the Catholic Church cannot perish, but national Churches have fallen again and again. There has been some talk amongst the Brahmins of sending a mission to England. And we may see in France, in Germany, a foreshadowing of what is in store for us here. "The class which has recently attained supreme political power is alienated from Christianity in its present forms." Are the Church and the sects alike to be broken up one by one? Or shall we lay aside our "fratricidal dissensions," and combine against the legion of foes—Atheism, Agnosticism, Socialism, and the rest? Of one thing we may be sure, that as long as our "unhappy divisions" last we shall never win England, much less the world, for Christ.

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

**Vers. 1—8.**—*The succession of Abijam to the throne of Judah appears to have had one limiting principle, viz., that the successor should be of the house and lineage of David* (see 2 Chron. xiii. 8). Within this limit it seems—

**I. IT WAS DETERMINED BY THE WILL OF THE REIGNING KING.** 1. *The principle of primogeniture was not considered.* (1) Else Abijam could not have ascended the throne: for he had elder brothers, sons of Mahalath and Abihail, and we know not how many besides (see 2 Chron. xi. 18—21). (2) These were deliberately set aside by the choice of the king. The reason given for that choice is arbitrary. Rehoboam “loved Maachah, the daughter of Absalom, above all his wives,” and therefore he “made Abijah, the son of Maachah, the chief ruler among his brethren: for he thought to make him king” (2 Chron. xi. 22, 23). (3) For this he had precedent. We have no proof that Rehoboam was not the only son of Solomon; but Solomon was a younger son of David (see 2 Sam. iii. 2—5; xiii. 13, 14), and was preferred before his elder brethren upon the designation of his father (see ch. i. 13, 32—35). 2. *Abijam represented Rehoboam by walking in his sins.* (1) He recognized the God of Israel. This he did formally in his address to Jeroboam before engaging him in battle (see 2 Chron. xiii. 4—12). So did Rehoboam recognize the God of Israel (see 2 Chron. xii. 10—12). (2) “But his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father.” David never followed idols; but Rehoboam forsook not the sins of Solomon, and Abijam forsook not the sins of Rehoboam. (3) Their mixed worship was like that of the Samaritans of later times, who “feared the Lord and served their own gods” (2 Kings vii. 32). If this was not worshipping other gods “before the Lord,” it was worshipping them “beside Him” (see 2 Cor. vi. 16). Yet—

**II. THE CHOICE OF REHOBAM HAD THE DIVINE SANCTION** (ver. 4). 1. *Primogeniture, therefore, cannot plead Divine right.* (1) Else would not God have set aside the choice of Rehoboam in favour of his elder son, or rather, of the representative of the elder son of David? (2) David himself was a younger son in the family of Jesse. And if we go back to earlier times, Judah, a younger son, was preferred before Reuben, in the family of Jacob. Jacob himself was chosen to the prejudice of Esau, and Isaac before him to the prejudice of Ishmael. (3) God had His own reasons for confirming the election of Rehoboam, which, however, were different from those which moved the king. 3. *God had respect to His servant David.* (1) “Because David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord.” He had no complicity with idolatry, but worshipped the one true God with pure delight. When away from the courts of the Lord he longed for them with vehement desire. What a worthy example! How it rebukes the half-day worshippers of modern times! (2) He failed only “in the matter of Uriah.” That was a foul blot. How sad so grand a life should have been so darkly blurred! (3) Yet “his heart was perfect with the Lord his God.” For he heartily repented of that sin, and was forgiven (see 2 Sam. xii. 13; Pss. xxxii. 1—5; li.). God giveth liberally and upbraideth not. 3. *Therefore for David's sake Abijam reigned.* (1) “That he might always have a lamp”—a man of his line. Abijam was a son of David by an unbroken male descent, and also by a female descent. “His mother's name was Maachah, the daughter of Abishalom.” *Abishalom* is written “Absalom” in 2 Chron. xi. 21. Maachah was the daughter of Absalom as Abijam was the son of David, viz., as being descended from him. Her father's name was “Uriel of Gibeah,” who appeared to have married a daughter of Absalom, who left no son (2 Chron. xiii. 2). She bore the name of her grandmother, who was “Maacah, the daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur” (2 Sam. iii. 3). (2) Christ is the true lamp of David (see Psa. cxxxii. 17). For His sake the line of David must be preserved. (3) The lamp, too, must shine in Jerusalem. “God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem, to set up a son after him, and to establish Jerusalem.” The Redeemer must come to Zion, there to turn away iniquity from Jacob. So before the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, and

the family of David had lost their genealogics, Jesus came and became an expiatory sacrifice for sin.—J. A. M.

**Vers. 9—15.—Reformation.** The moral condition of Judah was fearful when Asa came to the throne. The apostasy of Solomon had inaugurated a retrogression which was aggravated in the reigns following, so that for three generations the abominations of the heathens were increasing. The condition of Israel was even worse, under the system introduced by Jeroboam, to which the successors of that monarch tenaciously held. When the Holy Land was in such a state of degeneracy, what was the condition of the world at large! There was, therefore, the greatest need for reformation.

**I. OF THIS ASA BECAME THE SUBJECT AND SPECIMEN.** Reformations have ever been inaugurated by individuals who have embodied and exemplified their principles. Witness Luther in Germany, Knox in Scotland, &c. Such also was Asa. 1. *He "did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord."* (1) To do right in the eyes of the world is praiseworthy. For wicked men "know better;" and they have keen vision to discover inconsistencies in professors of religion (see Phil. ii. 15: 1 Pet. ii. 11—15). (2) To do right in the eyes of good men is a higher commendation. They have a purer light, and consequently a finer appreciation of moral qualities. Things which the world will allow they cannot approve. (3) But to do right in the "eyes of the Lord" is the highest praise. He reads the heart—surveys the motives—requires "truth in the inward parts." What a searching vision shall we pass under in the day of judgment! If that vision approve us now we shall then have nothing to fear. 2. *In this he is compared with David.* (1) David never followed idols. The one blur of his life was the matter of Uriah, of which he heartily repented. Who amongst us has nothing to repent of? (2) David's loyalty to God was sincere and fervent. What a warm spirit of piety breathes in the Psalms! Are they not, even in our gospel age, a fine vehicle for spiritual worship? (3) David was a prophet. This Asa was not. He had the grace, not the gifts, of the founder of his house. Gifts are not equally within the reach of all; graces are. 3. *Such commendation was eminently creditable to Asa.* (1) He stands out in remarkable contrast to his father. Abijam was wicked; Asa was good. The influence of the father was vicious; the son resisted it and was virtuous. (2) Asa's mother seems to have died early, for Maachah, the daughter of Absalom, who was his grandmother, is here mentioned as his mother. Under the influence of Maachah, Abijah developed badly; notwithstanding that evil influence Asa developed well. (3) We must not ignore, but fully recognize, individual moral responsibility. The will cannot be compared to a pair of scales which is mechanically moved by weights.

**II. OF THIS ALSO HE BECAME THE INSTRUMENT.** This is God's order (1 John i. 3). What he felt he tried to promote. 1. *Beginning with his own house.* (1) He removed the idols which his father had made. He felt especially bound to do this in order to cut off the entail of sin from his house. (2) He frowned also upon the idolatry of his grandmother. "She made an idol in a grove" (*כִּמְפִלְצֵת לְאִשֶׁרָה*) a glory for an Ashere. The word is used for *terribleness* or *majestic glory* Jer. xlix. 16. Setting an image in the cloud of glory was setting it on an ark or chariot of cherubim to be worshipped. (See Psa. l. 3, where *נִשְׁעָה* is used for the cloud of glory about Jehovah.) Asa demolished this *nimbus*, or glory, together with the Ashere, or idol, and probably threw the ashes into the Kedron in contempt (compare Deut. ix. 21; 2 Kings xxiii. 12; 2 Chron. xv. 16). (3) Furthermore, he removed Maachah from being queen (dowager). He thus merited the commendation of Levi (see Deut. xxxiii. 9; see also Math. x. 37). 2. *Then influencing the nation.* (1) He removed the Sodomites out of the land. What prosperity can there be in any state where public immorality is tolerated by the magistrates? (2) He destroyed the high places of idolatry with their altars and idols, in the country and in the cities (see 2 Chron. xiv. 3, 5). (3) The high places used in the worship of Jehovah after the fashion of the patriarchs, he spared. For this he is but lightly censured;

to have limited the ordinances of public worship to the temple would have been the more excellent way. (4) He encouraged the worship of Jehovah (see 2 Chron. xiv. 4). Not by precept only, but by example also. He dedicated to the Lord the things which his father had vowed, but either neglected to pay or died before he could carry his purpose into effect. Also the spoil which he himself had taken from the Ethiopians (see 2 Chron. xv. 11, 12). Where the heart of God's people is loyal the treasures of His house will be full.—J. A. M.

Vers. 16—24.—*The War Policy of Asa.* “Forty and one years reigned he in Jerusalem” (ver. 10). The evil kings of Judah were about as numerous as the good, but their reigns were shorter. “The wicked do not live out half their days.” But though the reign of Asa was long and glorious, his war policy with Baasha was not creditable.

I. THE OBJECT WAS RIGHT. 1. *The war was provoked by the enemy.* (1) Baasha was the aggressor (ver. 17). War is such a fearful evil that whoever provokes it is greatly culpable. (2) Therefore on Asa's part it was defensive. If human war is ever defensible it is when defensive. 2. *It was provoked by impious intention.* (1) Asa had set his heart upon the reformation of true religion, in which he was blessed by God with peace and prosperity (2 Chron. xiv. 1—7). (2) The more pious Ephrathites were attracted in great numbers to Jerusalem to join in the pure worship of the temple; and the reformation was influencing the northern kingdom (2 Chron. xv. 9). (3) Baasha now feared, as Jeroboam did when he set up his calves (ch. xii. 26—28), that his people would return to the house of David. To prevent this he proceeded to fortify the frontier town of Ramah (2 Chron. xvi. 1). (4) This was to coerce the Ephrathites to transgress the law of God (see Deut. xii. 11; xiv. 23—26; xvi. 2). To resist this persecution was as pious in Asa as the persecution was impious in Baasha.

II. THE MEANS WERE WRONG. 1. *They were human.* (1) Asa did not rely upon the Lord. This was the less excusable since God had wrought such signal deliverance for him from the vast multitude of the Ethiopians (see 2 Chron. xiv. 9—15). What was the host of Baasha compared with that army? (2) He did not even inquire of the Lord. Had God sanctioned his recourse to Ben-hadad then had he been blameless. (3) Though in other particulars he had listened to the advice of Azariah, the son of Oded, with blessed advantage, yet in this he had disregarded that advice (see 2 Chron. xv. 1, 2). 2. *They were unworthy.* (1) What right had he to engage a heathen to fight with his brethren? (2) What right had he to bribe a heathen to break his covenant (ברית *purification*) with Baasha, in which the blood of sacrifice had been sprinkled to express his *purity* of intention, as we now take the sacrament? What opinion could the heathen form of the religion of one who could offer a bribe for such a purpose? (3) What right had he to take the treasure of the temple for such a purpose?

III. THE SUCCESS WAS PARTIAL. 1. *The end was answered.* (1) The Syrians attacked Israel in the north. The news of this drew Baasha away from Ramah (vers. 20, 21). (2) This gave Asa the opportunity to demolish the fortifications in progress so as to open the road Baasha sought to close. He also removed the material so that the road might be kept open. (3) The material was useful to him in building Geba of Benjamin and Mizpah. 2. *But the price was too great.* (1) He missed an opportunity of spoiling the Syrians as he had spoiled the Ethiopians. This fact is revealed, though by what means Providence purposed to have brought it about is not disclosed (2 Chron. xvi. 7). (2) The treasures of the temple and of the palace were therefore needlessly alienated. (3) His brethren in “Ijon, and Dan, and Abel-beth-Maachah, and all Cinneroth,” or Gennesaret, “with all the land of Naphtali,” were exposed to the horrors of the Syrian invasion. The heart of Israel would be alienated from Asa in consequence, and the reformation hindered. (4) Asa's own heart became hardened, else he would not have imprisoned Hanani, and oppressed some of his people (who probably sympathized with the prophet). (5) And he inherited the judgment of wars to the end of his days. Also a disease in the feet, respecting which he sought to “physicians rather than the Lord” (2 Chron. xvi. 10, 12).

Note: Asa's blunders followed upon his prosperity. Few abide this test. Loss of spirituality and religious zeal accompanies the growing worldly prosperity of churches!—J. A. M.

Vers. 1—8.—“*Beloved for the father's sake.*” I. THE STORY OF A MISUSED OPPORTUNITY. Even in a three years' reign much might have been done. Israel had its troubles, the past its lessons of wisdom; but there was no ear to hear the one, and no heart to attempt redress of the other. 1. *The secret of failure.* (1) *He was content with things as he found them.* It is not said that he introduced any new idolatries: “He walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him.” The sin and responsibility of those who continue to walk in the paths of sinful, though general and time-honoured, customs, and who do not forsake the idolatries and iniquities of their fathers. (2) *His love was not set upon God.* The worship of Jehovah was still continued. Abijah had experienced the signal mercy of God (2 Chron. xiii.) His heart might have been won, but it “was not perfect with the Lord his God as the heart of David his father.” There was no thirsting after God, no delight in the sense of the favour which is life, and the loving-kindness which is better than life. The love of God the only source of work for God. 2. *The sinful was also a troubled reign:* “there was war,” &c., and it was war with brethren. 3. *The opportunity was soon ended:* “he reigned three years.” Opportunities abused may be soon removed. The life which sin has marred death may swiftly seal.

II. A RIGHTEOUS LIFE AN UNDYING POWER WITH GOD. “For David's sake did the Lord his God give him,” &c. Our good does not die with us or with our generation. The memory of it dwells, and prevails, with God. 1. The sinful king has a son to succeed him, and one whom God directs and blesses. 2. The city is preserved and the flood of evil driven back—“to establish Jerusalem.” God's promises, our prayers, and our purposes are alike remembered. They bloom amid our dust. Our love and loyalty to God will fall in blessing upon ages yet to come.

III. SIN LEAVES ITS STAIN ON THE FAIR RECORD OF A RIGHTEOUS LIFE. “Save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.” God will not wink at or cloak our iniquity. Is there any matter of which thou and all will hear when the books are opened? If there be, is it not a call for humiliation and for prayer?—J. U.

Vers. 9—24.—“*Zeal without trust.*” AN OPPORTUNITY RECOGNIZED AND USED. The need of the time was manfully met. Brought up in an idolatrous home, he nevertheless saw that this sin was sapping the foundation of the nation's stability and strength, and he set himself to root it out. 1. *The land was cleansed from filthy abomination,* from legalized, and even sanctified, sin (“And he took away the Sodomites,” &c.) The nation that legalizes sin will reap corruption and shame; that which suppresses it by righteous enactment will pass up into purity and strength and truest glory. 2. *He put down idolatry with unflinching faithfulness.* He “removed ALL the idols which his father had made.” “And also Maachah his mother, even her he removed from being queen,” &c. Neither reverence for the dead nor fear of the living was suffered to stand in the way of his obedience to God. It is easy to condemn sin in the abstract. It is hard to stand face to face with him who is its servant and say, “Thou art the man.” Is our faithfulness after the pattern of Asa's? 3. *His failure was one of ability, not of will* (ver. 14). We may not be able to accomplish all we desire, or that is needful, but if our heart be “perfect with the Lord” all is well. 4. *He did not keep back the Lord's portion.* The “silver and gold and vessels,” which his father and he himself had vowed, were brought into the Lord's house. His faithfulness was shown *in what he gave* as well as in what he condemned.

II. THERE MAY BE ZEAL FOR GOD WITHOUT PERFECT TRUST IN GOD. The man of action is not always a man of prayer. 1. *Baasha's attempt* (see 2 Chron. xvi. 7, &c.) The danger was great, but to the politician there seemed a way out of it. He was not shut up to God's help, as in the invasion by the Ethiopian king, and therefore God was not sought. (1). Forsaking the path of trust, he entered the

crooked ways of worldly policy. He bribed Ben-hadad to break faith with Baasha. How often is self-help stained with meanness and unrighteousness! (2) God does not always forsake His people when they forsake Him. Asa's plan succeeded. The fortress that was being built against him became two for him. If unbelief was so blessed, what mercies might have crowned faith! 2. *The disease which embittered his latter days.* "Nevertheless in the time of his old age he was diseased in his feet." Here, again, his faith was tried and found wanting. "In his disease he sought not to the Lord but to the physicians" (2 Chron. xvi. 12); and he found no relief. There is a limit to God's forbearance even with His people. How much is there of our weakness and trouble and distress over which the words are written, "Ye have not, because ye ask not" 1—J. U.

**Ver. 14.—Religious sincerity.** A beautiful flower often springs from the midst of corruption. The more we realize the moral condition of Asa's surroundings the more we wonder at the grace which made him what he was. His father was Abijam (or Abijah), the second king of Judah, of whom it is said, "He walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him." His education appears to have been entrusted to Maachah, his grandmother, a daughter of Absalom the rebel, and herself a gross idolatress. The remembrance of these facts makes the statement respecting this young prince the more surprising—"Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did David his father." An independent spirit and a resolute will must have been coupled with his piety. [Show from this the possibility of triumphing over the most adverse circumstances by those who sincerely seek to serve God.] It is not, however, to his manly resolution, to his vigour, or to his political wisdom that our attention is specially called by the text, but to his RELIGIOUS SINCERITY.

**I. RELIGIOUS SINCERITY ASSERTS ITSELF IN REFORMING ZEAL** (vers. 12, 13). It was only twenty years since the death of Solomon, yet irreligion and vice had corrupted the nation. Evil spreads more rapidly than good in a fallen world. The deadly fungus springs up in a night, the fruit-tree grows slowly to perfection. A half-hearted or timid man would have been content to worship Jehovah himself, and thus silently rebuke the idolatry of his people; but Asa, being an earnest man, could not content himself with any *laissez faire* principle. With a strong hand he would put down evil wherever he could reach it. Often in God's sight to leave evil alone, unrebuked, and uncombated is to share the guilt of those who commit it. It is the spirit of Cain, and not of Christ, that asks, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Asa's reforming zeal contains lessons to rulers, to employers, to parents, indeed to all who can mould the circumstances of others. See, therefore, how it made itself felt. 1. *Opportunities for sin were diminished.* Ver. 12 implies that there were those in Judah who made a traffic of vice. Corrupt themselves, they corrupted others. There are places in Christian cities which should be swept away by the strong hand of law. 2. *Incentives to sin were destroyed.* The idol referred to (in ver. 13) is literally "the horror." The obscene rites connected with its cultus will not bear investigation. Suffice it to say that this so-called worship provoked to vice of the most hideous kinds. Against provocations and incentives to sin how earnestly should parents guard their children, and masters and mistresses their servants. Impure literature is in the forefront of these; not only that which offends by its grossness, but that which secretly stains by its suggestions. 3. *Influences for sin were removed.* Sometimes vice is made popular by leaders of fashion or of policy. The unrighteousness of a clever man, the impurity of a leader in society are woefully far-reaching in their effects. Maachah, the queen-mother, was one of the most potent in Asa's court, was his near relation, his early instructress; yet, with as much wisdom as courage, "he removed her from being queen," and destroyed her idol publicly and shamefully. It might be said that he was indebted to her, that she was aged and should be respected, or that she could not live long, and might therefore be tolerated. Such pleas would not avail with a man whose "heart was perfect with the Lord." (Apply this.)

**II. RELIGIOUS SINCERITY PROCLAIMS ITSELF BY CONFIDENCE IN GOD.** This con-

fidence was at the heart of Asa's courage. Read our text in the light of the fuller history of the king (given in 2 Chron.), and see how his confidence displayed itself.

1. *He found rest in God in peril.* Many adversaries would be raised by a reformation which was ruthless in its rigour. Idolatrous priests, the party led by Maachah, &c., would rebel; but Asa was not perturbed. God was his refuge and strength.
2. *He offered prayer to God in his difficulty.* As an example read 2 Chron. xiv. Describe the incursion of the Ethiopian host, and this prayer of the king, "Lord, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O Lord our God, for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude." A victory followed which was unique in the history of God's people. Conquest waits on prayer in every struggle with evil.
3. *He consecrated himself and his people to God after their deliverance* (see ver. 15, and compare with it 2 Chron. xv.) He renewed the covenant, and afresh dedicated all he possessed to the Lord. So he deserved the high commendation, "Asa's heart was perfect with the Lord all his days." It remains yet to be observed that—

III. RELIGIOUS SINCERITY MAY BE ASSOCIATED WITH IMPERFECT SERVICE. *He failed to remove the high places.* This Hezekiah and Josiah did. To leave them was to provide a way of return to the idolatrous practices he had put down. Beware of leaving lesser sins unconquered, after victory has been attained over grosser crimes.—A. R.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER XV. 25—XVI. 28.

THE REIGNS OF NADAB, BAASHA, ELAH, ZIMRI, AND OMRI, KINGS OF ISRAEL.—After bringing up the history of the kings of Judah, which has engaged his pen since ch. xiv. 21, to the date of the death of Asa, our author goes back some forty years to record the contemporary history of the kingdom of Israel, with which the rest of this book, the last thirteen verses alone excepted, is occupied. On the other hand, none of these reigns are even noticed by the chronicler, who only refers to the history of Israel, so far as it is inextricably connected with the object of his work; in other words, so far as is necessary to explain or illustrate the reigns of the kings of Judah.

Ver. 25.—And Nadab [= *liberal*] the son of Jeroboam began to reign [Heb. *reigned*] over Israel in the second year of Asa king of Judah, and reigned over Israel two years. [The reigns of these five kings of Israel are related with great brevity. It was not the object of the author to chronicle secular history—for this he refers us to "the books of the days"—he is only concerned with the events of their reigns in so far as they relate to the kingdom of God.]

Ver. 26.—And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father [Jeroboam begat all his sons, save one, "in his own likeness"], and in his sin

wherewith he made Israel to sin. [*I.e.*, not the rebellion, but the schism (chs. xii. 30; xiv. 16; cf. vers. 30, 34; xvi. 2, 13, 19, &c.; see Homiletics, p. 274). All the successors of Jeroboam, it is clear, either thought themselves compelled, by the exigencies of their position, to adhere to his ecclesiastical policy, or found themselves more and more entangled in its toils.]

Ver. 27.—And Baasha the son of Ahijah [not the prophet of that name (ch. xiv. 2), who was an Ephraimite, whereas this Ahijah was], of the house of Issachar [This fact is perhaps mentioned to distinguish the father of Baasha from the prophet. Or it may owe its insertion to the insignificance of this tribe (Gen. xlix. 14, 15) up to this date. This change of dynasty, unlike the last, was in no way connected with tribal jealousies. Baasha owed his elevation to his own abilities or to his unscrupulous daring, conspired [The word implies associates. There was a plot formed for Nadab's assassination] against him; and Baasha smote him at Gibbethon [= *eminence*. In the tribe of Dan (Josh. xix. 44) and a Levitical city: one of the four assigned to the Levites in the territory of that tribe (*ib.*, xxi. 23). It has not been identified. Evidently it was on the border of Philistia. Some would connect it with the modern *Mejdel*, a little to the north of Ascalon. The reader will observe how large a number of the names of towns indicate their elevation. The cities of those days were set on a hill. It was dangerous to build in the plain], which

belonged to the Philistines [Blunt suggests ("Coincidences," p. 181) that it was because the place had been deserted by the Levites, in the general exodus to Judah, that the Philistines availed themselves of the opportunity to seize and fortify it. But the divided and consequently weakened state of the kingdom would of itself have encouraged them to throw off the yoke of Israel (Ewald)]; for Nadab and all Israel laid siege to Gibbethon.

Ver. 28.—Even in the third year of Asa [We have here (as in ch. xvi. 8, 23) a conspicuous instance of the Hebrew habit of counting parts of years as entire years. It is obvious that if Nadab succeeded to the throne in the *second* (ver. 25) and died in the *third* year of Asa, he cannot have reigned two full years] king of Judah did Baasha slay him [As the assassination took place during the siege, it is extremely probable that Baasha, like Omri, was the captain of the host], and reigned in his stead. [Probably Nadab had showed himself quite unequal to the task of governing, of which leading the army was in that age a principal function (1 Sam. viii. 20). It is just possible that in the occupation of Gibbethon by Philistines we have a proof of his feebleness and incapacity. Anyhow, when the strong hand of Jeroboam is removed, the fruits of the rebellion at once begin to appear. The contempt and defiance which Jeroboam had showed towards constituted authority are now manifested towards his successor. Baasha only takes a leaf out of Jeroboam's book (ch. xi. 26).]

Ver. 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 [Same expression in Josh. xi. 14; cf. Deut. xx. 16. Males and females alike were destroyed; see ch. xiv. 11], until he had destroyed him, according unto the saying of the Lord, which he spake by his servant Ahijah the Shilonite [ch. xiv. 10. It is not implied that it was because of this prophecy that Baasha exterminated the house of Jeroboam. It is probable that, so far from setting himself to fulfil it, he knew nothing about it, and, as he thought, merely took effectual measures for his own security. His seat could never be safe, so long as one of Jeroboam's house survived. Grotius aptly cites, with reference to these wholesale murders, the saying, *νήπιος δε πατέρα κτενας, υιοῦς κατέλιπε*]:

Ver. 30.—Because of the sins of Jeroboam which he sinned, and which he made Israel to sin, by his provocation wherewith he provoked the Lord God of Israel to anger. [Cf. ch. xvi. 2, 7, 13, 26, &c.]

Ver. 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?

Ver. 32.—And there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days. [Verbatim as ver. 16, where see note. Several commentators suggest that this latter statement was copied from the chronicles of Israel, and that of ver. 16 from those of Judah. It is held by others, however, that for Baasha we should here read *Nadab*, and in favour of this view is the fact that the reign of Nadab is still under consideration, the history of Baasha only beginning with the following verse.]

Ver. 33.—In the third year of Asa king of Judah began Baasha the son of Ahijah to reign [Practically a repetition of ver. 28. These iterations are thoroughly in accord with Eastern usage (cf. vers. 26, 30, 34; ch. xvi. 1, 7, &c.)] over all Israel in Tirzah, twenty and four years.

Ver. 34.—And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, and he walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin.

## CHAPTER XVI.

This division of chapters, immediately after the commencement of the narrative of the reign of Baasha, is somewhat unfortunate, inasmuch as it obscures the close connexion between the sin of Baasha and the prophecy which it provoked. The idea the historian would convey is clearly this—the analogy between the dynasty of Jeroboam and that which supplanted it, (1) in their sin, (2) in the denunciation of each by a prophet, and (3) in the punishments which followed their sins—an analogy so close that the prophet Jehu almost employs the *ipsissima verba* of his predecessor, Ahijah.

Ver. 1.—Then the word of the Lord came to Jehu, the son of Hanani [Hanani is mentioned in 2 Chron. xvi. 7—10 as having admonished Asa, and as having been thrown into prison for so doing. Both he and his son would seem to have belonged to the kingdom of Judah. We find the latter in 2 Chron. xix. 2 a resident in Jerusalem, and protesting against the alliance between Jehoshaphat, whose historian he became, and whom, consequently, he must have survived (2 Chron. xx. 34), and Ahab. He is mentioned in the verse last cited as "made to ascend on the book of the kings of Israel" (see Introduction, p. xiii.) His prophetic

career must have extended over at least half a century] against Baasha, saying,

Ver. 2.—Forasmuch as I exalted thee out of the dust [cf. ch. xiv. 7; 2 Sam. vii. 8; Psa. lxxviii. 70. These words assuredly point to a lowly origin. He may well have risen from the ranks], and made thee prince [The original word is used of leaders of various degrees, comprehending even the king; ch. i. 35; 1 Sam. ix. 16; x. 1; cf. Dan. ix. 25] over my people Israel [There is no approval implied here of the means by which Baasha had raised himself to the throne. All that is said is that he had been an instrument in God's hands, and owed his throne to God's sanction and ordering. Even his conspiracy and cruelties had been overruled to the furtherance of the Divine purpose], and thou hast walked in the way of Jeroboam, and hast made my people Israel to sin, to provoke me to anger [better *vez*, one word] with their sins;

Ver. 3.—Behold, I will take away [Heb. *exterminate*; same word as in chs. xiv. 10 (where see note); xxi. 21; xxii. 47, &c.] the posterity of [Heb. *after*] Baasha, and the posterity of [after] his house, and will make thy house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. [Cf. ch. xv. 29; xxi. 22, &c.]

Ver. 4.—Him that dieth of [Heb. *to*; see note on ch. xiv. 11] Baasha in the city shall the dogs eat; and him that dieth of his in the fields shall the fowls of the air eat. [It may be these words, like those of the next two verses, were almost a formula, but if so, it is noticeable that precisely the same formula was used of Jeroboam a few years before, and Baasha knew well how it had been accomplished. "All the prophets in succession have the same message from God for the same sins" (Wordsworth).]

Ver. 5.—Now the rest of the acts of Baasha, and what he did, and his might [as to which see ch. xv. 17—21. He could hardly have given a stronger proof of his might than by fortifying a post but five miles distant from Jerusalem. Keil, however, would interpret the word, both here and in ch. xv. 23, of his energy and strength in government. Better Bähr, *tapjere Thaten*. Ewald hence infers that Baasha was "a man of distinguished bravery"], are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

Ver. 6.—So Baasha slept with his fathers, and was buried in Tirzah [cf. ch. xv. 21, 33. This place is twice mentioned as his residence], and Elah his son reigned in his stead. [It is perhaps more than a mere coincidence that this uncommon name, *Elah* ("terebinth," see note on ch. xiii. 14), is also the name of the great valley (1 Sam.

xvii. 2, 19; xxi. 9) near to Gibbethon, where Baasha was proclaimed king.]

Ver. 7.—And also by the hand of the prophet Jehu, the son of Hanani, came the word of the Lord against Baasha [This does not refer, as some have thought, to a second prophecy on Jehu's part, but is rather explicative of ver. 2. Rawlinson thinks the object of the historian herein was to point out that Baasha was punished for the "murder of Jeroboam" (?) and his family," as well as for the calf-worship. Keil and Bähr hold that it is designed to guard against a perversion of ver. 2, "I made thee prince," &c., from which it might be inferred that he was commissioned of God to murder Nadab. But it is simpler to suppose that his primary idea was to convey, by this repetition, which no doubt is derived from a different source from the statement of ver. 2, that Baasha was visited by God for his various sins. It was no chance that happened to him. The excision of his house, like that of Jeroboam, was distinctly foretold], 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 [ver. 2; note the coincidence with ch. xv. 30, in connexion with the next words. Bähr explains "the works of his hands" as *idois, Dii factitii*, after Deut. iv. 23, but this appears somewhat far-fetched], in being like the house of Jeroboam, and because he killed him [i.e., Nadab].

#### The Reign of Elah.

Ver. 8.—In the twenty and sixth year of Asa, king of Judah, began Elah, son of Baasha, to reign over Israel, two years [cf. ch. xv. and see note on ch. xv. 28].

Ver. 9.—And his servant [Not only "subject," as Rawlinson, but officer. The same word is used of Jeroboam; ch. xi. 26, note. We may almost trace here a *lex talionis*. Baasha was Nadab's "servant," as Jeroboam was Solomon's] Zimri [From the occurrence of this name among those of the descendants of Jonathan (1 Chron. viii. 36), it has been supposed (Stanley) that this was a last effort of the house of Saul to regain the throne], captain of half his chariots [כָּבָר] as in ch. ix. 19; x. 26. The violation of the law of Deut. xvii. 16 brings its own retribution], conspired against him [precisely as Elah's father had "conspired" (ch. xv. 27) against Nadab], as he was in Tirzah, drinking himself drunk in the house of Arza, steward of [Heb. *which was over*; cf. chs. iv. 6; xviii. 3; 2 Kings x. 5; xviii. 37] his house in Tirzah. [Several points present themselves for notice here. First, the ex-

ample of Jeroboam has clearly had its full influence on the nation. "The Lord's anointed" is no longer had in reverence, as in the days of David (1 Sam. xxiv. 6, 10; xxvi. 9, 16; 2 Sam. i. 14), nor is it accounted a sin to grasp at the crown. (2) Zimri only does what Baasha had done before him. That prince was "hoist with his own petard." (3) Elah would seem to have been a dissolute and pusillanimous prince. His place was clearly with his army at Gibbethon (ver. 15; cf. Jos., viii. 12, 4). And as clearly it was *not* in the house of one of his subjects, even the intendant of his palace. "An Oriental monarch . . . is precluded by etiquette from accepting the hospitality of his subjects" — Rawlinson, who further remarks that the low tastes which we here find Elah indulging "had probably been formed before his father was exalted *out of the dust*." As probably they were inherited direct from his father. Anyhow, they led to his destruction. It is clear that Elah's want of character, like Nadab's, suggested the conspiracy of Zimri. (4) It is extremely probable, though not absolutely certain, as Bähr affirms, that Arza was one of the conspirators, and that the wretched prince had been decoyed to his house and made drunk, with a view to his murder there.]

Ver. 10.—And Zimri went in [cf. Judg. iii. 20; 2 Sam. iv. 7] and smote him and killed him, in the twenty and seventh year of Asa king of Judah, and reigned in his stead. [Cf. ch. xv. 28 and 2 Kings xv. 23. It is curious how it happened three times in the history of Israel that "the only powerful prince in a new dynasty was its founder, and after his son and successor reigned two years, the power passed into other hands" (Ewald).]

#### The Reign of Zimri.

Ver. 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 [see note on ch. xv. 29. The LXX. Vat. omits the rest of this verse and the first clause of ver. 12]: he left him not one that pisseth against a wall [*i.e.*, not a boy. See ch. xiv. 10 note], neither of [Heb. and]

his kinsfolks [The  $\text{בְּנָיִם}$  is strictly the person to whom (1) the right of redemption (Levit. xxv. 26; Ruth, *passim*) and (2) the duty of avenging blood (Num. xxxv. 19) belonged. And this being the next-of-kin (Ruth ii. 12, 13), the word came to mean *near relative, kinsman*, as here; cf. Ruth ii. 20. All the same, it discloses to us Zimri's object, which was to destroy the avenger of blood. And it shows (in connexion with

ver. 16) that none of Baasha's children, if he had other children, had gone to the war], nor of his friends. [Zimri went a step farther than Baasha had gone. He was not content with extirpating the royal family, but put to death the partizans of the house, all who would be likely to sympathize with Elah or to resent his murder.]

Ver. 12.—Thus did Zimri destroy all the house of Baasha, according to the word of the Lord which he spake against Baasha, by [Heb. *in the hand of*] Jehu the prophet [Vers. 1, 7; cf. ch. xv. 29. The analogy is now complete],

Ver. 13.—For  $\text{לְמַעַן}$  corresponds with the  $\text{לְמַעַן}$  of ver. 7 = *propter*; cf. chs. xiv. 5; xxi. 22] 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 [the formula of ch. xv. 30, &c.] with their vanities. [The calves, not idols, are referred to here. Cf. Deut. xxxii. 21; 1 Cor. viii. 4. The same idea is embodied in the word *Bethaven*; Hosea iv. 15; v. 8.]

Ver. 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?

Ver. 15.—In the twenty and seventh year of Asa king of Judah did Zimri reign [The same word elsewhere translated in A. V. *began to reign*. It is really an acrist = succeeded to the throne] seven days in Tirzah. And the people were encamped [Heb. *encamping*] against Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines. [It has at first sight a suspicious look that two kings of Israel, within an interval of about twenty-five years, should have been slain by conspirators during a siege of this place. But when the narrative is examined, its probability and consistency become at once apparent. Stanley assumes that the siege lasted over the whole of this period, but it is more likely that when Baasha found himself king, he discovered that he had domestic matters enough upon his hands, without a foreign war, and so he raised the siege. It is very probable that he feared opposition such as Zimri and Omri subsequently experienced. And his wars with Asa and with Syria may well have prevented his renewing the undertaking. On the accession of Elah, however, with the usual ambition and impetuosity of youth, it was decided to recommence the siege and to win this city back for Israel. But the fate of Nadab, and the consequent ill omen attaching to the place would not be forgotten, and this, as well as his voluptuous habits, may have deterred the *faméant* Elah from besieging

it in person, while the conspiracy which marked the former siege may at the same time have suggested to Zimri and others the thought of conspiring against Elah.]

Ver. 16.—And the people that were encamped heard say, Zimri hath conspired, and hath also slain the king: wherefore all Israel [obviously, all the army. Cf. ch. xii. 1, 16, 18] made Omri, the captain of the host, king over Israel that day in the camp. [It was hardly likely they would submit to the usurpation of Zimri. Not only had he occupied a subordinate position, but his murder of all Elah's friends must have made him a host of enemies in the camp. It was the natural thing for them, therefore, to turn to Omri. He had the advantage of being in possession. The captain of the host stood next to the king (2 Kings iv. 13; 2 Sam. v. 8; xix. 13; xx. 23), and twice stepped into his place (2 Kings ix. 5). This history has many parallels in that of the Roman empire.]

Ver. 17.—And Omri went up from Gibbethon ["The expression, 'went up,' accurately marks the ascent of the army from the Shephelah, where Gibbethon was situated, to the hill country of Israel, on the edge of which Tirzah stood" (Rawlinson)], and all Israel [see on ver. 16] with him, and they besieged Tirzah. [It is probable that they arrived before the city on the sixth or seventh day after the assassination of Elah. This period would just allow sufficient time for the news of the conspiracy to travel to Gibbethon and for the march of the army.]

Ver. 18.—And it came to pass, when Zimri saw that the city was taken [the meaning is probably that which Josephus gives: "When he saw that the city had none to defend it," or possibly, "when he saw that a breach was made"], that he went into the palace [מִן הַמְּצִדָּה citadel, fortress, from מְצִדָּה *altus fuit*. So Gesen., Keil, Bähr, *al*. The palace, no doubt, consisted of a string of buildings (ch. vii. 2—9) of which this was the highest and strongest part. Ewald thinks that the harem—a word which has almost the same radicals—or women's apartment, is meant—the most secluded portion of the great palace (Josephus understands it to mean "the inmost part"), and hence infers, as also from 2 Kings ix. 31, that the women of the palace had willingly submitted to the effeminate murderer of their lord, and that even the queen-mother had made advances towards him (vol. iv. p. 36). But, as Bähr remarks, there is nothing of this in the text, and Zimri's desperate act rather shows daring and contempt of death than effeminacy or

sensuality. And 2 Kings xv. 25 (cf. Psa. cxii. 7) seems to point to a stronghold rather than a seraglio] of the king's house, and burnt the king's house [probably the palace which Jeroboam had built. Ewald thinks it was this structure gave Tirzah its reputation for beauty; Cant. vi. 4] over him with fire [According to the Syriac, the besiegers set fire to the palace. Similarly Jarchi. But the text is decisive. The parallel deed of Sardanapalus will occur to all readers. Rawlinson also refers to Herod. i. 176, and vii. 107, and died. [This word is intimately connected with the verse following. But there is no need to rearrange the verses. The text, as it stands, conveys clearly enough that Zimri's tragical death was a retribution for his sins. Bähr remarks that of Elah and Zimri we learn nothing, apart from the fact that they held to the sin of Jeroboam, except how they died.]

Ver. 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 to sin. [It is quite clear that in his reign of one week Zimri cannot have done much to show his complicity in the schism of Jeroboam, and it is probable that the sacred writer means that his character and antecedents were such as to prove that all his sympathies were with the irreligious party. Bähr thinks that he had "formerly displayed much partiality for the calf-worship." But it is quite as likely that the idea in the historian's mind was that all these events were the bitter fruits of Jeroboam's misguided and impious policy, into the spirit of which, Zimri, like his predecessors, had been baptized. It is interesting to remember here the aspect these repeated revolutions and assassinations would wear to the kingdom of Judah, then enjoying quietness and prosperity under Asa. We cannot doubt for a moment that they were regarded as so many manifestations of the righteous judgment of God, and as the outcomes of that spirit of insubordination and impiety which, in their eyes, had brought about both the division of the kingdom and the schism in the church.]

Ver. 20.—Now the rest of the acts of Zimri [We see here the tendency of the historian to express himself in formulae. He checks himself, however, and does not add "and all that he did," &c.], and his treason that he wrought [Heb. *his conspiracy which he conspired*. Though this was all there was to tell of him, yet no doubt it would be recorded at greater length by the historians of the day. We can hardly suppose that the "books of the words of the

days" would dismiss so striking an event in a few sentences]. are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

#### *The Interregnum.*

Ver. 21.—Then were the people of Israel divided into two parts: half of the people followed [lit., *was after*]. Same expression 2 Sam. ii. 10; cf. ch. i. 7] Tibni the son of Ginath [Who he was, or why he was set up in opposition to Omri, it is impossible to say. It has been supposed that the army was divided in its preferences, and that part of the soldiery wished to make Tibni king, and this is perhaps the most probable conjecture. It is to be considered that the *entire* army was not encamped before Gibbethon. Nor are vers. 16, 17 fatal to this view, as Bähr maintains, because "all Israel" there clearly means all the army under the command of Omri. It is hardly likely that Tibni was set up by the people of Tirzah, after the death of Zimri, to continue the struggle. The only thing that is certain is that, the hereditary principle being overthrown, the crown appeared to be the legitimate prize of the strongest; and Tibni, who may have occupied a position of importance, or have had, somehow, a considerable following, resolved that Omri should not wear it without a fierce contest], to make him king [Omri had been already made king, *i.e.*, anointed, ver. 16]; and half followed Omri.

Ver. 22.—But the people that followed Omri prevailed against the people that followed Tibni the son of Ginath [It appears, however, from the following verse that the struggle lasted four years]: so Tibni died [According to Jos., Ant. viii. 12. § 5, he was slain by the conqueror. The LXX. has here a curious and probably genuine addition. "And Thabni died, and Joram his brother at that time"], and Omri reigned. [The jingle of the Hebrew words is probably designed.]

#### *The Reign of Omri.*

Ver. 23.—In the thirty and first year of Asa king of Judah began Omri to reign over Israel, twelve years [As Omri was proclaimed king in the twenty-seventh and died in the thirty-eighth year of Asa (cf. vers. 15, 29), he cannot in any case have reigned twelve full years; whereas if his reign is to be dated, as it is here, from the thirty-first year of Asa, it is obvious that he would only have reigned seven, or, according to the Jewish mode of reckoning, eight years. Rawlinson proposes to get over the difficulty by rearranging the text. He

to ver. 22, and read, "And Omri reigned in the thirty-first," &c. But to this there are two serious objections. First, that ver. 23, as it now stands, only follows the usual formula with which a new reign is announced (cf. vers. 8, 15, 29); and, second, it is extremely doubtful whether any prose sentence in the Hebrew ever begins as ver. 23 would then do, "*Reigned Omri* over Israel twelve years." Such a sentence would certainly be quite alien to the *usus loquendi* of our author. We are therefore reduced to the conclusion either (1) that the text here, as in some other instances (ch. vi. 1; 2 Kings i. 17; cf. iii. 1; xiii. 1, 10, &c.), has suffered at the hands of a reviser, or (2) that the numbers have been corrupted in transcription; or (3) that the historian expresses himself in a somewhat confused way. Of these suppositions perhaps (1) is the most likely. Anyhow, it is clear that the twelve years of Omri's reign are to be counted not from the thirty-first, but from the twenty-seventh year of Asa, *i.e.*, from the date of Zimri's death (see vers. 10, 15, 29). The confusion has arisen from the fact that it was not until Tibni was slain, after four years of conflict, that Omri became *sole* ruler]: six years reigned he in Tirzah.

Ver. 24.—And he bought [*i.e.*, after the six years just mentioned. During the four years of anarchy Omri would seem to have retained possession of the capital which he had taken (ver. 18) on Zimri's death. But the palace being burnt and the defences perhaps weakened by the siege, he determined, rather than rebuild it, to found a capital elsewhere] the hill Samaria [Heb. *Shomerôn*, called by Herod *Sebaste*, whence its modern name *Sebastieh*. In his selection of Samaria for the seat of government, Omri acted with singular judgment. It has been said that "Shechem is the natural capital of Palestine," and no doubt it enjoys a commanding position and great advantages, but Samaria has even superior recommendations. It is a site with which no traveller can fail to be deeply impressed. Even Van de Velde, who says, "I do not agree with Dr. Robinson and other writers who follow him that the mountain of Samaria presents so admirable a combination of strength, fertility, and beauty, that the like is hardly to be found in Palestine" (vol. i. pp. 374, 375), nevertheless readily allows its superiority to Tirzah, and remarks on the strength of its position. "Many travellers have expressed a conviction that the spot was in most respects much preferable to the site of Jerusalem" (Kitto). It is a large oval or oblong mound, with a level surface, adapted for buildings, with steep sides to make its position im-

pregnable, and surrounded by an amphitheatre of hills. "Samaria is in a position of great strength . . . and must before the invention of gunpowder have been almost impregnable. It stands some 400 feet above the valley, the sides of the hill being steep and terraced in every direction for cultivation, or perhaps for defensive purposes . . . broad and open valleys stretch north and south, and the hill is thus almost isolated," Conder, p. 47, who adds, "Strategical reasons may be supposed to have dictated the choice of the capital of Omri, for on the north the hill commands the main road to Jezreel over a steep pass, on the west it dominates the road to the coast, and on the east that to the Jordan" (p. 49). Grove (Dict. Bib. iii. 1099) speaks of "the singular beauty of the spot," and Stanley ("Jewish Church" ii. p. 284) justly sees in the selection of this spot a proof of Omri's sagacity. But perhaps the best proof is that which the subsequent history supplies. Shechem and Tirzah had each been tried, and each in turn had been abandoned. But Samaria continued to be the capital so long as the kingdom lasted] of Shemer for two talents of silver [variously estimated at £500 and £800. This purchase, obviously of the freehold, i.e., in perpetuity, was in contravention of the law of Levit. xxv. 23. David had bought the threshing-floor of Ornan, but that was (1) from a Jebusite, and (2) for a high religious purpose (2 Sam. xxiv. 24). It has been suggested that this purchase may have inspired Ahab with the idea of buying the vineyard of Naboth], and built on [Heb. *built*] the hill, and called the name of the city which he built, after the name of Shemer, owner of the hill, Samaria. [It is not improbable that the vendor bargained that the land should retain his name (cf. Psa. xlix. 11). The reluctance of the Israelite to part with his patrimony, even to the king, is brought out very strikingly in ch. xxi. Shemer, in selling his choice parcel of land for a capital, might well wish to connect his name with it. The fact that שִׁמְרֹן means *watch-mountain* (Gesén.), and that we should have expected a name formed from Shemer to take the form *Shimrôn*—*Shomerôn* would strictly imply an original *Shemer*—is not by any means a proof that our historian is at fault in his derivation. For, in the first place, the names Shomer and Shemer are used of the same person in 1 Chron. vii. 32, 34. And secondly, nothing would be more in accordance with Jewish ideas than that Omri, in naming the hill after its owner, should give a turn to the word which would also express at the same time its characteristic feature. A pun, or play upon words, was the form which wit assumed

amongst the Semitic races (as, indeed, is the case still, see Conder, p. 301), and the form *Shomerôn* would at once perpetuate the memory of Shemer, and express the hope and purpose of Omri. It is a curious fact that the later Samaritans did play upon this very word, representing themselves as *guardians* (שִׁמְרָיִם) of the law (Ewald). The Greek form of the name, *Σαμάρεια*, would seem to have been derived through the Chaldees (שִׁמְרֵי) as found in Ezra iv. 10, 17.]

Ver. 25.—But Omri wrought evil in the eyes of the Lord, and did worse than all that were before him. [It has been thought that Micah vi. 16 ("the statutes of Omri, &c.") points to a fresh departure from the Jewish faith; to the organization of the calf-worship into a regular formal system, or to "measures for more completely isolating the people of Israel from the services of the house of the Lord at Jerusalem" (Kitto).

Ver. 26.—For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin, to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger with their vanities.

Ver. 27.—Now the rest of the acts of Omri which he did, and his might that he showed [Not only in the war with Tibni, but certainly in the subjugation of the Moabites, of which mention is made in the recently discovered *Moabite stone*. He may well have had other wars, which, like this, have escaped notice in Scripture. If the king of Syria spoke truly (1 Kings xx. 34), the war with that power had been extremely disastrous. Yet the Assyrian inscriptions prove that Omri's name was more widely and permanently known in the East than those of his predecessors or successors. Samaria, for example, down to the time of Tiglath-Pileser, appears as *Beth Khumri*, the "house of Omri;" Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab, is called a daughter of Omri; and Jehu appears in the *Black Obelisk Inscription* as "the son of Omri" (Rawlinson, "Hist. Illus. of O. T.," pp. 111—12). It is perhaps an evidence of "his might" that his dynasty retained the throne to the third generation], are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? [Vers. 26, 27 are an exact repetition, *mutatis mutandis*, of ch. xiii. 14; cf. xv. 30.]

Ver. 28.—So Omri slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria [After the example of earlier kings, he found a grave in his capital city; cf. chs. ii. 10; xi. 43; xiv. 31; xvi. 16]; and Ahab his son reigned in his stead.

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 29.—*The Punishment of Jeroboam's Sin.* We have already considered the true character of Jeroboam's sin (pp. 274 sqq.) It now remains for us to observe, first, the punishment which it provoked, and secondly, its workings in later generations. And its punishment was so great and so varied that it will of itself occupy the rest of this homily.

But let us remember, in the first place, that there were two parties to this sin. Jeroboam sinned himself and also "made Israel to sin." King and people alike were involved in the schism. If the one suggested it, the other embraced it. Originating with the former, it was approved and perpetuated by the latter. There were two parties, consequently, to the punishment. That was impartially shared between sovereign and subjects. We have to consider, therefore—

## I. THE RETRIBUTION WHICH BEFELL THE ROYAL HOUSE.

## II. THE RETRIBUTION WHICH OVERTOOK THE PEOPLE AT LARGE.

I. And in considering the pain and loss in which this sin involved those who sat upon the throne of Israel, we must discriminate between Jeroboam and his successors. Jeroboam was the prime, but not the only offender. If he was the author, subsequent kings were continuators of the schism. And as he had his punishment, so they had theirs. Let us therefore take account first of the sorrows and sufferings of the heresiarch, *Jeroboam*. Amongst these were the following:

1. *The foreknowledge that his kingdom would be overthrown.* This dismal foreboding must have clouded all his reign, for it dated from the day of that first sacrifice at Bethel. Then he learnt that a child of David's house should cover his schemes and memory with disgrace. He knew that the dynasty he had founded should not endure, and moreover that he was the author of its ruin, and he knew that others knew it too. "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." What shall we say of the crowned head disquieted by such forebodings as these?

2. *The foretaste of the destruction of his family.* As he had learnt from the man of God of the triumph of his rival and the dishonour of his priesthood, so he learnt from Ahijah of the excision of his family. This ambitious prince knew that his posterity would be swept away like dung, would be devoured like carrion. And he was assured of this, not only by prophetic word and by signs following, but he had an earnest thereof in the death of his firstborn. He knew that that was but "the beginning of the end." It was a sharp pang, but it was the lightest part of his punishment (ch. xiv. 18).

3. *Remorse and vexation.* He could not fail to compare the two messages of Ahijah (chs. xi. 31—39; xiv. 7—16). The first gave him dominion over ten tribes. The second left him neither subject nor survivor. God had promised to "build him a sure house." God now threatens him and his with annihilation. And why this change? He knew why it was. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." It was because of the calves (ch. xiv. 9). How he must have repented that piece of folly and faithlessness: how he must have cursed his infatuation—the more inexcusable, as he had the example of Solomon before him. It is possible that this remorse was so poignant that it shortened his days; that it was thus "the Lord struck him, and he died" (2 Chron. xiii. 20).

4. *The shameful murder of his family.* We can readily believe that a *parvenu* like Jeroboam, a servant who had raised himself to the throne, would have been content to suffer for the rest of his days, if thereby he could have averted the dishonour of his name and the destruction of his posterity—of all evils the greatest in the eyes of a Jew. But no; he foresaw that butchery awaited his nearest and dearest, and he had not slept long in his grave before the knife of Baasha was at his children's throats. And this murder of his posterity, though after the manner of Eastern despotisms, would seem to have been marked by circumstances of peculiar cruelty (ch. xvi. 7). It was so truculent that it brought down vengeance on the instrument. Our history gives no details, but it is easy to picture the divans dripping with blood, the corridors choked with the corpses of Jeroboam's wife and

children. The annals of Turkey and other Eastern kingdoms would supply many illustrations of this deed.

5. *His own untimely end.* For he died by the visitation of God—by a *stroke* of some kind or other. He may have perished like Antiochus Epiphanes, like Sylla, like Herod, like Philip of Spain. Or, like our Henry the First, he may have never smiled again after his son's death, but steadily drooped to his grave. Somehow his life was cut short. "The wicked shall be silent in darkness."

Such, then, was the fourfold penalty which Jeroboam paid for his sin. Let us now consider the punishment which befell his successors, who "walked in his way" and "departed not" from his heresy. We may trace it—

1. *In the shortness of their reigns.* Nadab, Elah, Ahaziah, all reigned two years. Zimri one week. None of the kings of Israel reigned like David and Solomon, or like Asa and other kings of Judah. In the 250 years that the kingdom of Israel lasted, nineteen kings occupied the throne, as against eleven kings of Judah. Asa saw seven kings in turn rise and fall during his reign; Uzziah saw six; and we have but to remember that long life was one of the principal sanctions of the Mosaic dispensation to be assured that these brief reigns were a manifestation of the righteous judgment of God.

2. *In the revolution and assassination which often closed them.* In these 250 years the dynasty was changed no less than seven times, and we know what a change of dynasty meant, in that and a later age. It was one of its traditions that "the man was a fool who when he slew the father spared the children." Six times this tragedy of Tizrah was repeated. Once an unhappy prince, to escape the butchery awaiting him, devoted himself and his household to the flames. Once seventy ghastly heads, in two heaps at the city gate, witnessed to the work of extermination.

II. But now let us note the share of the people in this dispensation of suffering. What befell the priests who ministered at Dan and Bethel—what the worshippers who resorted thither? They or their children suffered these six penalties at least.

1. *Misgovernment.* Of the kings of Israel there was not one who did not "do evil" in the sight of the Lord. By which we are not only to understand that he worshipped the calves; oppression, exactions, intolerable cruelties may be comprehended under the words. The case of Naboth (ch. xxi.) was probably not the only one of its kind. We may be sure, too, that when Elah was drinking himself drunk, injustice was being practised in his name. Incapacity—on the part of the king—may have been the cause of some insurrections, but oppression is a much more probable reason. We know what Rome was like when the purple fell to military adventurers. Probably Israel fared no better at the hands of its Baashas, Omris, and Menahems. What suffering a change of dynasty involved on the people we may gather from 2 Kings xv. 16. An Eastern kingdom at the best was a despotism, at the worst a devilism.

2. *Civil war.* The four years' struggle between Omri and Tibni and their respective partisans, which was a war to the death (ch. xvi. 22), entailed no less miseries on the country than civil war always does. Lands ravaged, homesteads fired, women violated—these were some of its incidents. It has been said that no one can give any adequate description of a battle. What shall be said of a battle lasting over four years? for in a country not so large as Yorkshire civil strife would mean unceasing conflict.

3. *Invasion.* (1) By Abijah (2 Chron. xiii. 4), (2) by Shishak, (3) by Syria, (4) by Assyria. Shishak was primarily appointed to chastise Judah, Syria was the lash of Israel. Observe that in the invasion of ch. xiii. 4, 19, Bethel was captured by the men of Judah, whilst in that of ch. xv. 20, Dan—Jeroboam's other shrine—was among the first to suffer. The priests of Dan and the inhabitants of the surrounding territory, the worshippers at its temple, bore the brunt of Ben-hadad's invasion. But the bands of Syria were always invading the land (ch. xx; 2 Kings vi.) And many a "little maid" (2 Kings v. 2) was carried off to dishonour.

"Many a childing mother then  
And new-born baby died."

What a picture of the horrors of war have we in 2 Kings viii. 12. Yet such horrors must have been of common occurrence in Israel. And they culminated in the sack of Samaria and the captivity of the nation.

4. *Loss of territory.* Israel was "cut short" (2 Kings x. 32). In 2 Kings i. 1 (cf. iii. 6) Moab rebels. Syria, its great adversary, was once an appanage of Israel. Now Israel is made a dependency of Assyria (2 Kings xv. 19, 20).

5. *Famine.* It was the Lord called for this (2 Kings viii. 1). It was one of His "sore judgments" (Ezek. xiv. 13, 21). And it would seem to have been almost chronic in Israel (cf. chs. xvii. 1, 12; xviii. 2; 2 Kings iv. 83; vi. 25 sqq.; vii.; viii. 1). And the terrible straits to which the people were reduced thereby may be inferred from 2 Kings vi. 25, 29; cf. Deut. xxviii. 56, 57.

6. *Captivity.* For the carrying away beyond Babylon into the cities of the Medes was part of the reckoning for Jeroboam's sin, and for the allied sin of idolatry (ch. xiv. 15; 2 Kings xvii. 22, 23). The "carrying into captivity"—these are familiar words on our lips. But which of us can form any conception of the untold, unspeakable miseries which they cover? The gangs of prisoners tramping to Siberia give us but a faint idea. "Hermann and Dorothea" is a tale of modern times, and the flight it pictures conveys no just impression of the horrors of a wholesale transportation. When the land was swept as with a drag net (cf. 2 Kings xxi. 13, and compare Herod. iii. 149, vi. 31. where the manner in which the Persians carried away the population of some of the Greek islands is described), and the entire population marched in gangs across the burning plains, under brutal and lustful overseers—men in comparison with whom a "Legree" would be mildness itself—we may imagine some of the horrors of that journey. Nor did those sufferings end in the land of their captivity. Before the people was absorbed amongst the neighbouring nations, and so effaced from the page of later history, we may be pretty sure they paid a constant tribute of suffering for their sin. *Vae victis*, this was the unvarying law of ancient warfare, and the exiles of Assyria proved it in their own persons. Two hundred and fifty years after the schism, the seed sown by Jeroboam was still reaped in cruelty and agony and blood.

Ver. 2.—*The Working of Jeroboam's Sin.* The punishment which Jeroboam's sin brought down upon himself, his successors, and his people, was not its worst part. Its influences upon others, the lessons of disobedience and defiance taught by that malign example, were even more disastrous. Let us now trace, as far as we can, its workings; let us see how the leaven of the calves leavened the whole lump.

1. *He begat a son in his own likeness.* "The evil that men do lives after them"—it lives in their children; it is inwrought into their constitution. As a rule, the child reproduces the character of the parent, the moral traits, quite as closely as the physical. There are exceptions—Abijah was one—but they help to prove the rule. He was the only exception in the house of Jeroboam (ch. xiv. 3). *Fortes creantur fortibus et bonis*, and the converse is equally true. Nabab, and the other children of that house, not only practised the lessons they had learned in Jeroboam's school, but they reproduced in their own persons the self-will, the impatience of control, and the other faults and vices of their father. What wonder if "Nadab did evil in the sight of the Lord"? he only "walked," as the next words remind us, "in the way of his father" (ch. xv. 26).

2. *He begat a spirit of lawlessness and insubordination among his people.* There are not a few indications of demoralization and corruption in Israel, corresponding with the depravation of religion. The very revolutions, which followed one after another, are in themselves a proof of this. The chronic disaffection and the periodical upheavings of society in the northern kingdom, especially when contrasted with the quietness and security of Judah, can only be accounted for by the influences of the court. North and south were of one blood, and lived under one sky. It was because the former had been taught disobedience and disregard of constituted authority, it was because the sense of reverence and duty had been weakened by the action of Jeroboam, that it became like a reed shaken in the water—so often rebelled against its sovereigns. Jeroboam had accustomed them

to play fast and loose with the commandments of Heaven; what wonder if they made small account of their obligations to their earthly king?

3. *He taught Baasha, Zimri, and Omri to lift up their hands against the king.* Just as David's religious veneration for the person of the "Lord's anointed" tended to make his throne and that of his successors the more secure, so did Jeroboam's rebellion (ch. xi. 26) afford an example of aggression to later ages. His subjects were not likely to believe in the "divinity that doth hedge a king." Why should they scruple to grasp at the crown if it came within their reach? Why was Nadab more sacred than Rehoboam? Why should the son of Baasha, again, have more respect than the son of Solomon?

4. *He taught his subjects, indirectly, to hold life cheap.* There had been two changes of dynasty before Baasha had learned from him to attack the king and to exterminate his family, but both of these had been, so far as the royal family was concerned, bloodless. David never thought of slaying the children of Saul. His inquiry was, "Is there not yet any of the house of Saul that I may show the kindness of God unto him?" (2 Sam. ix. 3.) And when "Israel rebelled against the house of David," they never contemplated a massacre of Solomon's harem, or even of insolent Rehoboam. But observe the change in succeeding revolutions. "He left not to Jeroboam any that breathed" (ch. xv. 29; cf. xvi. 11; 2 Kings x. 11). Why this thirst of blood? It is because Jeroboam has returned from Egypt, and his godless proceedings have depraved public morality, and the restraints of law have been enfeebled, and men have grown more reckless and desperate (ch. xvi. 18, 24). It is clear to the most cursory reader that a daring impiety characterizes the whole period from Jeroboam to Hoshea, and for this "the sin of Jeroboam" is mainly responsible. That was the "first step" which makes the rest of the road easy.

5. *He entailed his sin upon his successors.* Of each of the kings of Israel do we read that he "walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he did," and we wonder, perhaps, how it was that not one of these nineteen kings, sprung as many of them were from different lineages, had the courage and the piety to retrace his steps, and revert to the primitive faith and mode of worship. But a little reflection will show that this, under the circumstances, was well-nigh an impossibility. For Jeroboam had made the calf-worship an integral part of the national life. It was so intertwined with the existence of Israel as a separate people, that to abandon it would be to repudiate all the traditions of the kingdom, and tacitly to acknowledge the superiority of Judah. Any king attempting such a reformation would appear to be a traitor to his country. The attempt would have provoked a second schism. No, it was clear to each monarch at his accession, if he reflected on the subject at all, that the calf-worship *must go on*. The *damnosa hereditas* which he had received he must transmit. There was no place for repentance.

6. *He paved the way for idolatry.* Already, in ch. xiv. 15, we find the "groves" following directly upon the calves, the images of Asherah upon the images of Jehovah. Ahab and Jezebel are not wholly responsible for the abominations of Baal and Ashtaroth. It was the daring innovations of Jeroboam had prepared the minds of men for this last and greatest violation of the law. "Man does not become base all at once." The plunge into wholesale idolatry would have been impossible, had not the deep descent to the calf-worship been traversed first. *Pecati poena peccatum*. That, too, begets children in its own likeness. Those who despised the "tabernacle of witness" in the wilderness were given up to take up "the tabernacle of Moloch and the star of the god Remphan" (Acts vii. 42, 43). If men will not have God in their thoughts, He gives them over to a reprobate mind (Rom. i. 28).

7. *We see his hand in the building of Jericho.* It was Hiel, a *Bethelite*, braved the curse and rebuilt the walls and reared the gates of the city of palm trees. Here we see the influence of a prior violation of law. Whether he acted in ignorance of law, or defiance of law, it is to Jeroboam's sin the deed owed its perpetration. The law might well be forgotten which had been so completely ignored. And the subject had been encouraged to violate it by his sovereign.

8. *We hear his voice in the curses of the children of Bethel.* Where but at Bethel would children have dared thus to revile a prophet of the Lord? The children only reflected the impiety and hatred of their parents. And from whom had these latter learned their hatred but from the king, who "made an house of high places" there, and inaugurated the schismatic worship with his own hands? From the day when a man of God laid the city under an interdict, the prophets of Jehovah must have been unpopular at Bethel, and as the time passed by, and the breach was widened, passive dislike ripened into open scorn and hatred, and a new prophet, of whose powers they had had no experience, could not pass by without insult and defiance.

The Jews have a saying, that in all the scourgings, plagues, and chastisements which they have endured, there is not one but has in it an ounce of the dust of the golden calf which Aaron made. The saying holds equally good of the calves which Jeroboam made. There is not one of the troubles which befell both the crown and the kingdom, not one of the bitter sufferings which the ten tribes endured, but had its starting-point in the sin of Jeroboam.

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 25—34.—*The Seed of Evil-doers.* 1. The subject before us furnishes illustration of the following propositions, viz.:

I. WICKED ARE THE SEED OF THE WICKED. 1. There is a sense in which this is generally true. (1) Jeroboam "made Israel to sin," Nadab "did evil in the sight of the Lord and walked in the way of his father, and in his sin whereby he made Israel to sin." (2) Baasha murdered Nadab and usurped his throne. Then he exterminated the whole house of Jeroboam. In this he fulfilled the words of Ahijah the Shilonite. Yet was it not out of zeal for God, but to serve his own selfish ambition. So under the same evil promptings he continued in the sin of Jeroboam (ver. 34). And his son after him walked in his steps. (3) Do we not still find that those who loyally serve God are children or grandchildren of godly persons? "The seed of the righteous is blessed." (4) This is the rule, but not without its exceptions; else missions to the heathen, abroad and at home, would be hopeless, which, thank God, they are not. 2. There is a sense in which this is universally true. (1) "Seed" is not always reckoned according to the flesh. "The children of the promise are counted for the seed" (Rom. ix. 8; see also the reasoning, Rom. ix. 13—18). (2) Thus God can, out of the very stones, raise up children to Abraham. Gentile believers in Christ are such (see Matt. iii. 9; Gal. iii. 26, 29). (3) In this sense all are not Israel who are of Israel. Descendants of Abraham who follow not his true faith and good works are not his seed (see John viii. 37, 40; Rom. ii. 28; ix. 7; Gal. vi. 15). (4) As the good, whether sprung from evil or good ancestors, are the seed of God; so are the wicked, whether sprung from evil or good ancestors, the seed of the devil (see Gen. iii. 15; John viii. 44; 1 John iii. 8). So are the wicked, without exception, the seed of the wicked.

II. THE TRIUMPHING OF THE WICKED IS SHORT. 1. *How brief was the reign of these kings!* (1) "The days which Jeroboam reigned were two and twenty years" (ch. xiv. 20). But this was little more than half the term of Asa's reign (ver. 10). (2) Nadab "reigned over Israel two years." This was really but a portion of two years, for, according to the usage of Scripture, a year entered is reckoned as if completed. He "began to reign over Israel in the second year of Asa," and "in the third year of Asa" did Baasha slay him (vers. 25, 28). (3) Baasha reigned "twenty and four years," still little more than half the time of Asa's reign. This son of David sat upon the throne of Judah long enough to see eight kings upon the throne of Israel, viz., Jeroboam, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Tibni, Omri, and Ahab. In these he witnessed no less than five dynasties! 2. *How little happiness had they in their rule!* (1) Sin brings the vexation of an evil conscience, with its attendant disquiet, suspicion, and fear. (2) Also the vexation

of an angry Providence. They that take the sword take the blade with the haft. The wars of these ever-changing dynasties left little room for repose. (8) How difficult for men to learn that worldly ambition and vexation are sisters; that abiding happiness is found only in the ways of God!

III. THE END OF THE WICKED IS DESTRUCTION. 1. *This is written in history.* (1) It is recorded in the history of these kings. Jeroboam in person died upon his bed, but in his family his light was extinguished in blood. Baasha in like manner died on his bed, but in his family he too perished by the sword. (2) These examples are but samples of history at large—sacred, secular. 2. *It is also written in prophecy.* (1) We meet with it in the alternatives to the conditions of salvation. (2) This destruction follows the spirit into the invisible world, and is a "much sorer punishment" than that which terminates in natural death. (3) The judgments upon the wicked recorded in history are but figures of the more terrible doom threatened in prophecy.—J. A. M.

Vers. 25—34.—*God's threatenings find at last a complete fulfilment.* I. THE LAST STEP IN A CAREER OF REBELLION AND FOLLY. Nadab might have been warned. His way to the throne was opened up by God's judgment in the removal of Abijah. He must have heard of the Divine threatenings; he might have seen the evil results of his father's sin. But in the face of all these things he adopted the sinful policy of his father. 1. *"He did evil in the sight of the Lord."* His heart and life were estranged from God and righteousness. This is the explanation of all that follows. Contempt of the claims of revelation, and rebellion against God are but the revelation to men of a heart and life which have already grieved and provoked God. 2. *He continued in a path already dark with the frown of God:* "and walked in the way of his father." The son who continues in his father's sin may incur thereby a deeper guilt than his. The iniquity of it may not have been at first so fully manifested. It might have been considered and abandoned in the shadow of the father's death. As the ages roll on sins manifest themselves, and the nation which will not turn from them seals itself for destruction. Are there sins with us the evil of which we know to-day as we did not know before? Then the guilt of their retention is greater than that of their first commission. 3. *He resolutely pursued a path which meant destruction, not for himself only, but for an entire people:* "and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin." It was nothing less than an attempt to rob God of His chosen people, and them of Him, in order that the house of Jeroboam might reign in safety. The terrible selfishness and the murderous heart of sin!

II. THE JUDGMENT. 1. *He was smitten in the midst of his army.* The host of his warriors could not save him. There is no place where God's hand cannot reach us. 2. *He was slain, not by the Philistines, but by one of his own servants.* Treachery and rebellion were visited with fitting punishment. The strict justice of the Divine vengeance. His judgments are repayments: "I will repay." 3. *The Divine threatening literally fulfilled* (ver. 29). God's words against sin are not lightly spoken. The end is hid from us, but His eye is resting, while He speaks, upon the woe.—J. U.

Ch. xv. 33—xvi. 7.—*Unrighteous Zeal.* I. SMITERS OF THE SINFUL ARE NOT NECESSARILY RIGHTEOUS (ch. xv. 33, 44). 1. *Baasha's crime.* Behind the slaughter of his master and his master's house lay the threatening of God. The Divine decree seemed to legalize the crime. But God's command did not come to him, nor was he moved by righteous indignation against the sins of the house of Jeroboam. He served his own passions, and it was sin to him before God, "because he killed him." The iniquity of those who rush in to smite wrong and hypocritically veil their hatred and spite and greed under the plea of zeal for God and righteousness (Rom. ii. 1). 2. *His evil life.* "He did evil in the sight of the Lord." State reforms are impossible for men whose own heart refuses God's yoke. Our work can never rise higher than the level of our life. There is also a spiritual law of gravitation: the streams of our influence can only flow downward. 3. *His hurtful reign.* He

“walked in the way of Jeroboam,” &c. He may have condemned Jeroboam’s sin in regard to the calves, &c.; but when begirt with the same state exigencies he continued the course he himself had punished with death. It is easy to condemn the sins of others. God has nobler work for us: it is, when surrounded by their temptations to triumph over them, and to serve not by words only but by deeds.

II. GOD’S MESSAGE TO BAASHA (ch. xvi. 1—7). 1. *His exaltation was of God.* “I exalted thee out of the dust.” The throne was not secured by his wickedness. The Lord had stilled opposition and given him success. 2. *It was great and unlooked for.* His tribe had no claim to the throne, and his own place among his people was a mean one. But God had, step by step, advanced him, and was now enabling him to reign in peace. The Lord’s help is not withheld from those who do not know and do not serve Him. “Despise thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” (Rom. ii. 4.) 3. *The return made to God.* He had changed nothing. Israel was still being led down the path of darkness and judgment, “to provoke Me to anger with their sins.” Every higher interest was sacrificed to the policy of keeping the ten tribes separated from the other two. Statesmen out of office condemn that which, when in office, they are afraid to change. And how many are there who are neglecting the trusts God has committed to them. Once they said, “If we had only place or wealth, &c., God would be served and men blessed.” These have been given and what has been done? Has the vow been performed? 4. *Baasha’s punishment worse than Jeroboam’s.* “I will take away the posterity of Baasha and the posterity of his house” (see ver. 11, “Neither of his kindred nor of his friends”). The Divine justice is shown in the differing penalties of sin.—J. U.

Vers. 1—7.—*Jehu’s Prophecy.* Jehu was a prophet and the son of a prophet. Of his father Hanani we read in 2 Chron. xvi. 7—10, where it is recorded to his honour that he suffered imprisonment for the fidelity of his testimony against Asa. This son was worthy of such a father. His testimony before Baasha, a man of desperate resolution and unscrupulous irreligion, was admirably courageous. We hear of him again after an interval of forty years (see 2 Chron. xix. 2; xx. 34). In his prophecy here—

I. HE RECITES THE CRIMES OF BAASHA. These were—1. *That he “walked in the way of Jeroboam.”* This implies (1) that he was influenced by a like ambition. An ambition to be great in the eyes of men—to be a king. (See ch. xi. 37.) (2) That to compass this he resorted to unscrupulous measures. He rebelled against his king. He rebelled against his God. 2. *That he made the people of the Lord to sin.* (1) To make any people, or person, to sin is a great crime. And who can sin only to himself? Directly or indirectly sin must exert an influence beyond. (2) To make God’s covenanted people to sin is a higher crime. The oath upon them is violated. The salt of the earth, too, loses its savour, and the world is left to putrefy. (3) To make God’s people to sin, not as by accident, but of set purpose, is the highest crime. This Baasha did in upholding Jeroboam’s calves—the “work” of men’s “hands” (ver. 7). He did this fearing, as Jeroboam had feared, that if the people went to Jerusalem to worship they might repent of their rebellion against the house of David. For the same reason Baasha opposed the reformation under Asa, and to this end set about the building of Ramah (see 2 Chron. xvi. 1). 3. *That he thereby provoked the anger of the Lord against them.* (1) This expressed itself in the incessant wars by which they were shaken “as a reed is shaken in the water” (ch. xiv. 15). (2) This is laid at the door of Baasha. His house is implicated with him. Jehu, therefore, had a message also to his house (ver. 7). 4. *And because he killed Jeroboam.* (1) This, however, he did not, in person. Jeroboam died on his bed (ch. xiv. 20). (2) But, in his house, he slew him (ch. xv. 27—29). A man lives in his posterity; when his posterity are destroyed or exterminated, he is extinct. (3) Perhaps the words “because he killed him” might be fairly rendered “because he killed it,” viz., the house of Jeroboam. This anyhow is the meaning (see ch. xv. 27, 29). The notion that he killed Jehu is incon-

sistent with the records of history, which bring Jehu upon the scene again in the days of Jehoshaphat.

II. HE UTTERS THE JUDGMENTS OF THE LORD. 1. *The posterity of Baasha was to be taken away.* (1) His own. He was to have no male representative. (2) That of his house. His female as well as male issue was to be destroyed. He was to be utterly rooted out. 2. *History repeats itself.* (1) It does this because crime must provoke appropriate punishment. God recognizes the *lex talionis*—eye for eye, tooth for tooth. (2) The house of Baasha being like to that of Jeroboam, the doom is similar. As Baasha executed the judgment of the Lord upon the house of Jeroboam, another aspirant to royalty is to execute the judgment of the Lord upon the house of Baasha. Note 3. *There are posthumous punishments.* (1) Baasha was as great a criminal as any of his house, yet he came to his grave in peace and honour. He died on his bed and was buried in state. Must there not be a future reckoning and retribution? (2) Baasha is punished in the extermination of his house. But this judgment came upon him after his decease. How could that affect him unless there be a future state? (3) The same inference follows from the judgment upon the bodies of his posterity after their decease. What matter would it be to him or them to have their bodies eaten by dogs or by vultures when the life was gone, unless the spirits survived? (4) How such things react upon the disembodied spirit is a mystery. "There are many things in heaven and earth that do not enter into our philosophy."—J. A. M.

Vers. 8—14.—*The House of Baasha.* The character of Baasha is drawn in the paragraphs immediately preceding, which also contain an account of his end, which was better than he deserved, and suggests the reality of a future retribution. His family so fully followed in his steps that we have no mention of an Abijah amongst them, "in whom was found some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel" (see ch. xiv. 13). The judgment of God upon this wicked house is written in the words before us. We have to reflect upon—

I. THE DEPRAVITY OF THE HOUSE OF BAASHA. 1. *The prophecy of Jehu came to them as a warning.* (1) Such is the nature of this class of prophecies. The threatenings of God, like His promises, are conditional. So, had they repented, the judgments denounced would have been removed or moderated. (2) Of this principle the Scriptures furnish many illustrations. Take, e.g., the argument of Abraham's prayer for Sodom and its success (Gen. xviii. 23—32). See the effect of the contrition of Ahab (ch. xxi. 27—29). How the judgment of the Lord upon Nineveh was averted through their humiliation before God (Jonah iii., iv.). (3) This prophecy, therefore, came in mercy, as a respite, to give space for repentance. Else judgment might have fallen without remonstrance, as it did in the issue. By timely repentance and reformation let us seek to avert all threatened judgments. 2. *But here was no repentance.* (1) Elah walked in the steps of his father. He followed the sin of Jeroboam. Their idolatries are called "vanities." The gods they worshipped could neither profit nor help them. "Happy is that people whose God is the Lord." Miserable, those whose gods are vanities! (2) Moreover, Elah abandoned himself to sensuality. See him in Tirzah, a palace beautifully situated (Cant. vi. 4), where he might have found innocent and rational enjoyment. But there he is in the apartments of Arza, his *major domo*, drunk! What a condition for a king! (3) What a condition for a nation, to be ruled by such a king! The Ephrathites had reason to repent of their revolution. They did not improve upon the house of David. Revolutionists have generally found their dreams of a political Paradise illusory. (4) The wisdom of Christians would be to make the best of the political system they may inherit, and pray for the speedy coming of the kingdom of Christ. This was the spirit of Paul's exhortations, even when such a monster as Nero ruled the kingdoms of the world (see Rom. xiii. 1; 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2; Tit. iii. 1; also 1 Pet. ii. 13, 17).

II. THE INSTRUMENTS OF THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD. 1. *The wicked follow their own devices.* (1) Zimri had an ambition to reign. Such an ambition is not uncommon. Few can ascend the throne of a kingdom. But there are tyrants on the

magisterial bench, in the factory, in the shop, in the mansion, in the college. (2) Zimri had also a desperate resolution to bend circumstances to his object. His rank as a cavalry officer, commanding half the chariots of Elah, gave him access to the palace. There, finding his lord helplessly drunk, he sacrificed gratitude and duty, and struck the fatal blow. What a warning to drunkards! Death is especially terrible when it surprises the sinner in his sin (see Luke xxi. 34). (3) With infernal promptitude Zimri proceeded to slaughter the whole of the seed royal. In the massacre he involved also the "kinsfolk and friends," so as to leave no rival to contest the throne. (4) But how little did he dream, after wading through this sea of blood, that his reign should be limited to a single week! How disproportionate was the end to the means! If men could duly estimate the end, how it would lead them to hesitate over the employment of the means! 2. *But the providence of God is over all.* (1) God foresaw everything. This is evident in the word of prophecy. And He so controlled the actors that the results answered the ends of justice. This also is evident in the same word. (2) But this did not excuse the wickedness of the executioners. God allows the wicked to punish each other for Him. So makes He the wrath of man to praise Him (see 2 Kings ix. 31). (3) He has better work for His saints. To bless is more congenial to them than to destroy. The ambition of the spiritual is too noble to be satisfied with an earthly crown, or to pay its price.—J. A. M.

Vers. 8—20.—*A Divine judgment and its instrument.* I. THE JUDGMENT. 1. *It was delayed in God's long-suffering.* Baasha had reigned nearly twenty-four years; Elah nearly two. The Lord is swift to bless but slow to strike. He has no delight in a sinner's death. Do we remember that God's long-suffering to-day is not forgetfulness or indifference, but the restraining of infinite love? 2. *It came upon him in his sin.* The army was in the field, but he was not there. He was deaf to the calls of duty and honour. He had lost his self-respect; he "was drinking himself drunk in the house" of his chamberlain. And now in a moment pleasure was swallowed up in terror, the misused life in death. The suddenness of God's judgments: "at such an hour as ye think not," &c. 3. *Its extent.* It was not less than was predicted. His kindred and his friends were cut off and their offspring (ver. 11). Every word was fulfilled. God's threatenings are not exaggerations meant to frighten us away from sin; they are descriptions. God's eye is resting on the woe which is hid from us, and His words are those of perfect truth and tenderest love.

II. THE INSTRUMENT. 1. *Zimri was his servant.* He had trusted and advanced him. Again we notice how ingratitude and rebellion against God are repaid in kind. If there be no love and truth toward God in us, let us not be surprised if we find these wanting in others toward us. 2. *Though his deed fulfilled God's word, it was not of God:* "he sinned in doing evil in the sight of the Lord;" it was "treason that he wrought." That which punishes evil may itself be sin. God's shield was withdrawn from around the house of Baasha, and an ambitious, cruel heart was allowed to work its will upon them. It is no justification of our act that the nation or persons against whom it is done were wicked and deserved their fate; the question remains, Were we righteous in inflicting it? 3. *The scourge was soon broken and cast away.* He reigned but seven days. In slaying the king he was but ending his own life; in entering the palace gained by blood, he was laying himself upon his funeral pyre. The cup we covet may be a cup of death. Take God's way, and bide God's time: He will give that which is good.—J. U.

Vers. 15—22.—*The Kingdom of Men.* Though "the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men," yet is He not responsible for the principles by which such kingdoms are actuated. For these are in striking contrast to those which shall obtain in the "kingdom of God." In the kingdom of men as represented in the specimen before us we encounter—

I. FOLLY. 1. *True religion is pure-wisdom.* (1) It is the "wisdom of God" revealed—*outwardly*, in His word—*inwardly*, by being written by His Spirit in

the heart. (2) To encourage this is man's highest wisdom. Godliness has promise of this life—of that to come. 2. *False religion is supreme folly.* (1) It is in some respects even worse than no religion. It is more than a negation in respect to truth; it is pertinacious antagonism to truth. (2) It is folly in relation to the highest interests of man. It demoralizes in the proportion of its ascendancy. It forfeits the heaven it professes to seek. It aggravates the hell it professes to avoid. (3) It expresses itself in vanity. What more vain than the idols of the heathen? The very forms of those idols evince the monstrosity of folly. Witness a monkey or an onion for a God; a fish with a man's head; a satyr; a griffin! (see Deut. xxxii. 21; Isa. xli. 29.) 3. *Of such folly was the kingdom of Israel flagrantly guilty.* (1) The calves with which they so deeply sinned were introduced by the kingcraft of Jeroboam. (2) They are maintained by the kingcraft of all his successors, of whatever dynasty. Even Zimri, who only reigned seven days, and in those days was occupied in exterminating the house of Baasha, yet found time to pronounce himself in their favour. (3) What a substitute for the Lord God of Israel who brought them up out of the land of Egypt!

II. *RESTLESSNESS.* 1. *Witnessed in frequent dynastic changes.* (1) The house of Jeroboam lasted twenty-four years. This gave place to that of Baasha, which lasted twenty-six. Zimri wore the crown seven days. Then came a four years' struggle for it between Omri and Tibni. At length "Tibni died and Omri reigned." 2. *These changes represented strong passions.* (1) There was the impatience of the rule of the house of David which resulted in the revolution in favour of Jeroboam. Yet so little did they benefit by the change, that when Baasha destroyed that house they accepted, without a murmur, the rule of the regicide. (2) But when Zimri treated the house of Baasha as Baasha had treated that of Jeroboam, they did not accept the second regicide. They now evinced some sense of right and wrong; but it was a wayward sense. There was no inquiry after the will of God. The army set up Omri, their general; but the civilians, apparently, chose Tibni. Here was a confusion which lasted until the death of one competitor. 3. *These commotions were sanguinary.* (1) The division of the nation into two kingdoms induced civil war. (2) Civil war also attended the treason of Zimri. For the army was occupied with the siege of Gibbethon when the news of this treason reached them, which determined them to raise the siege and invest Tirzah instead. The capture of Tirzah was not unbloody. A desperate character like Zimri would not tamely yield, when, rather than fall into the hands of Omri, he burnt the palace over his head and perished in the flames. (3) The competition for the crown between Omri and Tibni protracted the civil war four years. Omri is not said to have resigned until the "thirty-first year of Asa, whereas Zimri's treason occurred in the twenty-seventh year of Asa," upon which Omri was chosen by the army. (Compare vers. 15 and 23.) The difference here is about four years.

III. *CRIME.* 1. *Foremost under this head is idolatry.* (1) We mentioned this under the head of "folly," but it is not thereby removed from the category of "crime." Idolatry is the grossest and most direct insult to the living God. (2) Hence no crime is in Scripture more heavily denounced and more signally obnoxious to punishment. 2. *Next comes the capital crime of murder.* (1) As idolatry is the highest affront to God, so is murder the greatest offence against man. (2) The crown of Israel was deeply stained with the blood of murder—with that of the house of Jeroboam; with that of the house of Baasha. (3) Suicide also disgraced these violent times. And the note is significant that in his suicide Zimri perished "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 to sin" (vers. 18, 19). Note: Men with their own hands may punish their sin.

What a contrast is the kingdom of God! Its principles are peace, righteousness, and joy. Of this those have the earnest who in heart accept Jesus as their Melchisedec.—J. A. M.

VERS. 21—34.—*Change without improvement.* I. *OMRI'S INDEBTEDNESS TO DIVINE GOODNESS* 1. *His success against Zimri* (vers. 15—25). The traitor fell

before him almost without a struggle. 2. *Against Tibni*. Israel was equally divided, yet his life was preserved and the kingdom given to him. Men pass up to place and means and influence through a pathway which, if it is only looked back upon and considered, is full of power to touch the heart and bow it under the will of God. Do we read the story of our past, and let it touch us with the tale of God's marvellous mercy?

II. HIS SIN. 1. *His hardness of heart*. Not only was he blind to God's mercy. He passed up unawed through the midst of the terriblest judgments and the most marked fulfilment of God's threatenings. Neither the goodness nor the severity of God was allowed to touch him. 2. *He "did worse than all that were before him."* He was a man of energy and worldly wisdom. Both were bent to strengthen his power. He went further than Jeroboam, who seduced Israel, for he seems to have compelled them (see the mention of Omri's statutes, Micah vi. 16) to sacrifice before the calves. Great talents, if joined to a selfish, hardened heart, only carry men further away from God.

III. HIS SIN'S FRUIT (vers. 29—34). 1. *In his son's character and reign*. (1) "He did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him." (2) It was possible only to an Ahab to set Jezebel—the great enemy of God and His people—upon the throne of Israel. (3) It was not enough to worship the calves of Bethel and Dan. He must turn wholly away from the God of Israel and worship Baal. 2. *In the people's contempt of Jehovah*. Hiel's act was done in the face of Israel, yet it was not forbidden; its commission awakened no fear. The man was left childless, yet judgments so harrowing and fulfilments of prophecy so marked had no effect upon his own soul. The legislation that blots out God's ordinances delivers a people over to darkness and judgment.—J. U.

Vers. 23—28.—*Omri's Reign*. After a four years' contest with Tibni, the son of Ginath, for the crown of Israel, the followers of Omri prevailed over the adherents of his rival. The issue, then, was that "Tibni died and Omri reigned." Whether Tibni died in battle, or whether, when his followers were overcome, he was taken and put to death, is not written; but the record illustrates how in the revolutions of the wheel of fortune the fall of one makes way for the rise of another. Let us now view this new monarch—

I. IN HIS PALACES. 1. "*Six years reigned he in Tirzah.*" (1) This was once a lovely palace. Beautiful for its situation like Jerusalem (Cant. vi. 4), and beautified during the reign in it of all the earlier kings of Israel. For it was the third and last palace built by Jeroboam, the first of these kings, to which he removed from his palace at Penuel. (2) But it was now damaged by fire. When Zimri shut himself up in it as his defences were driven in by the forces of Omri in the siege of the city, he set it on fire and perished in the conflagration. Thus in a moment the labour of years was demolished. Destruction is easier than construction. This principle also holds in morals. (3) Still for six years Omri held his court in this city. Whether he occupied a portion of the palace which escaped the flames, or resided temporarily elsewhere in the city, is not revealed. The omissions of Scripture are instructive. Things of minor importance must not be allowed to divert attention from momentous things. 2. *Six years he reigned in Samaria*. (1) The origin of this new capital is here recorded (ver. 24). Seven hundred pounds of our money seems a small price for a hill considerable enough to be the site for the capital of a kingdom. (Compare 1 Chron. xxi. 25: 600 shekels of gold=£1,095.) Perhaps Shemei was animated by public spirit when he disposed of his hill for so trifling a sum. Perhaps he did so to perpetuate his name. His motive is withheld from us. Herein also is instruction. We are not judges of the motives of our fellows. God surveys the motives of all hearts. (2) Henceforth Samaria figures prominently in the history of Israel. It gives its name to the middle portion of Canaan. Tirzah, Penuel, Shechem, are henceforth little heard of. Men give importance to places rather than places to men. The importance even of heaven will be rather that of its inhabitants than of its situation. Learn the paramount value of spiritual qualities.

II. AT THE ALTAR. 1. "*He walked in all the ways of Jeroboam.*" (1) This means that he encouraged the worship of the calves, if not that he even appeared at the altar as high priest (see chs. xii. 33; xiii. 1). (2) It means further that he was moved by the same state policy. He desired to keep his people from Jerusalem lest they should repent of their revolution from the house of David. (3) Note: Satan has his opportunities. While the pride of Israel smarted under the insolence of Rehoboam, Jeroboam could impose his calves upon them. Had he missed that opportunity, it might have been impossible afterwards to have effected his purpose. Omri could not have done it. We should be wise as serpents, viz., in avoiding the snare of the devil, in availing ourselves of our opportunities for good. 2. *He "did worse than all that were before him."* (1) He "made Israel to sin" as Jeroboam did, persuading them to halt at Bethel or visit Dan, for that Jerusalem was too far from them. Persuading them also that his calves were images of the true God (see ch. xii. 28). (2) He bound them by *statute* to worship the calves (compare Micah vi. 16). In this he went farther than Baasha, who had set about building Ramah to prevent the people from going to Jerusalem (2 Chron. xvi. 1).

III. IN HIS EXIT. 1. *He "was buried."* (1) He had a state funeral. Money might procure that. He left a son to succeed him on the throne who would pay this public respect to his remains. (2) How variously is the same subject viewed by men in the flesh, and by the inhabitants of the spiritual world! The funeral of the corpse is the event upon earth; the destiny of the spirit is the event yonder. 2. *He "slept with his fathers."* (1) This expression does not mean that he was buried with them in their sepulchre, for Omri was buried in Samaria, a city which had no existence in the days of his fathers. Of Baasha also it is said that he "slept with his fathers, and was buried in Tirzah" (ver. 6), though there is no evidence that any of his fathers were buried in Tirzah. (2) It seems to import that he died upon his bed, as the generality of mankind finish their course. This expression does not appear to be used when any die by the hand of violence as a judgment of the Lord upon their sin. (3) Yet a violent death was deserved by Omri, as it was also by Baasha and Jeroboam, who, like him, came peacefully to the grave. They laid up sin for their posterity (see Job xxi. 19). But are they thus to escape the punishment of their own iniquity? Surely there must be a "judgment to come!"—J. A. M.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER XVI. 29—34.

THE REIGN OF AHAH.—With the accession of Ahab a new main section of our history begins—the section which has its close in the destruction of the house of Omri by Jehu, as related in 2 Kings x. And this reign is recorded at unusual length; in fact, it occupies nearly all the remaining portion of this volume, whereas the reigns of preceding kings have in several instances been dismissed in a few verses. It owes this distinction to the ministry of the great prophet Elijah by which it was marked, and, indeed, was profoundly influenced; but this ministry, it must be remembered, was necessitated by the critical circumstances of the time. It may be that "every age thinks itself a crisis," but no one can fail to see that

this was one of the veritable turning-points of Jewish history. One of the real "decisive battles of the world"—that between the Lord and Baal—was then fought out. No wonder that our historian felt constrained to chronicle at length the transactions of a reign so pregnant both with good and evil for the people of the Lord and for the faith with which they had been put in trust. Indeed, the same guiding principle which led him to devote so many of his pages to the reign of Solomon, when the theocratic kingdom was at its highest, impelled him to linger over the reign of Ahab when religion was at its lowest ebb. The secular historian, too often like the sun-dial which "counts no hours save those serene," draws a veil over the time of his country's decadence, or touches its misfortunes with a

light hand. It is only in the inspired records that we have an impartial register both of the glory and shame of a common-wealth.

Ver. 29.—And in the thirty and eighth year of Asa king of Judah [see notes on ver. 23] began Ahab ["Father's brother." The name is apposite. He was Omri's *alter ego* in impiety] the son of Omri to reign over Israel: and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty and two years.

Ver. 30.—And Ahab the son of Omri [The repetition is noticeable. It is possible that the preceding verse has been revised by a chronologer. The LXX. text is much more condensed] did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him. [The same words are used of his father in ver. 25. It is not difficult to see in what way Ahab's rule was worse even than Omri's. The latter had gone beyond his predecessors in the matter of the calf-worship. See note on ver. 25. But the calf-worship, however it may have deteriorated in process of time—and it is the tendency of such systems to wax worse and worse—was nevertheless a cult, though a corrupt, and unauthorized, and illicit cultus, of the one true God. Under Ahab, however, positive idolatry was established and fostered—the worship of foreign and shameful deities.]

Ver. 31.—And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him [Heb. as marg. *was it a light thing?* Ewald (362 a) explains this to mean "because it was." But it seems better to understand, "was it such a light thing . . . that he must needs also?" &c.] to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat [i.e., the sins of heresy and schism], that he took to wife Jezebel [= "Without cohabitation," "chaste," Gesenius, who compares it with *Agnes*. It is hardly the original of Isabella] the daughter of Ethbaal [= "With Baal." The Greek form Ἐθβαλος or Εἰθβαλος, found in Jos., Ant. viii. 13. 1; cf. Contr. Ap. i. 18, suggests as its original עֶתְבַּאִל i.e., "with him is Baal." In either case the name well became him, for, according to Menander (*apud* Jos. l.c.), he was the priest of Astarte, who gained for himself the throne of the Zidonians by the assassination of Phœles. He is further said to have reigned thirty-two years, and to have lived sixty-eight years. He would therefore be thirty-six years old at the time of his accession. It does not appear that (Keil) he was the brother of Phœles. Phœles, however, was certainly a fratricide. (Rawlinson reminds us that Jezebel was great-aunt to Pygmalion and

Dido.) This statement helps to explain Jezebel's fierce and sanguinary character, and at the same time accounts for her great devotion to the gods of her country, and for her determined efforts to establish their impure rites in her husband's kingdom. It was only what one would expect from the child of such a parent] king of the Zidonians [This alliance, it is extremely probable, was made for purely political reasons, as a counterpoise against the active, ambitious, and encroaching power which had arisen in Damascus Syria. The army which had already humbled Omri (ch. xx. 34) could not fail to be a source of danger to Tyre], and went and served Baal [Heb. *the Baal*, i.e., the lord or master; cf. *ὁ κύριος*. The name appears among the Babylonians as Bel (Isa. xlvi. 1)—Greek βῆλος. Reference has already been made to the frequent recurrence of the word in different compound names, and in different parts of Palestine, as showing how widespread must have been his worship at an earlier age. We are also familiar with the word in the names Hannibal, Hasdrubal, &c. Baal was the supreme male god of the Canaanitish races, as Ash-toreth was their great female divinity. The former was regarded, not only as the possessor, but as the generator, of all], and worshipped him.

Ver. 32.—And he reared up an altar for Baal in [Heb. omits *in*; cf. ch. xv. 15, &c.] the house of Baal [A temple, we can hardly doubt, of considerable splendour. Jezebel would not be satisfied with less], which he had built in Samaria [According to 2 Kings iii. 2, x. 27, he also raised a pillar (A. V. *image*) in the house of Baal. We learn from Dîus and Menander that Hiram had raised a golden pillar to Baal in Tyre. Perhaps Ahab may have copied this. But it is probable that this image, which represented the generative powers of nature, was an essential part of the impure worship of Baal. The house and its contents alike were destroyed by Jehu (2 Kings x. 27).]

Ver. 33.—And Ahab made a grove [Heb. *an Asherah*, i.e., image of Astarte, a female figure corresponding to the male effigy just described. See note on ch. xiv. 23]; and Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.

Ver. 34.—In his days did Hiel the Beth-elite [Observe the form בֵּיתֵי בְּתֵל, and see note on ch. ii. 8. It is noticeable that it was reserved for a man of Bethel to commit this act of impiety. It was to such results the worship of the calves contributed] build [i.e., *rebuild, fortify*, as in ch. xii. 25; cf. ch. ix. 17. It is clear from Judg. iii. 13 and

2 Sam. x. 5 that it had not been entirely uninhabited. But the Arab village was now converted into a town with gates and bars] Jericho [We learn from Josh. xviii. 21 that Jericho then belonged to Benjamin. It had evidently passed, however, at this date into the possession of Israel. It has been suggested that the transference took place in the reign of Baasha (Rawlinson). But it would seem that from the very first, parts of Benjamin (notably Bethel, Josh. xviii. 13) belonged to the northern kingdom. See Ewald, "Hist. Israel," iv. 2, 3. It is not quite clear whether the rebuilding of Jericho is mentioned as a proof of the daring impiety of that age and of the utter contempt with which the warnings of the law were treated, or as showing the ignorance and consequent disregard of law which prevailed. But, on

the whole, it seems to be implied that Hiel knew of the threatening of Joshua, and treated it with defiance. It has been suggested that the rebuilding had really been instigated by Ahab, and for his own purposes, hoping thereby to "secure to himself the passage across the Jordan" (Keil), but the text affords but slight warrant for this conjecture]; he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his firstborn [i.e., at the cost of, in the life of, Abiram], and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the Lord [Josh. vi. 26], which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun. [The exact fulfilment of the prophecy is mentioned, as showing that even in those dark and troublous times God did not leave Himself without witness, and that law could never be violated with impunity.]

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

**Vers. 29—33; ch. xvii. 1.**—Ahab represents the culminating point of the perversity of the kingdom of Israel. At once more able and more profane than his predecessors, he fostered to an unprecedented degree the corruption of morals, private and public injustice, and idolatrous practices. Ahab, prompted by Jezebel, became the more dangerous enemy of the cause of God. At this period of the national history arose the greatest of the prophets, Elijah, who well bore out his name—the strength of God—and who was the faithful type of John the Baptist, the immediate forerunner of Christ. In the coming of Elijah at such a crisis, we have an illustration of a general and permanent rule of God's kingdom. The excess of evil calls out the strongest manifestations of good. Never was the power of Satan more rampant than at the time when the Son of God appeared upon earth. So in the end of time, the day of Antichrist will be also the day in which Christ will intervene most directly in the great drama of history. Let us not, then, yield to a hopeless pessimism when the powers of darkness seem to be let loose, for the two following reasons:

**I. THE LETTING LOOSE OF EVIL BRINGS ITS OWN CONDEMNATION.** By showing its true nature it passes sentence on itself, and brings to maturity all the seeds of death latent within it. Ahab, casting off all restraints and rushing recklessly on his ruin, writes his own condemnation.

**II. AN AHAB ALWAYS CALLS FORTH AN ELIJAH.** Whenever the army of God seems on the verge of defeat, its Divine leader takes the direct command. Reflections like these may reinforce our courage in view of the giant evils of our own day.—E. de P.

**Vers. 30—33.**—*Moral Ruin through Moral Weakness.* This was the turning-point in the history of the kingdom of Israel. Till now the people had professedly worshipped Jehovah under the symbol of the calf. Now idolatry of a grosser kind was avowedly set up as the national religion, on a scale of great magnificence. The text, therefore, is worthy of our study as the record of an event of deep historic significance, but we propose to consider it as a suggestive example of the way in which a man of moral weakness may be betrayed into the worst depravity, to the undoing of himself and others. We learn the following lessons from Ahab's life, of which a summary is given here:

**I. THAT A FOOLISH CHOICE MAY RESULT IN LASTING DISHONOUR.** Ahab's marriage was the cause of his ruin. Jezebel, his wife, was the daughter of Ethbaal, who had been the high priest of Astarte, but was led by his ambition and unscrupulousness to usurp his brother's throne. Her parentage and her surroundings would have

been a sufficient warning to a prudent king. But besides these Ahab had the Divine law before him (Exod. xxiv. 16), which distinctly forbade union with the Canaanites. Such a marriage was unprecedented in the kingdom of Israel, and was the more fatal because of the character of the queen, the Lady Macbeth of Scripture. She was reckless and licentious, fanatical and cruel, with a temper as vindictive as her will was resolute. Her husband became a mere tool in her hands. He could not foresee all the issues of his choice, but he knew the choice was sinful. Show from this—illustrating by example—1. *How one wrong step leads to another.* This marriage to the establishment of idolatry. Indicate the nature of the false religion set up. 2. *How companionship influences character.* The stronger moulding the weaker. "A companion of fools shall be destroyed." 3. *How personal fascination may cause men to swerve from rectitude.* Jezebel's fascinating power was regarded as witchery and became proverbial (Rev. ii. 20). 4. *How young people should be warned against unholy alliances.* Marriage makes or mars character, hope, and blessedness (2 Cor. vi. 14). "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers."

II. **THAT EASY GOOD NATURE MAY PROVE THE SOURCE OF DEEP DEGRADATION.** Ahab was not destitute of good feelings and right impulses. Had he been firm instead of pliable, and resolutely refused to gratify the queen by the establishment of idolatry, he might, with God's help, have neutralized the effect of the false step he had taken. But he was of a yielding nature, while she was resolute; and so, like Samson, he lost his kingliness. Point out the special dangers of those who are kindly and genial. Their unwillingness to disoblige, their wish to be popular, their dread of derision, their love of ease and pleasure, &c., may have fatal issues.

III. **THAT BRILLIANT TALENTS WILL NOT COMPENSATE FOR MORAL WEAKNESS.** This king was gifted with military skill, with artistic taste, &c., but these could not help him in the hour of spiritual conflict. Give examples from history of the careers of clever but unprincipled men, their meteoric success, their future punishment, here or hereafter; e.g., Napoleon I. Many men of genius have been ruined by drunkenness and often high education has served only to alter the form and increase the influence of the sin. The clever forger is worse than the common thief; the viciousness of a leader of society does more injury than the licentiousness of an ignorant peasant.

IV. **THAT ARCHITECTURAL SPLENDOURS AND MILITARY VICTORIES ARE NOT PROOFS OF NATIONAL PROSPERITY.** Describe Ahab's magnificent buildings, his ivory house, his daring restoration and fortification of Jericho, his palace and park in Jezreel, which became to Samaria what Versailles once was to Paris. Show how often in history such costly expenditure has been a sign of decay. Extravagance and luxuriousness are omens of ruin to a people. "The Decline and Fall" of the Roman Empire is an abiding illustration of this. Nor will successful wars give stability to a kingdom. Ahab's victories were great military achievements, but of what avail to him and to his house? "The throne must be established in righteousness."

V. **THAT AMPLE POSSESSIONS DO NOT CONTENT AN UNQUIET HEART.** In Jezreel, the perfection of taste, Ahab was wretched, because he wanted Naboth's vineyard. (Read that story.) It is not in the power of earthly things to satisfy a hungry soul. The richest man is not content if he has only his riches, nor will any addition to them give him satisfaction. "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke xii. 15). "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." God "satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness."

VI. **THAT PARTIAL REPENTANCE DOES NOT AVERT GOD'S PUNISHMENT OF SIN.** Ahab "put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly," when he heard Elijah's final threat; but, though this first sign of penitence was graciously encouraged by a promise, the change went no further. He dreaded punishment, but his heart did not turn from sin, and therefore, though he disguised himself in the battle, the arrow "shot at a venture" was winged by Divine retri-

bution to his heart. God is our Judge, as well as our King. For the impenitent there will be no escape. In vain will they "call on mountains and rocks to fall on them, and hide them from the wrath of God." Now in this day of mercy, God calls on all to repent, and find pardon and hope in Him, who has come "to seek and to save that which was lost."—A. R.

Vers. 29—33.—*Ahab's wickedness.* The evil genius of the son of Omri appeared—

I. IN HIS WALKING IN THE SINS OF JEROBOAM. 1. *In this, probably, he encouraged his father.* He appears to have been associated with Omri in the kingdom. Omri reigned twelve years—viz., six in Tirzah, and six in Samaria; but his reign commenced "in the thirty-first year of Asa" (ver. 23). This would bring the close of his reign to the second year of Jehoshaphat, whereas in the text we read that "in the thirty and eighth year of Asa, king of Judah, began Ahab, the son of Omri, to reign over Israel." Hence it is evident Ahab must have been four or five years associated with his father in the throne. (2) The extreme wickedness with which Omri is charged was probably owing to Ahab's evil influence; for the "statutes of Omri" seem to have been inspired by the "counsels of Ahab" (see Micah vi. 16). So the note that "he sinned above all that were before him" is alike applied to the father and son (see verses 25, 30). And the leading influence of Ahab may explain why we commonly read of the "house of Ahab" rather than of the house of Omri. Parents are often demoralized by wicked children. 2. *He did not alter his course after his father's death.* (1) The sin of Jeroboam was perpetuated in Israel down to the time of their captivity. The captivity seemed necessary to break its power over them. Judgment is the last resource of mercy. (2) The same reasons of state continued to influence the successive rulers of the nation. Reasons of state are too often more potent than reasons of piety and righteousness. Else we had been spared the discredit of wicked wars, wicked laws, wicked trading.

II. IN HIS MATRIMONIAL ALLIANCE WITH JEZEBEL. 1. *She was a pronounced idolater.* (1) She was a Zidonian, and for any Israelite to marry one of that nation were a violation of the law of God (Exod. xxxiv. 11—16; Deut. vii. 3; Josh. xxiii. 11—13). For a king of Israel to do this was the more reprehensible. Office brings responsibilities. (2) These people were worshippers of strange gods, and in particular of Baal. Hence the name of this queen (אִיבֶל), which may be derived from אִיבָה, *where?* and בַּל, a contraction of בַּעַל, *Baal*, thus: *Where is Baal? q. d., a seeker of Baal.* Hence also her father's name (אֶתְבַּעַל), *Ethbaal*, which Gesenius construes to denote, "Living with Baal, i. e., enjoying the favour and help of Baal." 2. *Such alliances have ever proved demoralizing.* (1) The giants (גִּבּוֹרִים), *monsters*, viz., in wickedness, perhaps, rather than in stature, whose violence provoked the judgment of the deluge, were the issue of marriages between the "sons of God," or holy race of Seth, and the "daughters of men," or profane descendants of Cain (Gen. vi. 1—4). (2) Solomon's heathen wives and concubines made a fool of the wisest of men, and brought his house and nation into infinite trouble (ch. xi. 1—13). (3) The history of this alliance also was most disastrous. 3. *For typical reasons also they were forbidden.* (1) The marriage union should represent the union between Christ and His Church (Eph. v. 32). Therefore a husband, that he may justly represent Christ, is bound to be holy; and so is his wife, that she may suitably represent the Church. (2) Should the reverse happen, then is the woman an emblem of an apostate Church, of which the husband represents the Antichristian head (see 1 Cor. vi. 15, 16). Jezebel, accordingly, is viewed in this light in the imagery of the Apocalypse (see Rev. ii. 20).

III. IN HIS ENCOURAGEMENT GIVEN TO BAAL AND ASHERE. 1. *To Baal.* (1) To this god he built a temple in Samaria. This was the more audacious since, being placed in his capital, it seemed to vie with the temple of the Lord in the capital of Judah. (2) To Baal also he reared an altar there. This, of course, meant a service of priests and sacrifices. (3) Furthermore he himself worshipped Baal. Thus he gave the influence of his position to the encouragement of this idolatry.

That influence was therefore also given to discourage the pure worship of the God of Israel. 2. *To Ashere*. (1) This word is construed "grove" in the text as elsewhere. But a little reflection will teach us that groves do not spring up in a day. Beside, it is not here said that Ahab *planted* (נָטַע), but that he *made* (שָׁרַח) the Ashere. (2) The Ashere was a Canaanitish idol, probably of the figure of a goat, in the worship of which there appear to have been very abominable rites.

No wonder, then, the anger of the Lord should be provoked. If we would not provoke it we must avoid the spirit of idolatry. This spirit is shown in the love of illicit things. Also in excessive love of lawful things.—J. A. M.

Ver. 34.—*The Temerity of Hiel*. In discussing this subject we have to consider—

I. "THE WORD OF THE LORD WHICH HE SPAKE BY JOSHUA THE SON OF NUN." The record of this word is found in Josh. vi. 26. And the questions now arise—1. *Why did God thus curse Jericho?* (1) That its desolate condition might be a standing testimony to His abhorrence of the wickedness of the place. So abandoned were that people to idolatry that Rahab the hostess alone was accounted worthy of being saved. And "all her kindred"—(כָּל־מִשְׁפַּחֹתֶיהָ)—all her *families*—the word is plural; families, viz., on her father's and mother's side, both were given to her (Josh. vi. 23). Note: The faith of an individual is not only a personal blessing, but also a blessing to his family, to his nation, to the world, in time, in eternity. (2) That it might be a standing sign prophetic of judgments to come. (a) Jericho was the first city which offered resistance to the people of God; and it was proper it should stand forth as a figure of the last city that shall offer resistance, viz., Great Babylon. (b) As Jericho was compassed about six days before it fell, so is Great Babylon destined to last until the beginning of the seventh age of prophetic chronology. (c) As Jericho fell at the seventh blast of the trumpet, so at the sounding of the seventh Apocalyptic trumpet will Great Babylon come into remembrance before God. (d) As Rahab, through the righteousness of faith, escaped the plagues of war and fire which destroyed the city, so are the people of God urged to come out of Babylon lest they partake her plagues also of war and fire. 2. *Why did God thus curse the rebuilder of Jericho?* (1) Consider the import of the curse. His eldest son was to perish by a judgment of Heaven as soon as the work commenced; and if, notwithstanding the judgment, he persisted in the undertaking, he should see the death of his youngest son. It is thought the intermediate members of his family would also perish as the work advanced. That the curse involved the penalty of *death* is evident, since the curse upon the city meant the death of its inhabitants (see Josh. vi. 17). The law of God also expresses that devoted things must die (see Levit. xxvii. 29). (2) The curse, then, came to keep up the testimony for God against sin; also to be a public sign of the judgment upon Babylon to come. Whoever would remove such a testimony must be a man of determined wickedness, and therefore deserving execration. Let us beware how we oppose or discredit any faithful testimony for Christ.

II. THE TEMERITY OF HIEL TO ENCOUNTER THIS MALEDICTION. 1. *The historical fact is before us*. (1) He did build Jericho. Not only did he lay the foundation, but he also set up the gates. Resolution and persistency are fine qualities when they are concerned with truth and goodness. But it was otherwise here. (2) He paid the penalty accordingly. When he laid the foundation his first-born Abiram perished. This did not deter him. So when he set up the gates "his youngest son Pegub" was smitten. 2. *But what could have possessed him?* (1) The general answer to this question is, that the spirit of wickedness possessed him. No godly man could be so rashly defiant. Even reputable men of the world would shrink from such an audacious undertaking. The respect for sacred things manifested by such unconverted men encourages the hope that they may yet seek His grace and mercy. Hiel must have been a hardened sinner to have attempted this. (2) A more particular answer is suggested. (a) He was a "Bethelite." This expression may mean that he was born in Bethel, though this is not clear. It suggests rather that he was wedded to the sin of Jacob's; for Bethel was the head-quarters of that

apostasy. There Jeroboam placed one of his famous calves. There he built an altar. There also he built a temple. There his priests congregated, and there he, in person, officiated as high priest. The service of the calves would so harden the heart of Hiel as to prepare him to disregard the curse of Jehovah. (b) Then, he lived in the days of Ahab. These were days of fearful degeneracy. For Ahab provoked the Lord by wickedness more than all that had been before him. Hiel might argue that if Ahab could thus outrage the law of the God of Israel and survive, so might his own children survive, though he should transgress the adjuration of Joshua. It is dangerous to do evil because others have done it, apparently, with impunity. (c) The curse was denounced a long time ago. Since then five centuries and a half had passed away. Time weakens memory with men, and when man has a purpose to serve, he may argue that this also is the case with God. But He that remembers mercy for ever also remembers justice and judgment. Let us not deceive ourselves. Let us pray God to bring our sins to our remembrance, that we may repent of them before Him, for with Him they are never forgotten till forgiven.—J. A. M.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER XVII. 1—24.

**ELIJAH AND THE GREAT DROUGHT.**—The picture which the historian has just drawn of the shameless idolatry and the gross degeneracy of the earlier part of Ahab's reign forms a fit prelude to an account of the ministry of the great prophet Elijah, which occupies this and several succeeding chapters; for the two stand together in the closest connexion. It was only the unprecedented corruption of that age which necessitated such a mission, and a mission armed with such credentials as his. It will be obvious to the most cursory reader that the narratives comprised in the remaining portion of this book and the earlier part of 2 Kings are of a very different character from those which have so far been before us. The ministry of Elijah and Elisha alike is little more than a series of miracles. Of their words comparatively few are recorded; we hear of little but the signs and wonders that they wrought. And on this ground—because it is miraculous—this portion of our history is summarily discarded by many recent writers, not as wholly unhistorical, but as mythical; as containing, indeed, many germs of truth, and as having a basis of fact, which, however, has been distorted into its present legendary shape by the credulity and fancy of a later age, or by the half-unconscious exaggeration of some poetic-prophetic writer. But without entering upon the question of miracles generally,

for which this is not the place, two remarks may be hazarded here. First, that the narrative is so sober, so circumstantial, so full of touches which have every appearance of having been painted from the life, that were it not for its supernatural element, the most destructive critic would never have thought of questioning its veracity. Secondly, that if miracles are ever allowable or conceivable, if there ever have been occasions in the history of our race when we might concede to the Necessary Being the liberty which we ourselves possess, of varying the so-called order of nature, or of impressing a visible purpose upon its forces, then assuredly the time at which we have now arrived, the beginning of Ahab's reign, was such an occasion. It is quite true that no new revelation was then given to the world. Neither Elijah nor Elisha, as Ewald has observed, "originated anything essentially new," but the task assigned them was one which needed supernatural support and attestation, no less than the promulgation of a new law or gospel. It was their work, at the very darkest hour in the spiritual history of Israel, when a determined effort was being made to stamp out the faith of God's elect, when the nation chosen of God to be the depositary of His truth was fast lapsing into heathenism, and more, into unutterable abominations, it was their work to witness for God and truth and purity. If God's purposes of grace to our world, which had been ripening from age to age, were not

now to be frustrated; if the one lamp which cast a ray on the world's thick darkness was not to be utterly extinguished, then, as far as we can see, God must send special messengers, and arm them, in token of their mission and authority, with superhuman powers. The age demanded the messenger; the messenger must have credentials; the credentials could only be miraculous. If it is objected, therefore, against our history that it contains a mass of miracles, our answer is that the crisis necessitated them, and that only miracles would have availed to accomplish the moral and religious reformation which Elijah is allowed on all hands (see, e.g., Ewald, "Hist. Israel," iv. 63) to have wrought; that only signs such as he was commissioned to show would have sufficed, in that age, to counteract the influences of such a princess as Jezebel and of such a propaganda as her eight hundred and fifty priests; to rescue the world from corruption, and to preserve to distant generations the treasury of truth and hope with which the Jewish people had been entrusted by the Most High. "The times," says Bishop Hall, were fit for Elijah, and Elijah for the times. The greatest prophet is reserved for the worst age. Israel had never such an impious king as Ahab, nor such a miraculous prophet as Elijah." "The profusion of God's miraculous working in Elijah was due to the exorbitant wickedness of the rulers of Israel at that time, which required an extraordinary manifestation of God's Divine power, in order to recover His people from the ruin and misery into which they had fallen" (Bishop Wordsworth).

The grandeur of the character of Elijah, however, has been universally recognized, and not least by those who have disputed his miracles. Indeed, it may well be questioned whether the intellect and conceptions of that or a much later age were adequate to create such a character and personality as his, a character which has profoundly impressed men of all ages and of all creeds. The glowing panegyric of the son of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus, xlviii.) need only be hinted at here. The colossal proportions he assumes in the traditions and belief of the Mohammedans is well known. "Omnium suae aetatis pro-

phetarum facile princeps; et si a Mose desceris, nulli secundus," is the testimony of an illustrious Jew (Abravanel). "The grandest and most romantic character that Israel ever produced" is the verdict of a brilliant writer amongst ourselves (Stanley). His highest praise, however, is that "in the New Testament no prophet is mentioned and extolled so frequently as Elijah" (Bähr). Nor must it be forgotten here that he it was who was chosen to appear with Moses in glory at our Lord's transfiguration, and to speak of the exodus He should accomplish in Jerusalem (Luke ix. 31).

The chapter divides itself into four parts. In ver. 1 we see Elijah standing before Ahab and denouncing the drought; in vers. 2—7 we find him hiding in the Wady Cherith and fed by the "Orebim;" in vers. 8—19 he is resident at Zarephath, feeding the widow and her house; in vers. 17—24 he restores the widow's son to life and health.

Ver. 1.—And Elijah [This name, which appears both as  $\text{יְהוֹאֵל}$ , and, less frequently,  $\text{יְהוֹאֵל}$ , means *my God is Jehovah*. It is so singularly appropriate to the man who bore it, and so exactly expresses the idea of his life and the character of his work (see especially ch. xviii. 39), that it is difficult to resist the belief that it was assumed by him. This is certainly more probable than that it was due to the presence of his parents. It may, however, mark their piety and hopes, and may have influenced the life of their son. Cf. 1 Chron. iv. 10], the Tishbite [So he is called without any further designation in ch. xxi. 17; 2 Kings i. 3, 8, &c. The presumption is altogether in favour of  $\text{תִּשְׁבִּי}$  being the name of his birthplace. Cf. ch. xi. 29], who was of the inhabitants of Gilead [The interpretation of these words is much disputed. The Heb. stands  $\text{הַתִּשְׁבִּי מִתְּשֻׁבָּה}$   $\text{יְהוֹאֵל}$ . It will be observed that the first and second words have the same radicals, and it has been hence inferred that they cannot mean "two entirely distinct things" (Rawlinson, *al.*), and that either the Masoretic pointing must be set aside, when the words would yield the meaning, "Elijah, the Tishbite of Tishbe of Gilead," or they must be interpreted, "Elijah, the stranger of the strangers of Gilead." But it is by no means certain that the current interpretation is not the best. Such a play upon words as it involves is not at all uncommon in Hebrew. The meaning would then be that Elijah, who was, if not by birth, by

domicile of Tishbe, was one of the strangers—**תִּשְׁבִּי** is found in the sense of *παρούκος*, *inquilinus*, in Gen. xxiii. 4; Exod. xii. 45; Levit. xxii. 10; xxv. 35, 47, &c.—or immigrants who had settled in Gilead. The only objection to this rendering—apart from the identity of radicals just mentioned—is that we should have expected to find **תִּשְׁבִּי** written *plene*, as the word always is elsewhere. It is alleged by Keil, Bähr, *al.*, however, that the *stat. constr. plur.* may well be an exception to the rule, and in support of this view it may be mentioned that the cognate word, **תִּשְׁבִּי**, is constantly found in the *constr. plural* as **תִּשְׁבִּי** (see Gesen., Thes. 635). It is clear, then, that the usual interpretation is by no means to be lightly set aside. It is certainly preferable to the rendering, “Elijah the stranger,” &c., for we have no proof that **תִּשְׁבִּי** can bear this meaning. In favour of the alternative rendering “the Tishbite of Tishbe,” it may be said that it has the support of the LXX., *ὁ ἐκ Θεσβών*, and of Josephus (*Ant.* viii. 13. 2), *ἐκ πόλεως Θεσβώνης τῆς Γαλααδίτιδος χώρας*. Nor is it any weighty objection to this view that we now here read of a Tishbe in Gilead: as for the matter of that, we have no undoubted traces of any such place west of the Jordan; the passage in Tobit (ch. i. 2, LXX.), which is often alleged as proving that there was a Tishbe in Galilee, and from which Gesenius, Bähr, Keil, &c., conclude that this must be the Tishbi here referred to, being too uncertain to permit us to build any positive conclusions thereupon. See *Dict. Bib.* iii. pp. 1489, 1516. In any case—and it is perhaps impossible to decide positively between this and the rendering of the A. V.—it is clear that Elijah, even if born in Galilee (but see John vii. 52, for the belief of the Jews), was trained for his work in Gilead. It was, therefore, a rugged, unsettled, half-civilized, trans-Jordanic region gave to the world the greatest of its prophets. In this respect he was like Moses (*Exod.* iii. 1), and his antitype the Baptist (*Luke* i. 80). “The fact that this mission was entrusted not to a dweller in royal city or prophetic school, but to a genuine child of the deserts and forests of Gilead, is in exact accordance with the dispensations of Providence in other times” (*Stanley*) said unto Ahab [The abrupt way in which Elijah appears upon the scene without a word of introduction or explanation is certainly remarkable. Ewald observes that “his first entry within the province of the history seems almost as unique and inexplicable as his final disappearance.” “Elijah comes in

with a tempest, and goes out with a whirlwind” (*Hall*). But there is no sufficient ground for believing (*Thenius, al.*) that a part of our history which described some of his antecedents has been lost to us, or that our text merely recites the *issue* of a long conference which Elijah had held with Ahab, for other prophets of this period, Ahijah, Shemaiah, Jehu, are introduced to us in a similar manner, though it must be allowed that their respective ministries were of very different proportions and importance from Elijah’s. This sudden appearance, however, is thoroughly characteristic of the man. He presently disappears just as suddenly (*ver.* 5. Cf. *xix.* 3; *2 Kings* i. 8). It was thought by some in that age that he was borne hither and thither by the Spirit of God (*ch.* xviii. 12), and men of a later time caught this as one of his prominent characteristics (*Eccles.* xlviii. 1—12). Hence, too, the traditions of a still later period, according to which he was “the fiery Phinehas returned to earth, or an angel hovering on the outskirts of the world,” (*Stanley*), As the Lord God of Israel liveth [This formula here occurs for the first time, and it is full of meaning. It asserts first that Jehovah, not Baal, is the God of Israel, and it suggests, in the second place, that he is the *living* God, such as Baal was not, and that though ordinarily He keeps silence, He is one who can make His power felt], before whom I stand [*i.e.*, “Whose I am and whom I serve” (*Acts* xvii. 23). Cf. *ch.* xviii. 15. The slaves of the East stood before their masters. See note on *ch.* i. 28, and cf. *1 Sam.* iii. 1; *Luke* i. 19. Elijah claims to speak in God’s name, and as His ambassador], there shall not be dew nor rain [Observe the order of the words. Dew is perhaps put first as more essential to vegetable life. Elijah only denounces a plague already threatened in the law as the punishment of idolatry (*Deut.* xi. 16, 17; *xviii.* 23; *Levit.* xxvi. 19). He came forward as the vindicator and restorer of the law] these years [An indefinite period. Its duration depended on Elijah’s word, and that again on the penitence, &c., of the people. It was because of the obduracy of king and people that it lasted so long] but according to my word. [The idolatrous priests no doubt claimed for Baal the dominion over nature and absolute control over the clouds and rain—a power which, it may be worth observing, the monks of the convent of St. Katherine at Sinai, where Elijah was, are thought to possess by the Arabs of the Sinaitic peninsula. Elijah directly challenges them to a trial of strength. It was as if he had said, “The God that answereth by rain, let him be God.” On the fitness

of this miracle, both as a sign and as a punishment, see "Homil. Quart." v. 100, 101. "To Eastern and Southern nations, where life and water go always together, where vegetation gathers round the slightest particle of moisture and dies the moment it is withdrawn, . . . the withholding of rain is the withholding of pleasure, of sustenance, of life itself" (Stanley). "My word" is somewhat emphatic, "*Nisi ego, et non alius vir . . . dixero*" (Seb. Schmidt). No doubt there is a special reference to the prophets of Baal. Their inability to remove the ban would prove the impotency of their god. Elijah had asked for the supernatural powers which he here claims (James v. 17, 18.)

Ver. 2.—And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying [cf. ver. 8; ch. xviii. 1; xxi. 17; 2 Kings i. 3].

Ver. 3.—Get thee hence, and turn thee [for the construction (*dat. commodi*) cf. Gen. xii. 2; xxii. 2; Cant. ii. 11] eastward [This he must do, whichever side of the Jordan, east or west, the brook Cherith was, for his interview with Ahab had probably taken place at Samaria. But the word would be specially appropriate, if the Cherith was beyond Jordan. Ewald, indeed, holds that our text is decisive on this point], and hide thyself [Heb. *be hid*, i.e., lie hid, Niphal. It does not seem to have occurred to the prophet that such a calamity as he had denounced against the country almost made his disappearance from the scene a necessity, or if it did, he still waited for instructions. Cf. ver. 9; ch. xviii. 1, &c. Not merely was his flight necessary in order to escape persecution or punishment—the search which Ahab instituted for him in part explains his disappearance—but to avoid importunity. It would have been morally impossible for him, though a man of inflexible will (Bähr) to dwell among the people, while the land groaned under the terrible burden which he had laid upon it, and which he alone was able to remove. His life would not have been safe—see ch. xviii. 4—and the ordeal would have been intolerable. And ch. xix. 2 shows that the prophet's nature had its weaker side. Wordsworth observes that Elijah's escapes and departures into unknown places are "faint resemblances of the mysterious vanishings of our blessed Lord, after He had delivered some of His Divine messages which excited the anger of the people;" Luke iv. 29; John viii. 59; x. 39] by [Heb. *in*] the brook

[Heb. *קֵרִית*]; i.e., *watercourse, wady*. This word has two meanings. Its primary meaning is *torrent*; its secondary and, from the

fact that the torrents of the East are for the most part dried up during the greater part of the year, its common meaning is *torrent-bed*, or ravine, valley. Both meanings are brought out here. Elijah should *dwell in and drink of* the *קֵרִית*. Cf. ch. xv. 3] Cherith

[The word means *separation*, a name which may possibly indicate that it was extremely secluded, or it may have been a boundary line of some sort. Tradition identifies the brook Cherith with the *Wady-el-kelt*, i.e., the great valley, west of the Jordan, which debouches into the Ghor, half a mile south of Jericho, and Robinson and Porter pronounce in its favour. Van de Velde (ii. 310, 311) suggests the *Wady Fasael*, a few miles to the north. But it is much more probable that it is to be sought in the region east of the Jordan, where, indeed, Eusebius and Jerome place it. It is extremely doubtful whether the *Wady-el-kelt*, or any Cis-Jordanic ravine, would afford sufficient privacy. Probably Jericho was already rebuilt. As we cannot decide with certainty, we may reasonably conjecture that it is to be sought in Elijah's own country of Gilead, and probably in the *Wady Alias*, i.e., at no great distance from *Abara* (Conder, "Tent-work," p. 230), the Jordan ford nearly opposite Bethshan, where, indeed, an old tradition places it] that is before [Nothing positive can be concluded from *לפני*. In Gen. xvi. 12; xxiii. 19; xxv. 18; Job. xviii. 14, &c., it means eastward. But this meaning is gathered from the context.] Jordan. [The Cherith was clearly one of the lateral valleys which run into the Ghor. It is just possible that the name may be recovered by the survey of the country east of the Jordan, which is now (1830) being organized.]

Ver. 4.—And it shall be that thou shalt drink of the brook [There was clearly nothing miraculous about the supply of water. No miracle was wrought even to continue the supply, ver. 7]; and I have commanded [cf. ver. 9; Isa. v. 6; Amos ix. 3, &c.] the ravens to feed thee there. [Despite the general agreement of scholars that by *עֲרִבִים* we must understand "ravens," I think probability favours the meaning *Orbites*, i.e., inhabitants of Orbo. In support of the received rendering is the very powerful consideration, that it is the interpretation of all the versions (except the Arabic) and of Josephus, who, beyond all question, represented the belief current in his own time (Ant. viii. 13. 2). It is also certain that elsewhere in Scripture we find some of the inferior animals supernaturally constrained to effect God's purposes, both of mercy and of judgment (1 Kings xiii. 24;

2 Kings ii. 24; Dan. vi. 22; 2 Peter ii. 16), though never, it must be said, in so rational and methodical a way. Nor can it rightly be contended that the words "I have commanded," *צוה*, imply human agency, for elsewhere we find the Almighty *commanding* (same word) the serpent (Amos ix. 3) and the clouds (Isa. v. 6; Psa. lxxviii. 23). It is not, however, a sufficient account of this narrative to say that the prophet merely helped himself to the food which the ravens, whose *habitat* was in the Wady Cherith, brought, day by day, to their nests and their young. For, not to insist on the words, *לָּהּ מְבִיאִים*, *bringing to him* (ver. 6), the expressions "bread (or food, *לֶחֶם*) and flesh," and "morning and evening" certainly point to something more than such a fortuitous supply. Whether the *Orebim* were "ravens" or not, they certainly acted in an intelligent and rational way: they brought food, that is to say, to the *prophet*, and they brought it for months together with unflinching regularity. But against this view the following considerations may be urged. 1. It is hardly in accord with God's usual way of working, that he should employ birds of the air and those unclean (Levit. xi. 15; Deut. xiv. 14) and ravenous birds, to feed and succour His saints, rather than men or angels. Of course, no one who does not altogether repudiate the supernatural will deny for a moment that the Almighty *could*, had it seemed good to Him, have sustained His prophet by the instrumentality of ravens, just as easily as by any other means. But it appears to be almost a fixed principle of His dealings with men, not to resort to miracles when ordinary means will suffice; or if He does employ miracles, they are never *bizarre* or *fantastic*; they are *not* such as to suggest the idea of fable or legend; they are invariably the simplest and directest means to the end. And it is submitted that this prolonged and methodical ministry of ravens is altogether unlike God's method of procedure on other occasions. It was an angel succoured Hagar and Ishmael in their need (Gen. xvi. 7). It was an angel fed Elijah himself, a few years later (1 Kings xix. 5, 6). They were angels who ministered to our blessed Lord after His long fast (Matt. iv. 11). But God's "chief means," it is always to be remembered, "is man." And it is to be carefully observed that when, about this very time, not one, but one hundred prophets were threatened, just as Elijah was, with death, no miracle was wrought to save their lives or to supply their wants, but they were fed by human agency, with bread and water (ch. xviii. 13). But it is still more signifi-

cant that elsewhere in this narrative, which is characterized by the profoundest sobriety and reticence, there is what we may almost call a studied absence of the miraculous element. No miracle is wrought to protect Elijah against Jezebel, but he must consult for his own safety by flight. He is sent to the brook Cherith, because there is *water* there; in other words, God chose that hiding place in order to obviate the necessity for a miracle. And when the water of the brook dries up, no miracle is wrought to prolong the supply, but the prophet, at the risk of detection, must go forth and seek it elsewhere. And at Zarephath he is fed, not by ravens, but by human agency—by a widow woman. It is true a miracle appears to have been wrought, but the narrative has so little idea of effect and gives so little prominence to the supernatural that even that is doubted. To put the interpretation of "ravens," consequently, on the word *עֲרָבִים*, provided it will yield any other meaning, appears to be to do violence to the spirit of the context, and to the tenour of Scripture generally. 2. It is somewhat difficult to believe that such a prodigy as this, so altogether unique and irregular, would not have been mentioned, had it really happened, elsewhere in Scripture. The absence of all reference thereto is remarkable, when we consider how constantly the ministry of Elijah and his lessons (Luke iv. 25, 26; ix. 54; James v. 17; Rev. xi. 5, 6) are referred to in the New Testament; but when we observe what an admirable and unequalled illustration of God's providential care this incident would have supplied to some of our Lord's discourses, and notably to that of Luke xii. 22 sqq., this silence becomes almost suspicious. 3. Despite the practical unanimity of the versions, the interpretation "ravens" has been disputed from very early times. St. Jerome among Christians, Rabbi Judah Hakkodesh and Kimchi amongst Jews—these are but some of those who have repudiated this rendering. 4. A very slight change in the vowel points—*עֲרָבִים* instead of *עֲרָבִים*—yields the meaning "Arabians." That a fugitive would readily find, not only shelter but sustenance among the Bedouin, whose generous hospitality and loyalty to strangers is proverbial, is obvious, and we know that about this time some Arab tribes had dealings with the Jews (2 Chron. xvii. 11); but without any change at all, a sufficient meaning may be extracted from the word. For we find that somewhere in the *Ciccar*, or plain of the Jordan, off which the Wady Cherith lay, was a rock *Oreb* (*עֲרֵב*), Judg. vii. 25), apparently east of the Jordan (Judg.

viii 1). but in any case, at no great distance from Bethabara (John i. 28). Now Bethabara has been identified, almost to a certainty (Conder, "Tent-work," pp. 229—232) with the modern 'Abarah (i.e., passage or ferry), "one of the main fords of the Jordan just above the place where the Jaldid river, flowing down the valley of Jezreel and by Beisân, debouches into Jordan." But we learn from an ancient and independent source, the *Bereshith Rabba* (see Dict. Bib. ii. 464), that in the neighbourhood of Beisân, i.e., Bethshean, there was anciently a town named Orbo, עֲרְבוֹ—a word, it is to be observed, which preserves the radicals of עֲרְבוֹ transposed. We may safely assume that these two places, Orbo and Oreb, were identical; that the former was the representative at a later day of the latter, or was the shape which the name assumed when bestowed on the hamlet, as distinct from the rock. The inhabitants of this place would, of course, be called עֲרְבִים, just as the inhabitants of Ziph were known as *Ziphim* (1 Sam. xxvi. 1), or the men of Zidon as *Zidonim* (1 Kings v. 6). We find, consequently, that this word, which means "ravens," also designates the inhabitants of a village near Bethshean, and probably east of the Jordan; that is to say, in or near Elijah's native country of Gilead. And with this agree the testimonies of Rabbi Judah and Jerome already referred to. The former held that the *Orebim* were not ravens at all, but inhabitants of Orbo or the rock Oreb, while the latter says, with equal positiveness, *Orbim, accotae villae in finibus Arabum, Eliae dederunt alimenta*. It only remains for us to notice the perfect naturalness and consistency of the narrative thus interpreted. Elijah is bidden to go eastward; to hide in the Wâdy Cherith, where he would be among tribesmen or friends. For water, there is the brook; for food, the *Orbites*, whose name would be familiar to him, and whom he may have known, are commanded to feed him. He goes; he is received with Arab hospitality; the Eastern law of *Dakheel*, by which any man at any time is entitled to throw himself upon the mercy and protection of another, ensures his safety. The *Orebim* minister assiduously to his wants. Every morning before the dawn, every evening after dark, they bring him bread and flesh.]

Ver. 5.—So he went and did according unto the word of the Lord: for [Heb. and] he went and dwelt by [Heb. in] the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan.

Ver. 6.—And the ravens brought [Heb. bringing] him bread and cesh in the morning and bread and flesh in the evening

[the Vat. LXX. has "bread in the morning and flesh in the evening." It has been objected that this verse is fatal to the view advanced above—that the עֲרְבִים were not birds but men—that no men would have "come regularly twice a day, . . . thus giving themselves needless trouble and increasing the chance of detection, when they might easily have left him a supply for several days" (Rawlinson). But if we may believe that the prophet was, if not among kinsmen or friends, yet among the pastoral, seminomadic people of Gilead, a people, that is to say, like the Bedawin in their instincts and customs, it is easy to understand that having taken him under their protection, they would make a point of visiting him regularly, not only to show him all possible honour, as a person endued with supernatural powers (cf. ch. xviii. 7, 13), but to afford him some measure of sympathy and companionship. And we can then see a reason for the morning and evening being mentioned. Their visits would be made in the twilight, which is really longer in the East than is generally supposed; and he drank [Hebrew drinks. The Heb. future often has the force of an imperfect, and expresses continued or repeated action] of the brook.

Ver. 7.—And it came to pass after a while, [Heb. at the end of days. Not necessarily *post annum*. The words no doubt have this force elsewhere, Levit. xxv. 29; Judg. xi. 40; xvii. 10; 1 Sam. xvii. 7, &c.; but in all these cases, the meaning is not resident in the words themselves, but in the context. It is impossible to say how long Elijah remained in the Wâdy. All we can be sure of is that he must have been more than two years, out of the three and a half, at Zarephath. See on ch. xviii. 1] that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land. [עֲשָׂה, *imber*, signifies heavy rain. The word used in ver. 1 is עֲשָׂה, rain of any kind.]

Ver. 8.—And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying,

Ver. 9.—Arise, get thee to Zarephath [cf. Obad. 20. The name points to furnaces or workshops for the refining of metals, זָרְפָּת, *liquavit*. LXX. Ζαρεφθά; cf. Luke iv. 26. It is now represented by an insignificant village, *Surajend*, which, however, preserves the original name. It lies still, as no doubt it did then, on the high road between Tyre and Sidon, and on the shore. The prophet would thus be in the lion's den, in the very heart of the dominions of Ethbaal. See Porter, ii. 397. Stanley (S. and P. v. 268) shows how the memory of this visit still lingers in the traditions of the neighbourhood], which belongeth to Zidon [Sidon is

visible from a spot a quarter of an hour distant. "The dependence of Sarepta on Sidon is indicated in the inscriptions of Sennacherib, where it is mentioned as belonging to Luliya, king of Sidon." Rawlinson], and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee [In considering these words the generally destitute condition of the widow of the East should be borne in mind (Acts vi. 1; 1 Tim. v. 3—5, &c.) We gather from Luke iv. 25, 26, that it was for her sake as well as his that the prophet was sent thither. Matt. xv. 21—28 tells of another Syro-Phœnician woman.]

Ver. 10.—So he arose and went to Zarephath [It does not follow that his route lay over the "White Promontory," or Ladder of Tyre, the way our Lord took when He "departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon" (Matt. xv. 21). If his place of concealment was anywhere near 'Abara, or Bethshean, it is probable he would keep east of the Jordan, as far as Banias or Dan, where the river is fordable, and whence a road leads direct to Sidon. He would thus avoid Tyre]. And when he came to the gate of the city [the ruins of Surafend are still very considerable (see Thomson, "Land and Book," i. 235) and prove it to have been a place of importance, a town with gates and walls. "Gate," however, is used somewhat loosely in the O. T.—of the entrance to a village, or even of the place of concourse and of judgment], behold, the [Heb. a. He did not yet know that this was the widow to whom he was sent. Her replies to his requests first informed him that this was the object of his search] widow woman was there [Heb. behold there, a widow woman] gathering of sticks [This was not a promising sign. It only proved her poverty]: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel [Heb. the vessel. Bähr understands the drinking-cup that Elijah had brought with him from the Wâdy Cherith; but surely it is extremely improbable that he would carry either cup or bottle with him. "The vessel" probably imports the ordinary vessel used for the purpose—the "potter's earthen bottle" (Jer. xix. 1). That this was used for fetching water, we know from Isa. xxx. 14], that I may drink.

Ver. 11.—And as she was going to fetch it [The gift of water to the thirsty is always regarded as a sacred duty in the East. "Never yet during many years' residence in Syria and many a long day's travel, have I been refused a draught of water by a single individual of any sect or race. The Bedawy in the desert has shared with me the last drop in his water-skin" (Porter). It is clear

1 KINGS.

that the water supply of Phœnicia had not entirely failed. "The fresh streams of Lebanon would retain their life-giving power long after the scantier springs of Palestine had been dried up," Stanley] he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread [The request for food will soon reveal to him whether this is the widow woman who is to sustain him] in thine hand. [Bähr would understand here, "Give me a morsel of the bread which thou hast in thine hand"—*einen Bissen des Brodes das du besitzest*—and he has the LXX., *ψωμὸν ἀποῦ τοῦ ἐν τῇ χειρὶ σου*, to support him. But it is fatal to this view

(1) that the verb is *קָחָהּ*—the same as already used in the request for water (ver. 10), and (2) that there is no article before bread. "The bread in thine hand" would have been clear, but the words as they stand can only mean, "Bring me, together with the water in the vessel, a morsel of bread in thine hand." Besides, "in thy possession" would probably have been expressed by "under thine hand," as in 1 Sam. xxi. 3, 4, 8, though "in the hand" is found in Eccles. v. 13; Ezra vii. 25, in a somewhat similar sense.]

Ver. 12.—And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth [Bähr, Keil, *al.* conclude from this formula that the woman was a worshipper of the God of Israel. Bähr is extremely positive on this point, affirming that, had she been a heathen, the words would have been positively hypocritical, and more, that Elijah would never have been sent (Luke iv. 26) to an idolater. He further suggests that possibly she was an Israelite by birth, who had been married to a Phœnician. But all this is extremely doubtful. In the first place, it is noteworthy that the words are, "Jehovah thy God," words which show that she recognized Elijah, perhaps by his Jewish face, probably by his prophetic dress (2 Kings i. 8) as a worshipper of Jehovah. But had she also been the same, it is probable that she would have said "my God," for that form would not only have given greater force to her obtestation, but would have established a bond of sympathy—such as Jews in a foreign land were only too glad to recognize—between them. And the remark that it is hypocrisy to swear by a god in whom one does not believe is disposed of by the consideration that she may well have believed in the Lord as well as in Baal. See note on ch. v. 7. The Tyrians knew nothing of monotheism], I have not a cake [קֶמַח, the synonym of *חֶמֶץ* (ver. 13), the smallest kind of bread. It was baked in the ashes; hence

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the LXX. *ἐκφυγίας*. We gather from this pitiful disclosure that the famine had already extended to Phœnicia, as it naturally would do, considering how dependent that country was on Israel for its breadstuffs; see note on ch. v. 9, 11. Josephus (Ant. viii. 13, 2) cites Menander as attesting to a year's drought in the reign of Ethbaal, but **an handful of meal in a** [Heb. *the*] barrel [כַּיָּס, probably connected with *cadus*, *cadeau*, &c.; bucket, pail], and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks [*i.e.*, a few sticks (Gesenius)]. We may compare the German idiom *ein Paar* and our "two or three." But "two" in this sense occurs nowhere else in the Bible—"two or three" is found in 2 Kings ix. 32; Isa. xvii. 6; Amos iv. 8. According to Roberts, the word is constantly used for "few" by the natives of India. This widow was evidently reduced to the greatest extremities, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son [The LXX. has *τίκνους* here and in ver. 13, and *τὰ τέκνα* in ver. 15. Bähr contends that Elijah first learnt from these words—the mention of a son and the absence of any mention of her husband—that he was addressing a "widow woman." But we read Gen. xxxviii. 14, 19, of "garments of widowhood" (cf. Deut. xxiv. 17), and ver. 10, "a widow woman," &c., almost implies that Elijah from the first recognized her as such], that we may eat it, and die.

Ver. 13.—And Elijah said unto her [This looks at first like a further test. But it is pretty clear that the prophet now knew that the widow of whom God had spoken was before him], Fear not; go and do as thou hast said [Heb. *according to thy word*] but [Heb. *only, however*]: make me thereof [Heb. *thence, i.e.*, of the oil as well as the meal. The former took the place of butter. Bread was sometimes baked in oil] a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and thy son. [The "first" and "afterwards" are emphatic by position. When Bähr says that Elijah would never have made this demand, and that still less would the widow have paid any attention to it, had she been a heathen, he appears to forget the words that followed (ver. 14). When one in the garb of a prophet swore, as this man did, by the sacred name, a heathen, with the belief of the heathen in miracles, might well be persuaded that the word was truth. Elijah's manner alone would carry conviction with it.]

Ver. 14.—For thus saith the Lord God of Israel [The words, "God of Israel," if anything, favour the supposition that he was speaking to one who was not of Israel. See on ver. 1. There the words were addressed

to one who was denying the God of Israel] The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fall, until the day that the Lord sendeth [Heb. *giveth*. For כָּיָס see note on ch. vi. 19] rain upon the earth. [Heb. *on the face of the ground*. Like expression ch. xviii. 1; Gen. ii. 5. It has been said that there is not a syllable here to imply a miracle, and it has been contended that this Sareptan household was sustained for two years simply by the blessing of God on the use of natural means. But clearly, if there was nothing else, there was supernatural knowledge on Elijah's part. And it cannot be denied that the literal construction of the words points to a "supernatural and inexplicable multiplication of food" (Rawlinson), similar to those of which the Gospels tell. It is just possible that this was a figure of speech, which practically meant no more than the necessities of life should somehow be provided, directly or indirectly, by God. Nor is this view effectually negated, as Bähr contends, by Luke iv. 26; but, in view of 2 Kings iv. 44, Matt. xiv. 15—21, xv. 32—38, it is extremely improbable. It is curious how many miracles of Elijah and Elisha foreshadowed those of our blessed Lord.

Ver. 15.—And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah [the echo of ver. 13, "Go and do according to thy saying"]: and she, and he, [or *he and she*, according to Chethib] and her house [probably her friends or poor relatives who came to partake of her plenty (Bähr)], did eat many days. [Heb. *days, i.e.*, an indefinite period. See note on ver. 7. The word does not refer to the first baking (ver. 13), but it is to be explained by the next verse.

Ver. 16.—And [Omit. This verse is explicative, not additional] the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which He spake by [Heb. *by the hand of*] Elijah. [Having received a prophet in the name of a prophet, she received a prophet's reward. (Matt. x. 41, 42). Stanley suggests that our Lord, when He spoke of the "cup of cold water," may have had this incident in his mind.

Ver. 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. [Does this mean that he was dead? Keil thinks it perfectly clear that it does. Bähr is as firmly persuaded that it does not. He justly remarks (1) that the same expression occurs in Dan. x. 17 (cf. 1 Kings x. 5) where it does not imply death. (2) That as the text does not

say, "and he died," we must conclude that it did not mean to say it. (3) Verses 18, 20 do not necessitate the belief that he was dead (see below). (4) Josephus, who was not afraid of the miraculous, has interpreted the words thus: *ὡς καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ἀφείναι καὶ δόξαν νεκρῶν*. To this it may be added that *נָפְשׁוֹ* simply means *breath*, and that where it is desired to convey the idea of *life*, additional words are used (as in Gen. ii. 7, "the *breath of life*; Gen. vii. 22, "the *breath of the spirit of life*." Cf. Job xxvii. 3, Prov. xx. 27 (where the intelligence or reason appears to be meant), Eccles. iii. 21. It must be confessed also that the statement, "his sickness was so sore," &c., is quite *apropos* and intelligible, if we may understand that he lay in a state of *coma*, but would be an extremely roundabout way of affirming that he was dead.

Ver. 18.—And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee [Heb. *what to me and thee*. Same formula, Judg. xi. 12; 2 Sam. xvi. 10; 2 Kings iii. 13; Matt. viii. 29; John ii. 4. It means, "What is there between us?" or practically, "What have I done?" "Is this the result of my association with thee? Must such sorrow befall me because thou art with me?" Bähr], O thou man of God? [This woman, if a Phœnician, was evidently familiar with the titles borne by the Hebrew prophets (ch. xii. 22; xiii. *passim*; Judg. xiii. 6, 8). Nor is this to be wondered at. The intercourse between the two nations had been very considerable] art thou come unto me to call my sin [not necessarily any "special sin in her past life,"] to remembrance [her idea evidently is that the prophet by residing with her, seeing her life, &c., had become acquainted with her sinfulness, and had called it to the remembrance of the Almighty. She does not mean that he had recalled it to her mind, but that he had been the *נִזְכָּר* or remembrancer of God. Cf. Gen. xl. 14; Ezek. xxi. 23; Jer. iv. 16] and to slay my son? [Observe, she does not speak of him as slain.]

Ver. 19.—And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, [the age of the child may hence be roughly inferred] and carried him up into a loft [Heb. *הַמִּזְבֵּחַ* the upper chamber. LXX. *τὸ ὑπερφῶν*. *Loft* is most misleading. The upper room "was often [rather, *always*] the best apartment in an Eastern house" (Rawlinson). It was sometimes the guest-chamber (Luke xxii. 11, 12), and, from the uses to which it was put, must have been large (Acts i. 13; ix. 39; xx. 8; 2 Kings i. 2). Thomson (L. & B. i. 235) infers from the fact that the widow's house had an upper room, "that

the mode of building in Elijah's time and the custom of giving the '*alliyeh*' to the guest were the same as now; also that this poor widow was not originally among the poorest classes (who have no '*alliyeh*'), but that her extreme destitution was owing to the famine", and laid him upon his own bed. [It may be doubted whether the verb *יָרַדְתִּי* lit., *made him to lie down*, would be used of a corpse.]

Ver. 20.—And he cried unto the Lord, and said, O Lord my God, hast Thou also [*i. e.* in addition to the misery and suffering brought through me upon my country] brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying [Heb. *to slay*. Wordsworth partly bases his conclusion that the child was dead on the inexact translation of the A. V.] her son?

Ver. 21.—And he stretched himself [marg. *measured* himself, but Gesenius holds that *stretch out* is the primary meaning of the root] upon the child [cf. 2 Kings iv. 34. The commentators are again at variance as to whether these words imply the use of natural means or not. Those who hold that the child was dead naturally adopt the negative, and some (Keil, Rawlinson, *al.*) compare with it the action of our Lord in the case of the blind, deaf and dumb (Matt. ix. 35; Luke vii. 14; John ix. 6, 7). But surely the circumstances and the purpose alike, in these latter cases, were entirely different. The object of the touch, of anointing the eyes, &c., in these cases of healing, appears to have been to awaken a sufficient faith—without which "He could do no miracle" (Matt. xiii. 58)—in men whose infirmities of blindness, deafness, &c., prevented their attaining faith through the ordinary channels of seeing and hearing the merciful and gracious Son of man. But here the child, if not dead, was senseless. We are driven, therefore, to the belief that the prophet "used rational means for warming and revivifying" the child, "not with the hope that of themselves they would prove effectual, but in the sure confidence that God, in answer to his weeping supplication, would impart supernatural force to the natural human agencies," Bähr] three times [Not only in his prayer but also in this triple repetition do we recognize Elijah's profound conviction that only by the Almighty power of God could the child be restored, and that whatever means were used, God alone could make them effectual. For three is the number and signature of the Godhead—"die eigentlich göttliche Zahl, die Signatur des göttlichen Wesens" (Bähr, Symb. i. 143). Hence it is, *inter alia*, that "the calling upon the name of Jehovah in the old

covenant"—he might have added, "and in the new;" cf. Mark xiv. 39, 41; 2 Cor. xii. 8—"was a threefold act:" Psa. lv. 17; Dan. vi. 10, 13; Num. vi. 24—26; Isa. vi. 8 (Bähr). The correspondence with 2 Cor. xii. 8 is very striking] and cried unto the Lord, and said, O Lord my God, I pray Thee [Heb. *now*] let this child's soul come into him [Heb. *upon his inside*; לִבּוֹ is here, as elsewhere, used for נַפְשׁוֹ] again. [Though נַפְשׁוֹ, here translated "soul," constantly means "life," yet it by no means settles the question whether the child was really living or dead. For (1) the primary meaning of the word is "breath" (Gesen., Thesaurus, s. v.), and (2) the words might with perfect propriety, even if we interpret "life" or "soul," be used of one who lay in a lifeless and inanimate condition. Massillon's graphic language (vol. i. p. 91, ed. 1833), showing the contrast between Elijah's procedure and that of our blessed Lord (Luke vii. 14; viii. 54; John xi. 43), is worth citing here: "Elie ressuscite des morts, il est vrai; mais il est obligé de se coucher plusieurs fois sur le corps de l'enfant qu'il ressuscite; il souffle, il se rétrécit, il s'agite; on voit bien qu'il invoque une puissance étrangère; qu'il rappelle de l'empire de la mort une âme qui n'est pas soumise à sa voix, et qu'il n'est pas lui-même le maître de la mort et de la vie: Jésus-Christ ressuscite les morts comme il fait les actions les plus communes; il parle

en maître à ceux qui dorment d'un sommeil éternel, et l'on sent bien qu'il est le Dieu des morts comme des vivants, jamais plus tranquille que lorsqu'il opère les plus grandes choses."]

Ver. 22.—And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived [or *recovered*. Cf. 2 Kings i. 2; viii. 8].

Ver. 23.—And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house [Probably the הַבַּיִת was reached by an *outside* staircase, and did not directly communicate with the lower rooms. Cf. Matt. xxiv. 17; Mark ii. 4; 2 Kings ix. 13] and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth.

Ver. 24.—And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this [Heb. *this*. Gesenius interprets הֵן עַתָּה *just now*. Similarly Bähr, *nummehr*] I know that thou art a man of God [not that she had doubted it before. See ver. 18. In the face of what Elijah had done for her, she could not doubt it. All that she means is that this is a great fresh proof of his mission], and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth. [This last word אֱמֶתָה from which Amittai (Jonah i. 1) is formed, perhaps gave rise to the tradition that this boy was afterwards known as the prophet Jonah. Amittai was held to have been this widow's husband.

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*The Mission and Ministry of Elijah.* The appearance on the arena of Israel's history of such a champion as Elijah, armed with such high credentials, wielding such supernatural powers, marks a crisis in the history of God's ancient Church. We have but to see him, to hear him for one moment, to know that a great struggle is impending. God, like Nature, which is but a name for God, "does nothing in vain." Such high powers as his foreshadow great issues. Four points consequently may well engage our attention, viz., the man, his mission, his message, his ministry.

I. THE MAN. 1. *He was a wild man* (Gen. xvi. 12; Heb. *a wild-ass man*). Abraham has been called an "Arab sheykh." We have in Elijah a veritable Bedawy, if not by birth or tribe, by training and in character. The rough sheep-skin (ch. xix. 13), the shaggy hair (2 Kings i. 18), the marvellous bodily endurance (ch. xviii. 46), the careful avoidance of the city, the flight into the desert (ch. xix. 4), the whole bearing of the man suggests to us the child of the wilderness. He, the greatest of the prophets, one of the "first three" of those born of women, has the exterior, the instincts, the heart of an Ishmaelite. He was thus a fit successor of Moses, the shepherd of Horeb, who in the very haunt and home of the Bedawin, was trained for his high vocation; he was meet to be the forerunner and pattern of the Baptist who was bred in the desert, clad in Arab dress, and fed with Arab food (Matt. iii. 1, 4). It is impossible to understand the man and his work unless this be borne in mind. The gaunt dervish who one day strode into the presence of the king and lifted up his shaggy arm and denounced the great drought; the shaggy,

long-haired sheykh, who single-handed faced the hierarchy of Baal, and knew no fear, his were the asperities, the privations, the scant fare, the primitive, seminomadic life of a Gileadite. The sweet uses of adversity had moulded this man for the crisis. Our great chancellors, it has been said, come to us from the garret: the desert has ever been the school of the greatest prophets. The rugged, unsettled pasturages of Bashan were a meet nurse for a prophetic child. This champion was cast "in the clay ground" (see p. 142).

2. *He was a man of like passions with ourselves* (James v. 17). An "earthen vessel" (2 Cor. iv. 7). "In all points tempted like as we are," and not "without sin" (Heb. iii 15). The Bible never pictures men as perfect. The *phronema sarkos* remains even in the regenerate.

II. HIS MISSION. Consider—1. *Whence it was derived.* He was not taught of men (Gal. i. 12, 17). He was *ιδιούρης και ἀργάμαρος*. The God who separated him from his mother's womb called him by His grace (*ibid.* v. 15). He was an extraordinary messenger for a great emergency. But observe; when God employs such messengers, men whose mission is derived directly from on high, the "signs of an apostle" are wrought by them. We are not to listen to an angel from heaven, unless he shows us his credentials. We have a right to ask of those who run without being sent to show us a sign. When the missionary Dr. Wolff told one of the Eastern bishops that the "Lord had sent him," the prelate not unreasonably asked him for a display of his powers. If God should send us an Elias again, He will give us at the same time a sign from heaven.

2. *When it was conferred.* It was (1) When iniquity abounded. When Hiel had built Jericho; when Ahab had raised a temple for Baal; when Jezebel had gathered round her an army of false prophets; when the faith of God's elect was in jeopardy. The darkest hour is ever before the dawn. *Cum duplicantur lateres, venit Moses.* "Man's extremity is," &c. "Israel was sore wounded when God sent them this balm from Gilead" (Henry). (2) When ordinary means were insufficient. There were true priests in Jerusalem; there were "sons of the prophets," it is probable, in Bethel and Samaria; there were seven thousand faithful ones in Israel; but what were these against such a queen as Jezebel, against such a propaganda and such a system as hers? It was then no longer a question of heresy or schism, of calves or cherubim, of Jeroboam's or Jehovah's priests; the very existence of the Church was at stake. Elijah was summoned to the court; he was armed with "power to shut heaven that it rained not in the days of his prophecy" (Rev. xi. 6), with power to call down fire to devour his enemies, and the like, because only thus could the elect people be stayed from throwing themselves into the arms of an organized prostitution; from yielding themselves, body and soul, to the whoredoms and witchcrafts of "that woman Jezebel;" because only thus could the light of truth, the one lamp which illumined the world's darkness, be preserved from utter extinction.

III. HIS MESSAGE. It was a denunciation of immediate drought, one of the most terrible calamities that can befall an Eastern land. In Palestine, animal as well as vegetable life is directly dependent on the rain. Not only do the showers which irrigate the land feed the springs, but they are carefully stored up in cisterns for daily use. It is only as compared with the arid wastes of Egypt that the Holy Land could be called "a land of brooks and waters, of fountains and depths," &c. (Deut. viii. 7). And it is also described by the same writer as a land that "drinketh water of the rain of heaven" (*ibid.* xi. 11). Consequently rain, everywhere a prime necessity of existence, is doubly indispensable in Palestine. The rainfall of Jerusalem is on the average three times as great as that of London. It is clear, consequently, that this message threatened a terrible plague, that it portended long and protracted suffering. There are some who will not hear of the "terrors of the Lord," who would never have them mentioned in the pulpit. Yet pain and privation are among the first sanctions of God's law, and we have the authority of many eminent divines for saying that more men are won to God and right by fear than by love. It sounds fine and philosophic to speak of fear as an unworthy motive, but men forget what an unworthy animal is man. Besides, this drought was a part of the punishment, and was admirably adapted to serve as a punishment for apostasy. It was meet that

men who practically denied the living God should be practically reminded of their dependence on Him. It was well that those who held Baal to be lord of nature, should be left to discover his impotence (cf Judg. x. 14; Jer. xiv. 22). "Are there any of the vanities of the heathen that can give rain?" And it was a punishment this, which penitence might avert. Moreover, it was the penalty foretold in the law (Deut. xxviii. 23). Elijah was not left to scatter plagues at his pleasure. Like an earlier prophet, he could not "go beyond the word of the Lord to do less or more" (Num. xxii. 18). Of himself, he could do nothing (*ibid.* v. 33). His message was, "As the Lord liveth." If the rain should only come "according to his word," it was because his word was God's word. If his prayer for the drought had been answered (James v. 17), it had first been inspired. He speaks here as the minister, not the master. He is the willing, patient slave of Jehovah. "Before whom I stand."

IV. HIS MINISTRY. From this initial message let us turn to his ministry as a whole. And it presents to our view these broad features—

1. *It was exercised in silence.* How few are Elijah's recorded words, and those few are the utterances of but five or six occasions. He was not "mighty in word." He had no sooner delivered his first brief message than he disappears, and for three years and a half Israel hears him no more. He speaks for a moment: he is dumb for a triennium. And when he reappears, it is but for a day. That one day's ministry ended, he is again hidden from our view. Thrice more he reappears in the history, but each time it is but for a day, and then he goes into the silent heavens, and save on the night of transfiguration, speaks to men no more. How like to the revelations of God to man. He "keepeth silence (Psa. l. 3). He too hideth Himself. "He spake and it was done." How unlike the everlasting chatter of some of our later prophets. "Ministers," it is sometimes said, "are mere talkers." Elijah proclaims the dignity, if not "the eternal duty, of silence." "All real work," some one has said, "is quiet work." How many of our sermons, full of sound and fury, leave not a trace behind them. But the silent Elias accomplished the regeneration of his country.

2. *It was a ministry of deed.* There was no need for him to speak. The works that he did bore witness of him. Declamation, argument, remonstrance, would have been absurd. The time for that was past. And he had actions to speak for him. Surely there is a lesson for Christ's ministers here. It is true they cannot work wonders like Elijah; and it is also true that they are sent to "preach the Word," to reprove, rebuke, exhort, &c.; but we are reminded here that a fruitful ministry must be one of *action*. Words, however eloquent, in the long turn count for less than a holy life. The age, however it may hanker after sensationalism, is nevertheless suspicious of all talk. Why is it that our holy religion has but such an indifferent hold on the masses of our countrymen? One reason is that while we "point to heaven," we do not always "lead the way." "*Cujus vita contemnitur, ejus prædicatio despicitur.*" The life of their parish priest is the only Bible many Englishmen ever read, and alas, what a smeared and blotted page that sometimes is. And those who do hear our sermons have learned to discount them. They know full well that words are cheap, and that emotion, and even unction, can be simulated. They often wonder how much of our discourse we really believe and practise ourselves, and they turn to our lives for an answer. That familiar paradox, consequently, is full of truth and meaning, that, "in preaching, the thing of least importance is the sermon." It was well said that *actio*—action in the truest sense of the word, not gesture or manner, but conduct—is the first, second, and third great essential of eloquence (see "Guesses at Truth," ii. pp. 146 seqq.) A French ecclesiastic, the Abbé Mullois, has laid it down, as one of the canons of preaching, that "to address men successfully, they must be loved much." "Nothing influences others so much as character. Few people are capable of reasoning, and fewer still like the trouble of it; and besides, men have hearts as well as heads. Hence, consistency, reality, ever-present principle, shining through the person in whom they dwell, and making themselves perceptible, have more weight than many arguments, than much preaching" (Heygate, "Ember Hours"). It is Baxter

who speaks of clergymen who "cut the throats of their sermons by their lives;" but there are many who, without doing this, invalidate their words by their actions. It is well for us to remember that personal character is the best preparation for the pulpit. "*Facta, non verba;*" this is, and will be increasingly, the demand of the age upon the prophetic order. "*Non magna eloquimur sed vivimus.*" This must be more and more the response of the ministry.

3. *It was brave and fearless.* On three occasions this court preacher took his life in his hand (ch. xvii. 1; xviii. 2; xxi. 19). On one occasion he seems to have quailed (ch. xix. 3), but even then it does not appear that he fled from any present duty, or, like Jonah, declined any commission. His ministry as a whole was boldly discharged as in the presence of the Eternal, "Before whom I stand." He saw none other than his Master. Like another preacher before royalty, Massillon, he spoke as if he saw Death standing at his elbow. Like Daniel, he knew that his God could deliver him. The fear of man is cast out when we realize the presence of God (Isa. li. 12, 13).

4. *It was seemingly a failure.* If others did not think so, he did. We know that no work, really and truly done for God, can be wasted (Isa. lv. 11); but we are often tempted to think it is. But it must be such work as will stand the trial by fire (1 Cor. iii. 13). It has been strikingly said, "If any man's work is a failure, the probability is that it is because he is a failure himself." Still, it is for our comfort to remember, in times of depression, that the greatest of the prophets saw little or no fruit of his labours. He was persuaded that even the unexampled miracles that he wrought were of little or no avail (ch. xix. 10). We find that when there were seven thousand secret followers of the Lord God, Elijah thought himself left alone. And indeed the state of Israel, even after the ordeal of Carmel, might well lead him to take the gloomiest and most despairing view of the situation. Jezebel pursues her infamous way. The son of Ahab sends to consult a foreign oracle, and ignores the God of Israel. The fire must come down a second time and burn up the idolaters instead of the bullock and the altar. But all the same, we know that his work was not in vain. Nor can ours be, if done like his. We have nothing to do with immediate successes. "One man soweth, another reapeth." Nor is success in any shape mentioned in our instructions. That is God's part, not ours. We have but to sow the seed, He must make it grow. The world worships success—or what it calls success—and the greatest of ministries—Elijah's, Jeremiah's, Ezekiel's, our blessed Lord's—were all failures from a worldly point of view.

Vers. 8—7.—*The Solitary Place.* We have just seen that it was from the wilderness that Elijah went forth into the busy, wicked world, and to the anxious, dangerous work of a prophet. He, like his antitype, was in the desert "until the time of his showing unto Israel" (Luke i. 80). There, in secret communion with God, he had gained strength for the encounter; there he had meditated over the grievous apostasy of his people, and had "vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their evil deeds" (2 Pet. ii. 8). And there, as he "prayed earnestly that it might not rain," the word of the Lord came to him and burned in his bones (Jer. xx. 9), and bore him into the presence of the king (Amos iii. 8). But it is now for us to observe that no sooner had he entered upon his ministry, and delivered his first brief message, than he was sent into the desert—it may be, the same desert—again. The word of the Lord straightway bids him turn eastward and hide in the brook Cherith. Now the word *Cherith* means *separation*. This section consequently may fittingly speak to us of the need of separation, of the uses of solitude and retirement in the discipline of the saints. From Elijah's separation from his work and the world we may glean some lessons as to our own. Observe—

1. *Solitude was necessary to Elijah's safety.* He must hide or lose his head. When Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord (ch. xviii. 18), we may be sure *he* would not be spared. Was it not because of him indeed that the others were attacked? Had his dwelling been with men, the messengers of Ahab would assuredly have found him and slain him (ch. xviii. 10). So it is sometimes necessary, for the life of our souls, that we should flee into the desert. It is at our peril

that we stay in Sodom. We must "escape to the mountain." It may be from some enchantress, whose whoredoms and witchcrafts are as cruel as Jezebel's; it may be from companions whose snares are more perilous than Ahab's sword; it may be from a society hardly less pestilent than that of Israel. There are times when our only safety is in flight. Those hermits who buried themselves in the Thebaid, or who burrowed in the rocks of the Wady Feiran, the world has only a smile for their folly, and it is no doubt true that God would have us leave the world, not leave it. But it would have been well if some had, for a time at least, followed their example. How many souls have perished because they would not enter into their chambers and shut their doors and hide themselves until the indignation be overpast (Isa. xxvi. 20); because they had not the courage to disappear for a while, if only into their closets. "He that wilfully stands still to catch dangers, tempteth God instead of trusting him."

2. *Solitude was necessary to his soul's health.* It is remarkable how God's elect messengers, each in his turn, have been sent "apart into a desert place to rest awhile" (Mark vi. 31). Moses must spend forty days in the great and terrible wilderness; must spend forty days and forty nights in Horeb, the Mount of God. Elijah himself only emerges from the Cherith to go to another hiding-place at Zarephath, and from Zarephath he passes almost directly to the same wilderness and the same mount where Moses was. The Baptist's life was almost divided between the desert and the prison. St. Paul must learn his gospel in Arabia. And our Holy Lord, He must begin His ministry by a forty days' fast, and from time to time must seek a quiet place to rest and pray. All men who are much before the world need their times of retirement. In the "loud stunning tide of human care and crime" it is difficult to hear the whispers of God in the soul. Now the voices of nature, such as men hear in solitude, are among the voices of God. Nature has been called "God's great green book."

"One impulse from a vernal wood  
May teach you more of man,  
Of moral evil and of good,  
Than all the sages can."

"There are two books," says Sir Thomas Browne, "from whence I collect my divinity. Besides that written one of God, another of his servant nature, that universal and public manuscript that lies expanded unto the eyes of all." And is not every tree, every leaf, in its way a mute witness for God and purity? It is remarkable that the greatest crimes and brutalities are committed in those districts of this country where men can have neither nature nor solitude—in the dens of Liverpool, amid the cinder heaps of the Black Country, in the dingy pit villages of Durham. It is only in quiet, under the silent stars, amid the purple heather, by the murmuring brook, or in the inner chamber, that we can know ourselves and our God. The "Ancient Mariner's" conception of his "wide, wide sea"—

"So lonely 'twas, that *God Himself*  
Scarce seemèd there to be,"

fine though it is, contradicts the experience of the saints, who have found that it is precisely the profoundest solitude that is instinct with His presence.

And now let us consider how God calls us all in turn to a brook Cherith. (1) He calls us to separation from sin. The Church is a Cherith. Baptism is a "water of separation," the token and pledge of our renunciation of world and flesh and devil, of our admission into the family of God. While in the world, we may not be of it. Our calling is to holiness (1 Pet. i. 15; 1 Thess. iv. 7; 2 Tim. i. 9). We are to be sacrifices (Rom. xii. 1), and the root idea both of holiness and of sacrifice is a separation to God. (2) Sometimes He calls us to a chamber of sickness, sometimes to the very "valley of the shadow of death." How often is bodily sickness for the soul's health! That vale of separation becomes a vale of blessing; the *Cherith* leads to a *Berachah* (2 Chron. xx. 26; cf. Ps. lxxxiv. 6). What a school of the

heart has that enforced solitude often proved! See Homiletics, p. 13. (3) Nor must we forget here the *Retreat*—those opportunities for meditation and prayer, happily revived amongst us of late years. The name may possibly be Romish, but the thing is sensible and scriptural enough—a voluntary retirement for a short period from the world that we may hear and think only of the things which make for our peace. The saying still holds good, “He goeth before you into Galilee”—a retired mountain place it was (Matt. xxviii. 16)—“there shall ye see him.”

3. *Elijah's retirement was for the ultimate welfare of Israel.* So long as he remained amongst them, the people would have looked to him as the author of their calamities, or would have cried to him to avert them. His disappearance afforded them leisure to examine themselves and face their sins, and left them only God or Baal to cry to. It is sometimes well that the prophet should keep silence. *Deus habet suas moras.* It is not always that He stretches out his hands all day long to the disobedient and gainsaying. Having spoken by Elijah to Ahab and Israel, now He and His prophet must withdraw into the darkness, and the drought must do its silent work. And there are times, too, when Christ's ministers must be silent. When the Gadarenes besought our Lord to depart out of their coasts, He straightway took them at their word (Matt. viii. 34; ix. 1; cf. ch. xxiii. 88, 89). The apostles were to shake off the dust of their feet against the city that received them not, and to depart from it (Matt. x. 14), and they did so (Acts xiii. 51). When the Jews counted themselves unworthy of eternal life, Paul and Barnabas turned to the Gentiles (Acts xiii. 46). When the churches of Asia fell and repented not, their candlestick was removed out of its place (Rev. ii. 5). Their loss is our gain. “These things were written for our admonition.”

Vers. 4—7.—*The Food of the Saints.* We have just seen the prophet in his solitude. Let us now consider the manner in which he was sustained there. His needs were supplied in two ways, partly by natural, partly by supernatural means. No miracle was wrought to give him water. He must make his home in the wady and drink of the rivulet that flowed past his feet. It was there, and he must help himself to it. But with his food it was quite different. He could not find that, and so it was brought to him; it was provided him by God. For even if it was not laid at his feet morning and evening by ravens—and we have seen reason to think that it was not—even if it was furnished him by the villagers of Orbo, his tribesmen and friends, or by the loyal and hospitable Arabs who roamed over the adjoining region, still it was supplied by the ordering and special Providence of God. For it is as much a supernatural work to control, by an unseen Power, the minds of men as the instincts or habits of birds. If we get rid of the ravens we do not get rid of the miracle. It is clear, consequently, that he was sustained in part by natural, in part by superhuman agency. Now our food, like his, is, though in a different way, natural and supernatural. We use the terms in the popular sense, for who shall say that all food is not supernatural. True, it comes to us by what we call “natural processes,” in what we call the “order of Nature;” but it is obvious that the so-called “laws of Nature” are only “statements of the observed course of Nature, or the uniform results of known physical causes ending in some prime cause or causes not merely physical” (Sir E. Beckett, “Origin of the Laws of Nature”). Nature only means what is fixed, settled, uniform (Bp. Butler). But, using the words as they are used in common parlance, part of our sustenance, the supply of our bodily wants is, for the most part natural; and another part, the satisfaction of our spiritual necessities, is for the most part supernatural. Our needs, that is to say, are supplied something like Elijah's were. Let us trace the resemblance a little more in detail, and let us see first how it holds good of our

I. BODILY SUSTENANCE. We learn from this history—

1. *That we must use the means within our reach.* Not even for His elect messenger, the greatest of the prophets, does God work an unnecessary miracle. “Dieu n'agit pas par des volontés particulières” (Malebranche). No doubt God could have supplied his drink just as easily as his daily bread, in an extraordinary way, but He would not. No; in a valley debouching into the Jordan was a stream, fed

from some hidden source, such as the snows of Hermon, or springing from the roots of the hills of Gilead, and the prophet must seek it, and take up his abode near it. What do we learn from this but that God "will have our endeavours concur to our preservation," a truth somewhat roughly, but strikingly, put in the Puritan *mot d'ordre*, "Trust in God, and keep your powder dry." It is no real kindness to do for Elijah what he can do for himself. There are lands where daily bread is to be had without care or labour; where a man has but to put forth his hand and take the bread-tree fruit and eat and be satisfied, but that is said to be a doubtful boon. It is found that the natives of those lands will not work, and their life, which should be full of high endeavour, which should aim, if at nothing more, at "making two blades of grass grow where only one grew before," is wasted in basking in the eternal sunshine. The primeval law, "In the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat bread," though we call it a curse, is really a blessing. "Six days shalt thou labour" is as much a Divine command as the command to rest on the seventh. It is God decrees, "If any man will not work, neither shall he eat" (2 Thess. iii. 10). The imperious necessity to provide our daily bread is one of the springs which keeps the world in motion: it is the salt which keeps our life from stagnation and corruption. It is in vain we cry to Jupiter for help. God has given us fields and seed. He gives us rain and sunshine; it is for our good that we should do the rest.

2. *That then God will supply what is lacking.* When we have done our best we may justly look to Him to give what we cannot get. And this He will do. "Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy waters shall be sure" (Isa. xxxiii. 16). "Never have I seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread" (Psa. xxxvii. 25). In the barren wilderness, He gave bread from heaven. "In the days of famine, they shall be satisfied" (Psa. xxxvii. 19). What a commentary on these words does this history furnish! Elijah had "called for a famine on the land" (ch. xviii. 2; Luke iv. 25), and had "broken the whole staff of bread" (Psa. cv. 16); but he himself had enough and to spare. God spreads for him "a table in the wilderness" (Psa. lxxviii. 16), and almost "in the presence of his enemies" (Psa. xxiii. 5). The stars shall fall from their courses, but he shall have enough. It has been thought by some that the ravens brought him bread and flesh from Ahab's own table. It would have been so, had it been necessary. If he was supplied with food by human instrumentality, it was none the less by God's command. And this is God's ordinary way of hearing "the prayer of the poor destitute;" he puts it into the hearts of others to help. "God works by means, and the chief means is man" (Bossuet).

3. *That God gives us our bread daily.* Elijah only received a small supply of food at once. Though he had no lack, he had no profusion. He had "daily bread"—for "morning and evening are one day" (Gen. i. 5)—and no more. Even he must walk by faith and learn to "take no thought for the morrow." And daily bread is all that is promised us; all that we are taught to pray for (Matt. vi. 11). And that, perhaps, because a day is a life in miniature; each day is rounded by dawn and dusk, by sleep and darkness, into a perfect little life. Whether the birds brought him food or not, he and they received it alike, τὸν ἐπιούσιον ἄρτον, the bread of a day in its day. The lesson of the manna (Exod. xvi. 20) is taught us again by the brook Cherith.

4. *That God guarantees us necessities, not luxuries.* Elijah's fare was frugal. "Water, bread, and flesh" (cf. Isa. xxxiii. 16). As a rule, He gives us food "exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think." How prodigious is the variety of our food, how lavish its supply! What rich provision has the Eternal Goodness made for the gratification of our tastes. Fish, flesh, fowl, fruits,—the list is endless. And of the flesh or fruits, again, how many *genera*, and in the *genera* how many *species*, and in the species what countless *varieties*. Lavish profusion marks His gifts. But all the same he *covenants* to give us less than the fare of Cherith, even bread and water. "God gives order for competency, not for wantonness" (Hall).

II. SPIRITUAL FOOD. But we are now to consider that "man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word," &c. (Deut. viii. 3; Matt. iv. 4). The saints have

meat to eat of which the world knows nothing (John iv. 34). Elijah had other food than that which the ravens brought him. In giving "daily bread," God does not forget man's spiritual part, even if *he* forgets it in his prayer for bread. And God supplies the soul's needs by laws not unlike those which govern the supply of material food.

1. *We must use the means of grace.* The treasury of the Church contains an abundant provision. There are "living waters," there is "super-substantial bread," there is word and sacrament, prayer and psalm. But we must come to the waters and drink (John vii. 37; Rev. xxii. 17). Our faith needs something to feed upon, and it is in vain we ask for miracles, so long as we do not use means. If we want to love God more, we must seek to know God, through His word and works, better. If we want to be more like Christ, we must be more with Christ, in His word and ordinances, for it is "association produces assimilation." There is a tendency to decay the *means of grace*. There is a religion which is wholly subjective, which seeks its growth and expansion in everlasting self-introspection or mystical contemplation of the Divine perfections. But "Thou shalt drink of the brook." True, the channel is nothing—*Annus non ager, facit fructum*—but a channel. **It is God must fill it, but if God has dug it, it is presumption to discard it.**

"The means that Heaven yields must be embraced,  
And not neglected; else if Heaven would  
And we will not, Heaven's offers we refuse."

2. *If we are debarred from the means of grace, God will give grace without means.* It is a blessed truth, *gratia non ligatur mediis*. We may not dispense with them, but God can, and does. He did so in the oft-cited instance of the dying thief. He was saved without sacraments, but St. Paul was not (Acts xxii. 16). And how often have the saints and martyrs, cut off, amid fierce persecutions, from the communion of the saints, found their deserts or their cells glorified by direct communion with God. Matthew Henry quaintly says that "if we cannot go to the house of the Lord, we can go to the Lord of the house." The Church of England proclaims that there may be a true Eucharist without the elements (*vide* The Communion of the Sick, 3rd Rubric). But it is only when we are deprived of the means that we can justly expect God to dispense with them. He has commanded His ministers to feed His Church (Acts xx. 23; 1 Peter v. 2); He has given them word and sacrament, bread and wine, wherewith to nourish it; but He is independent both of means and ministers.

3. *Supplies of grace are granted day by day.* Our soul's bread is a daily bread. Every day we ask for forgiveness, for grace (Matt. vi. 11); and as our days, so our strength shall be (Deut. xxxiii. 25). If we have not morning and evening prayer in the Church, we may have it in the house. And morning and evening may be sanctified by the Word of God and prayer, in private. Each may find a Cherith in the closet; each receive there his portion of meat in due season.

4. *Grace is given without measure.* God does not promise luxuries, because they are often hurtful. But there is no over-indulgence here. It is significant how excess in wine is contrasted with being filled with the Spirit (Ephes. v. 18). One cannot drink too deep of the living waters (John vii. 38). They are given freely (Rev. xxii. 17).

Vers. 8—16.—*The Furnace of Trial.* The village of Zarephath appears to have borrowed its name from the furnace or furnaces created there for the *smelting* of metals. See note on ver. 9. A great lexicographer interprets the word to mean, a "workshop for the melting and refining of metals." But that name might with scarcely less propriety have been bestowed upon it from the circumstances recorded in this section. It was a veritable furnace for men; a place of assay and refining both for the prophet and the widow with whom he lodged. "Surely . . . there is a place for gold where they fine it" (Job xxviii. 1).

I. IT WAS A PLACE OF TRIAL FOR ELIJAH. In connexion with it he was subjected to the following trials of his faith and courage—

1. *He had to leave his hiding place.* For months he had dwelt safely in the deep, sequestered, peaceful wady. That he must hide there, and hide so long, showed how great was the danger to which he was exposed. But now he is commanded to quit his asylum, to go forth into the world, to run the risk of recognition, of betrayal, of death; and to do so, we cannot doubt, would cost him a struggle, and put his faith in God to the proof.

2. *He had to seek a home in Zidon.* How those words would strike upon his ears, "Which belongeth unto Zidon"! Zidon was the capital of Ethbaal. The father of Jezebel, his implacable enemy, held sway there. It was like going into the lion's den. His feeling would be something like that of David's men, "Behold, we be afraid here in Judah: how much more then if we come to Keilah" (1 Sam. xxiii. 3). Of all hiding places, that would seem to him to be the most to be dreaded. How can he escape detection *there*? He might well have taken fright, as at a later period, and have fled further into the desert. Or he might have petitioned, like Lot (Gen. xix. 20), to be allowed to find some other refuge. But he did neither. "He arose and went to Zarephath." He was "strong in faith, giving glory to God" (Rom. iv. 20).

3. *He had to be sustained by a widow woman.* The position and circumstances of the Eastern widow are to be remembered here. The seclusion in which Oriental women live makes its difficult for a widow to find a livelihood, even if there were work for her to do. And we have only to consider what the position of widows amongst ourselves would be, if there were no such things as investments, no means of putting out money to usury (Deut. xxiii. 19). Hence the repeated injunctions to remember the widow (*ibid.* xiv. 29; xvi. 11, 14; xxiv. 17, 19—21; Job xxiv. 21; xxix. 13; Psa. cxlvi. 9). Hence the special provision for widows in the early Church (Acts vi. 1; 1 Tim. v. 4—9). The widow was an object for charity, and needed sustenance. And now Elijah learns that by a widow he is to be sheltered and sustained. And this widow a foreigner, probably an idolater—an alien both in race and religion. Surely there was a trial both of his faith and of his obedience here.

4. *He finds the widow in the extremest poverty.* He encounters her "gathering of sticks." That in itself was not an encouraging sign. Next he hears from her lips that her cupboard is empty. She has not food for herself, much less for a stranger. "A handful of meal," a "little oil," this is all her store. She who was to sustain his life is herself ready to die. But he knows in whom he has believed. He "argued not against Heaven's will." He did not "bate a jot of heart or hope." "Make me a little cake first." He is assured that "they shall not be ashamed in the evil time, and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied" (Psa. xxxvii. 9). He knows that "God will not suffer his word to fail, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his lips" (Psa. lxxxix. 34).

5. *He is immured in her house for two years.* Those two years were years of banishment from his country and his work. Three years and a half had he to wait, and most of the time in a strange land, ere his real; cut off, "not from life, yet from usefulness, which is the end and comfort of life." Which of us would not have been impatient, or, like the Baptist in his fortress-prison, tempted to think God had forgotten us? And he knew that all this time his people were suffering. We think it strange if a servant of God is laid aside for a few months from his ministry. But the greatest of the prophets was silenced, was buried alive, for the mystical period of forty and two months, for "time and times and half a time" (Rev. xi. 2, 3; xii. 6, 14). "When we cannot work for God we must sit still quietly for him" (Henry). "They also serve who only stand and wait."

6. *His presence there is no protection against sickness.* Of the three inmates of the cottage home, one sickens and droops to his grave. This sickness causes us no surprise, but it did Elijah (ver. 20); and that because he lived under the dispensation of temporal rewards. Sickness was then regarded as, and it often was, the scourge of the Almighty (Deut. vii. 15; xxviii. 61; cf. 1 Cor. xi. 30). It was a trial, consequently, of Elijah's faith. It looked as if the hand of the Lord was gone out against him. It seemed as if he was to be always the author of misfortune ("Hast thou

also," &c.); as if the widow by whom he had been housed, and who had hidden him at the risk of her life, was to be requited with cruel punishment for her good deed. But let us now see in Zarephath

II. A FURNACE OF TRIAL FOR THE WIDOW. It was this in two ways—

1. *A stranger demands a share of her last meal.* Or, rather, he demands the first share. "Make me a little cake first." Now consider her position. She is reduced to her last morsel. So sore is the famine that she and her son, after they have eaten this meal together, are about to lie down and wait for death. They must have suffered hunger enough already; they must have dreaded the hunger even unto death which awaited them. At this moment a stranger suddenly appears before her, and says he must eat first. It is true that he wears the aspect of a prophet, and appeals to the Lord God of Israel, but prophets were often deceivers (chs. xiii. 18; xxii. 12), and foreign gods could be expected to show her no favour. And at home, her own flesh and blood, the son of her womb, stretches out his skinny fingers, attenuated by famine, and cries for all she has to give. Moreover, if this prophet could multiply food, as he professed to be able to do, why should he ask her for bread? Was it reasonable that she should part with her last morsel on the strength of such a promise? "Charity begins at home." "Let the children first be filled." "Shall I take my bread and my water and give it to one that I know not whence he is" (1 Sam. xxv. 11)? Thus she might justly have argued. We could not have wondered had the ordeal been too great for her; had she kept fast hold of her children's bread and denied it to "dogs." But, like that other Syro-Phoenician woman (Matt. xv. 21 sqq.), her faith was equal to the test; she "went and did according to the saying of Elijah." And, therefore, of her also it might justly be said, "I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel."

2. *Her son falls sick and lies apparently lifeless.* The tie between a mother and an only son is, perhaps, the closest and tenderest of all blood relationships; and it has been remarked that it is peculiarly strong and sacred in the East. "The only son of his mother and she was a widow" (Luke vii. 12): who does not feel the pathos of these words? And the tie would be all the stronger in this case because they had suffered together; because he had been given back to her from the jaws of death (ver. 12). It is said by some that we value things in proportion to what they have cost us, and on this principle they would explain the deep love of the mother for her offspring. Goethe's mother used to say that "she and her Wolfgang had always clung to each other, because they had been young together;" but to have hungered together, to have, hand in hand, looked Death in the face, to have seen the spectre retreating, surely this communion in suffering, this συμπάθεια, this *compassio*, would beget a much profounder sympathy. And now this boy, whose life had been miraculously preserved, is so sick that there is no breath left in him. What could this fond and anxious mother think? Was the prophet who had given them bread unable to defend them from sickness? Or was this God's recompense for her hospitality? She might have had hard thoughts of God, or unworthy thoughts of the prophet. It is a wonder she held fast her integrity. But she only thought hardly of herself. It must be, she argued, a judgment for her sin. The man of God had read her life; had brought her sin to the remembrance of his Master (ver. 18). It never occurs to her, strong as was the temptation, to arraign God's providence. But her faith and patience must have been sorely tried.

It now remains for us to consider how these assays of faith, which have given to this Phoenician workshop its fame and immortality, were "more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire" (1 Peter i. 7). In that workshop God Himself sat "as a refiner and purifier of silver."

It is said that when the crucible, the fining pot for silver (Prov. xvii. 3), is put into the furnace, the chymist has a sure and ready test of its purity; a means of knowing when his long processes have accomplished their object. When he sees his face reflected in the glowing and untarnished metal, he knows that the purification is complete.

It was that Elijah and his hostess might learn to know God, might be trans-

formed into the image of God, that they experienced this two years' purgation in the furnace. It was that the dross might be purely purged, and the tin taken away (Isa. i. 25); that they might be changed into the image of their Creator (Col. iii. 10; 2 Cor. iii. 18).

Now the historian does not record the results of this assay, except incidentally. But we can clearly see that the faith of Elijah and the widow alike grew stronger by the exercise. How much Elijah gained; how the discipline told on his subsequent career; how the trying of his faith wrought patience (James i. 3), we cannot now discover. But we can see that it resulted in the widow's conversion, or in the confirmation of her faith, and in the glory and praise of God (ver. 24). And that is not all. Its issues are in eternity. The cross was the forerunner of the crown (James i. 12).

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

**Ver. 1.—Elijah.** In this sudden manner the Tishbite is introduced, upon which Bishop Hall remarks, "He comes in with a tempest who went out with a whirlwind." And Lamartine says, "Recalling his life and his terrible vengeance, it seems as if this man had the thunder of the Lord for a soul, and that the element in which he was borne to heaven was that in which he was brought forth." Let us consider—

I. HIS PRESENCE. 1. *It is awful in its vagueness.* (1) It was of the inhabitants of Gilead—"The hard, stony region," south of the river Jabbok. This was one of the wildest parts of the Holy Land. The awful scenery of that district harmonized well with the ruggedness of the spirit of this prophet. John the Baptist first appeared in a wilderness. Out of a wilderness Jesus came up when He entered upon His public ministry (Matt. iii. 1; Luke iv. 1, 14, 15). (2) He is distinguished as the Tishbite. Calmet says Tishbe was a city beyond Jordan in the tribe of Gad, and in the land of Gilead. Gesenius, from Relandi, mentions Tishbe as "a town of Napthali." Could there have been two Tishbes; and were the words "Of the inhabitants of Gilead" added to distinguish? (3) "The Tishbite," we incline to think, was a name of office or commission. It designates Elijah as the *Converter* (מְשַׁבֵּי from שָׁב to turn). In this he resembled John the Baptist, whose commission also was to preach *repentance*. (See Matt. xi. 13, 14; xvii. 12; Luke i. 17.) When Elijah comes again "before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord," it will be in his character of *Tishbite* or *Converter*, viz., "to turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers." (See Matt. iv. 5, 6). 2. *It is awful also in its intensity.* (1) His name (אֵלִיָּהוּ) some interpret to be, "My God Jehovah is he," others, "God is my strength." In either case it reminds us of God, and God is the very centre of all reality. (2) Elijah brings us into the very presence of God also by the manner in which he announces himself. "As Jehovah liveth, before whom I stand." In this way also the angel Gabriel announced himself to Zacharias, and that too when he revealed the coming of the Baptist. (See Luke i. 19.) It is probable Elijah, like John the Baptist, also was a priest, and the expression under review may intimate this. (Compare Deut. x. 8.) About 940 years after this, Elijah, with Moses, in a remarkable manner stood, in the presence of Jehovah, in the mount of transfiguration (Matt. xvii. 1—3). (3) This declaration of the *living* God was appropriately timed. For the calves or young bulls of Jeroboam, and the bulls and goats of Sidon established through the influence of Jezebel, had so occupied public attention that He was forgotten. Lamentable is the substitution of death for life!

**HIS FAITH.** 1. *It is bold in its assertion.* (1) "There shall be neither dew nor rain." The material elements which mechanically produce dew and rain were worshipped by the Phœnicians, and now by the Israelites, while the God that made them was forgotten. Is not this the very error of modern atheistic physicists? They worship Baal, Ashtoreth, and Ashere under other names, and ridicule faith and prayer. But Elijah asserts the *living* God as superior to *nature*, who will

restrain both dew and rain, and so make the gods to worship him. (See Deut. xi. 16, 17; Jer. xiv. 22.) (2) "There shall be neither dew nor rain *these years.*" Dew and rain, according to the course of nature, may be withholden for days, for weeks, even, in rare cases, for months; but not for years. When therefore for "three years and six months" these meteors were awanting, the phenomenon was supernatural. 2. *The qualification is no less remarkable*—"But according to my word." (1) Unless divinely authorized to say this, such a declaration would be most presumptuous. And the inevitable failure of the prediction would cover the pseudo-prophet with ridicule and confusion. (2) But Elijah was a genuine man. He spoke under the inspiration of Jehovah before whom he stood. Such inspiration makes all the difference between presumption and faith. This is just the distinction made by James, who describes Elijah's faith as (*ἐνεργουμένη*) *inwrought persuasion* of a righteous man (James v. 16). Faith is the gift of God. 3. *The directness is admirable.* (1) This address is to Ahab. It comes not to him as a hearsay, but with the highest authenticity. The inspired messenger of God is above kings. (See Jer. i. 10.) (2) It is fearlessly delivered. When a man is conscious that he stands before Jehovah he may use great freedom of speech. The courage of the lion is in the heart of faith. Elijah was a man of faith because he was a man of prayer. It is an encouragement to our faith to know that "Elias was a man of like passions as we are" (James v. 17).—J. A. M.

Vers. 2—6.—*Resources of Providence.* When the heavens are shut up by the word of the Lord, what will become of the prophet who declared that word? Will he not suffer from the drought in common with the sinners on whose account the dew and rain are restrained? Will he not be exposed to the rage of an idolatrous king and queen whose humbled gods cannot, in this crisis, vindicate themselves? Will not a demoralized populace resent their sufferings upon the man of God? God knows all, and is equal to all, emergencies.

I. HE HAS RESOURCES FOR THE PROTECTION OF HIS SERVANTS. 1. *He could defend Elijah in the midst of his enemies.* (1) The power that had shut up the heavens could surely do this. The elemental fire which now scorched the earth, He could cause to fall upon the heads of any who would threaten his servant. (See 2 Kings i. 10—15.) (2) Without recourse to violence, he could dispose the hearts of men to respect His messenger, as afterwards He did. (See chap. xviii.) But this was not now His way. 2. *He has also places of refuge for His servants.* (1) If there be a valley secluded from human intrusion God knows it. In the courses traversed by the brook Cherith Elijah may safely hide. These recesses lay "eastward" from Samaria, where probably the prophet had encountered the king; and eastward from the Jordan, for this is the import of the phrase "*before Jordan.*" Probably this seclusion was in his own wild district of Gilead. (2) Ahab will not suspect that Elijah is here; for how could he possibly subsist in such a desolate region. Water he might find in the streams of the mountains; but where can he get bread from bald rocks in time of drought? (Matt. xiii. 5, 6.) 3. *Into such asylums He can guide His saints.* (1) "The word of the Lord" came to Elijah. Christ is that Word (John i. 1—14). He was the MEMRA of the Targums—that personal Word, who "appeared" to patriarchs and prophets. (See Gen. xv. 1.; xxviii. 20.) He will be ever with his people guiding them into safety. (2) "The word of the Lord came unto him *saying,*" or expressing His wisdom in human vocables. To Elijah the direction was, "Get thee hence," &c. To all He comes in the promises and precepts of holy Scripture. (3) Those who believe and obey God's Word, as Elijah did, are in safe keeping. They need never fear the combinations of wickedness against them.

II. HE HAS RESOURCES ALSO FOR THEIR SUPPORT. 1. *Their water is sure.* "Thou shalt drink of the brook." (1) There was refreshment for the body. The stream of that brook continued to flow for a whole year. Such is supposed to be the import of (מים) *days*, when there is nothing to limit it (as in ver. 7, marg.; see also ver. 15, marg.; Gen. iv. 8). (2) His soul meanwhile was refreshed, as, by faith, he realized the wells of salvation which flow from the Word of the Lord.

(See Psa. xli. 4; John iv. 14; vii. 37-39; Rev. xxii. 17.) 2. *Their bread shall be given.* "I have commanded ravens to feed thee there. (1) What an unlikely thing! Ravens were unclean creatures (Levit. xi. 15). They are insect-feeding, carrion-eating birds, themselves fed by special providence of God. (See Job xxxviii. 41; Psa. cxlvii. 9.) (2) Yet God *could* do it; for the instincts of all creatures are in His hands. He restrained hungry lions from harming Daniel; instructed a fish how to behave to Jonah; and another to lift a piece of silver from the bottom of a lake and then fasten upon a hook. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" (3) But *would* He do it? Would He employ an unclean creature to feed His servant? He might have His own reasons even for this. Elijah sustained for three years and a half in the wilderness was a type of the Christian Church nourished by the word of God for three and a half prophetic years (Rev. xii. 6, 14). Babylon the great, from whose face the Church had to fly, was the mystical Jezebel, as the true Church was the mystical Elijah. But in this Church the destruction of clean and unclean creatures had no place. (See Acts x. 15, 28; xv. 7-11.) Might not this gospel have been foreshadowed in the manner in which Elijah was fed? 3. *But is it certain that ravens were employed?* (1) He might have been fed by *Arabians*? For the word (רַבִּי) translated "ravens" also denotes *Arabians*. (See it so used in the singular, Isa. xiii. 30; Jer. iii. 2; Neh. ii. 19; and in the plural as here, 2 Chron. xxi. 16: xxii. 1.) And Gilead bordered upon that tract of country more especially described in Scripture as Arabia. (2) Or he might have been fed by *merchants*. For this word also designates merchants. (See Ezek. xxvii. 9, 27.) If Israelitish merchants supplied the prophet's needs, then probably would they be of the seven thousand who scorned to bow the knee to Baal (ch. xix. 18), and so would not discover his hiding place to Ahab. (3) Or he might have been sustained by certain inhabitants of Oreb, a rocky place beyond Jordan. (See Judg. vii. 22; Isa. x. 26.) This opinion is favoured by Jerome, who says, "The Orbim, inhabitants of a town on the confines of the Arabs, gave nourishment to Elijah." (See more in A. Clarke.) (4) Whether by ravens, Arabians, merchants, or people of Oreb or Orbo, matters little; God can spread a table in the wilderness. He can give us the bread of the day in the day—"bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening." Necessary things are sure; luxuries we may dispense with. The greatest luxury to the wise and good is the feast upon the spiritual food which accompanies faithful obedience to God (John iv. 32-34).—J. A. M.

**Vers. 7-9.—The Widow of Zidon.** Towards the close of Elijah's year of seclusion, to use the words of Dr. Macduff, "the brook began to sing less cheerily; once a full rill or cascade, which, night by night, was wont to lull the prophet of Israel to sleep, it becomes gradually attenuated into a silver thread. In a few days it seems to trickle drop by drop from the barren rock, until, where pools of refreshing water were before, there is nothing now left but sand and stones." It is time for the prophet to look to God for further direction; and in response to his prayer, "the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, Arise," &c. How different are the resources of the believer from those of the worldling! When the Cherith of the worldling fails he has nothing further to look to, but when from the believer one comfort is withdrawn another is at hand (Psa. xxxvii. 19). Let us meditate upon—

**I. THE COMMAND OF GOD TO THE WIDOW.** 1. *She is to sustain the prophet of the Lord.* (1) What an honour is this! For two years and a half to entertain the man that "stands before Jehovah," at whose word the clouds are sealed or the windows of heaven opened! (See ver. 1 and xviii. 41.) The man whose prayer was to bring fire down upon the sacrifice on Carmel to the confusion of idolatry! (ch. xviii. 38.) Who was to bring the same element down upon the soldiers of Ahaziah! (2 Kings i. 10-12). Who was destined to ride alive into the heavens in a chariot of fire! (2 Kings ii. 11). Who was destined, many centuries later, to appear in glory with Messiah on the mount of transfiguration! (Matt. xvii. 3). And who is yet to come before the great day of judgment to gather back the children of Israel from their dispersion! (Mal. iv. 5, 6). (2) How could she hope for such distinc-

tion? A poor widow, so poor that she has no servant and no fuel in her house! A widow with her son, both at the point of death! A stranger, and a stranger of Zidon too—the land of Baal—and the land of the wicked Jezebel! Note: God's ways are not as our ways. He brings unlikely things to pass. How little do we know what may be the thoughts of His heart concerning us! 2. *But how is she to accomplish this?* (1) Unbelief might murmur at such a requisition. It might charge God foolishly as a tyrant requiring brick where he had not supplied straw. Those who shrink from Church work because of fancied incompetence fall into this error, neglecting to trust God. (2) It is enough that God has commanded. His commands are promises. (See Exod. iii. 10—12; Judg. vi. 14.) See how the meal and oil are multiplied in the hands of the widow. The more difficult (humanly considered) the undertaking, the more gloriously will the excellency of the power of God appear. (See 2 Cor. xii. 9.) Attempt great things for God. Expect great things from God.

II. THE REASONS OF THE COMMAND. 1. *Elijah needed succour.* (1) The brook is dried up. Now is the time to test the prophet's faith. But he is a man of prayer, so is familiar with God. Those who best know God have most confidence in Him. Let us be much in prayer. (2) Then "the word of the Lord came." Man's extremity is God's opportunity. In no strait let us despair of help while we keep a single heart. God knows all things. He can do whatever He will. 2. *The woman needed succour.* (1) She too had come to extremity—to the last handful of meal. What a touching spectacle is that widow at the gate of Zarephath gathering a few sticks to prepare the last meal for herself and her son! (2) Had she not prayed? No doubt; and most sincerely. She was evidently a believer in the God of Israel. Jehovah was not unknown in the land of that Hiram who "was ever a lover of David," and so materially aided Solomon in building the temple (1 Kings v.) (3) But then she was not an Israelite to whom "were the promises." So in addressing Elijah her words are, "As the Lord *thy* God liveth." She believes in the "living God," but cannot presume to call Him *her* God. (See Rom. ix. 4.) What right had a poor stranger of Zidon to look for any special consideration from the Lord? (4) "He giveth grace unto the humble." He that reads the heart saw that she would believe if only she had a promise to authorize her faith. He accordingly gave her the opportunity which she seized and improved. (See Acts x. 1—6.) Let us act up to our light, and God will guide us into all the truth. 3. *But were there no widows in Israel?* (1) Upon the best authority we know that there were "many," and as needy as this Zidonian. In the severity of such a famine deaths from starvation were no rare occurrence. (2) But the same authority informs us that there were none so worthy as this widow of Sarepta (Levit. iv. 24—26). No widow in Israel would have received the prophet as this widow received him. The moral is that if we would have special favour of God we must have special faith to receive it. Let us ever be in that attitude of whole-hearted consecration to God which will make us eligible for any service he may be pleased to promote us to. To be permitted to do anything for God is an unspeakable honour.—J. A. M.

Vers. 10—16.—*The Barrel of Meal.* In the East the people kept their corn in earthen jars to protect it from insects which swarm in the heat of the sun. What in our translation is called a "barrel" (כַּב) was one of these vessels. The store in this case was run low; there was but a "handful" left; yet this was so multiplied by the power of God that three persons found at least in it sufficient provision for two and a half years. Let us inquire—

I. HOW ITS CONDITION BECAME KNOWN. 1. *Elijah came to Zarephath in quest of the widow.* (1) Such were his instructions (vers. 8, 9). But was there only one widow in this city of "smelting furnaces" (comp. ch. vii. 14), this hive of industry, this centre of population? How, then, is he to discover the right one? (2) God knows her, and that is enough for the prophet. The Word of the Lord who came to him at Samaria and at Cherith will now guide him. (See Isa. xlii. 16.) (3) Let us follow the light we have and God will give us more. So was Abraham's

faithful servant guided to Rebecca (Gen. xxiv.) 2. *He found her at the gate of the city.* (1) She was there on an errand of her own, viz., to gather a few dry sticks to kindle a fire to cook her last meal in this world. (2) She was there also, though unknown to herself, on an errand from God. She was commanded to sustain the prophet of Israel. (3) Yet these two errands harmonize. God uses man's purposes to work out His own. Man proposeth; God disposeth. 3. *He readily identified her.* (1) He asked her for water, which, with admirable promptitude, she went to fetch. This was the sign by which Abraham's servant identified Rebecca (Gen. xxiv. 14). The cup of cold water has its promise of reward (Matt. x. 42). (1) Then he asked for bread, which further request opened the way for the whole truth, "As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but," &c. (ver. 12). From these words it is evident that she recognized Elijah, at least as an Israelite, and probably as the prophet of Israel; for he was a person of pronounced individuality. His profusion of hair, probably, placed Elisha in such contrast to him that Elisha was mocked as a "bald head." (Comp. 2 Kings i. 8, and ii. 23.)

II. HOW ITS RESOURCES WERE MAINTAINED. 1. *By the miracle-working power of God.* (1) "The barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruise of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord which he spake by Elijah." This supplied not only the guest but the widow and her son for two years and a half. As Bp. Hall remarks, "Never did corn or olive so increase in the growing as these did in the using." (2) This miracle was similar to that of the manna. The oil was used as butter for the meal, and the taste of the manna was like fresh oil (Num. xi. 8). Also to Christ's miracles of the loaves. (3) The lessons are the same. The miracles all teach that "man lives not by bread alone, but by the word of God." That this spiritual food is the gift of God. That it differs essentially from the bread that perishes. Not only is it imperishable, but it multiplies in the using, grows as it is dispensed. How delightful were the spiritual feasts of that two years and a half in the widow's dwelling! (See Rev. iii. 20.) 2. *Through the faith of the widow.* (1) She was predisposed to believe. God saw this, else He had not honoured her with His command to sustain his prophet. (See Luke iv. 24—26.) Let us ever live in that moral fitness to be employed by God. (2) This disposition was encouraged. She waited for something to justify her faith in God, and she got it: "And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said," &c. (vers. 13, 14). She knew that the word of the Lord was with Elijah And this instruction to make first a little cake for the prophet was according to God's order. (See Num. xv. 20, 21.) (3) She proved the genuineness of her faith by her works. "She did according to the saying of Elijah." By works faith is perfected. And God justified the faith that justified him.—J. A. M.

Vers. 17, 18.—*The Reproaches of Death.* In verse 15 we read that the widow and her household did eat of the multiplied meal "*days*" (דַּיִם), a term which is by some Hebraists understood, when used without qualification, to denote a *year*. So the phrase with which the text opens, "And it came to pass *after* these things," imports that the miracle of raising the widow's son occurred "*after*" Elijah had been one year in her house. The "*things*" to which this miracle succeeded were the earlier signs of the presence of God with the prophet, meanwhile the widow read the bereavement her own way.

I. SHE SAW THE HAND OF GOD IN IT. 1. *She attributed it to Elijah.* "Art thou come unto me, to slay my son." (1) Not, however, under any notion of unkindness to her in the heart of the prophet. For (a) had she not, and her son with her, been saved from death by famine in connexion with his sojourn in her house? (b) The heavenly conversation they must have had during the year would preclude such an idea. (2) Yet here is the fact; and it is written for our learning. The incidents in Scripture, given under Divine inspiration, are therefore to be very particularly noted. They cannot be too carefully or too prayerfully studied. 2. *She attributed it to him as a "man of God."* (1) This was not, in her estimation, an ordinary case of death. The circumstances surrounding it were all extraordinary.

(2) At least she saw that it was intended by God for some high purpose. She was right. We should not be wrong so to regard ordinary providences. All God's purposes are high. All His providences are important. His providence is in everything. Life therefore is no stale thing.

II. SHE READ HIS REPROACHES IN IT. "Art thou come to call my sin to my remembrance?" 1. *We should never forget that we are sinners.* (1) Whatever reminds us of God should remind us of sin. For all sin is, directly or indirectly, against Him; and this is the gravest side of the offence (Psa. li. 4; Luke xv. 21). (2) Death especially should remind us of God, before whose tribunal it conducts us. So it should especially remind us of sin, for it is its wages appointed by God. 2. *The remembrance, however, will affect us variously according to our moral state.* (1) Sin, in the first instance, is called to the remembrance of all that they may hate it and forsake it. (2) To those who have endeavoured to do this, it is still called to remembrance, that they may trust in Christ for forgiveness and salvation. (3) To the justified it is called to remembrance that they may praise God for His mercy. In this sense sin will be remembered even in heaven. (See Rev. v. 9; vii. 9, 17.)

III. SHE CONNECTED THESE REPROACHES WITH THE PRESENCE OF ELIJAH. "What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God?" &c. 1. *Why did she do this?* (1) Prophets were sent usually to reprove, and denounce judgments. Hence the coming of Samuel to Bethlehem inspired the magistrates and people with alarm. (See 1 Sam. xvi. 4.) This bereavement, therefore, might suggest to the widow her sin in general, or some particular sin, though not clearly defined to her as yet. (2) Or it might have brought home to her some imperfection in the service of God which she had not previously sufficiently considered. Had she adequately appreciated the great privilege of having such a guest? (3) *Was there not in this a confession that she was unworthy of such an honour, and a desire implied that she should be made worthy, lest otherwise his continued presence must become an occasion of judgments?* Was not the expression of Peter, with whom Jesus lodged, of similar import when the divinity of the Master was brought vividly before him by the miraculous draught of fishes, and he exclaimed, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord?" (Luke v. 8). 2. *Did she not here recognize a great truth?* (1) What sanctifications and consecrations Levites, and more especially sons of Aaron, needed, who had to draw near to God; and how perilous to them, even then, were their approaches to that sacred presence! (Exod. xxviii. 43; Levit. viii. 35; xv. 81; xvi. 2, 13; xxii. 9; Num. iv. 15; xvii. 13). (2) How clean should they be who bear now the vessels of the Lord! How careful unsanctified persons should be not to tamper with holy things! Witness the judgments upon Uzzah and Uzziah. (See 1 Sam. vi. 19; 2 Sam. vi. 7; 2 Chron. xxvi. 19, 20.) The sanctification now required is moral, of which the ceremonial was the type. (3) All shall have to appear in the very presence of the Judge. *How shall we stand then? Let us now prepare for that solemnity.*—J. A. M.

Vers. 19—24.—*The Sign of the Widow's Son.* Here is a touching scene—a poor widow pressing to her bosom the corpse of her only child, while in the agony of her bereaved soul, addressing Elijah, she says, "What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come to call my sin to my remembrance, and to slay my son?" Now note the words of the text: "And he said unto her, Give me thy son," &c. In this history we have—

I. AN EXAMPLE OF THE POWER OF FAITH. Behold here—1. *The spirit of faith.* (1) He had confidence in God before he prayed. This is evident from the manner in which he asked the widow for the corpse. He did not tell her what he intended; but, on the other hand, neither did he express any hesitation as to the comfort she might expect. (2) This confidence must have been divinely authorized, else it would have been presumption which, instead of conciliating the favour, would have awakened the displeasure of God. (3) This was what Elisha and the sons of the prophets called "the Spirit of Elijah," *i.e.*, the Spirit of God abiding with him. (See 2 Kings ii. 9, 15.) 2. *The prayer of faith.* (1) He recognized the hand of God in the bereavement: "Hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I

sojourn by slaying her son?" He calls it "evil," yet attributes it to God. Moral evil God cannot perpetrate, but evil which comes in the form of affliction or punishment is a very different thing. (See Job ii. 10; Isa. xlv. 7; Amos iii. 6; John ix. 1—3.) (2) He entreated God to restore the child's life. "He cried unto the Lord." Here is the "fervency" which characterizes "effectual" prayer. (3) He entreated Him confidently: "O Lord *my* God." This appealing to God in the *possessive* expresses a loving trust in a Covenant-Friend. (See Levit. xxvi. 12; Jer. xxxi. 33; 2 Cor. vi. 16; Heb. xi. 16; Rev. xxi. 3.) (4) Hence his success. "The Lord heard the voice of Elijah." He saw in Elijah those moral qualifications which make it fitting that He should answer prayer. So the prophet was able to restore the child alive to his mother. 3. *But what example is this for us?* (1) Elijah's success in prayer was not because he was a prophet. James replies to this objection when he assures us that "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are." For this is the ground on which he proceeds to lay down the broad principle, *viz.*, that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James v. 16; see also Acts xi. 24). (2) Therefore *we* also *may* be moved by the Holy Ghost; and we *must* be so moved if we would pray effectually. True faith is "of the operation of God" (Luther's prayer for the recovery of Myconius instanced in Krummacher). (3) But how may we know that we are so influenced? God will make it plain as one of the secrets of holy communion with Him (Psa. xxv. 14; John vii. 17; xv. 15). When we are free from selfish desire, and above all things seek God's glory, there is little danger of being led astray. (4) The widow was no prophetess, but she also was an example of faith. (See Heb. xi. 35.) Witness her recognition of God, and the readiness with which she gave her son from her bosom at the prophet's request. Her faith was honoured as well as his.

II. A PROPHETIC SIGN. 1. *So the widow interpreted it (ver. 24).* (1) It authenticated Elijah as a "man of God." Not only that he was a good man, but that he was a prophet of the Lord. (2) Consequently "that the word of the Lord in his mouth" was no sham. (Comp. ch. xxii.) Spurious prophets could not give miraculous signs. 2. *Such signs were parables.* The question, then, is, what did this parable teach? (1) Could it be a sign that the drought would be removed which had now lasted two years, working fearful ravages, and must, if continued long, destroy the nations visited? For the "word of the Lord in the mouth of Elijah" did encourage the hope that rain should come upon the earth (ver. 14). The coming of rain would be a national resurrection. (2) Could it be a pledge of the resurrection of the dead at the last day? The gospel has thrown floods of illustration upon this subject, but in old times it was obscure. This miracle taught the separate existence of the soul. Also that the disembodied spirit may and shall be reunited to its organic companion. (3) Why did Elijah stretch himself upon the child? He was a type of Christ. So he made himself like the dead to foreshow that Christ by dying in our room should give us life. This He does morally. Also physically, *viz.*, in the resurrection of the body. (Comp. 2 Kings iv. 34; John xi. 43—45; Acts xx. 10.) Is there any correspondence between the "three times" mentioned in the text and the "three times" in which our Lord prayed for the removal of the cup of His suffering? (Matt. xxvi. 44).—J. A. M.

Ver. 1.—*The Messenger of Jehovah.* Stanley is justified in describing Elijah as "the grandest and most romantic character that Israel ever produced" (S. & P., p. 328). He appears suddenly, and disappears miraculously. Hence imagination has had scope. Some Rabbins believed that he was Phineas, the grandson of Aaron, and others that he was an angel from heaven. The impression his ministry made upon the mind of the people re-appeared again and again after the lapse of centuries. When, for example, the miracles of our Lord aroused the wonder of the people, many said, "It is Elias." Such a character and work as were his deserve careful study. Describe the social and religious condition of the kingdom of Israel after Ahab's accession and marriage with the dauntless, fanatical, idolatrous Jezebel. Never was reformation more called for, and never were supernatural works more necessary as the credentials of a Heaven-sent ambassador. Our text presents for

our consideration—I. *A messenger from a forsaken God*, and II., *A message for an apostate people*.

I. A MESSENGER FROM A FORSAKEN GOD. Ahab was congratulating himself on the success of his policy. It had been greater than he could have expected. The old faith and fervour of the people had died out so completely that they were quiet under the bold introduction of Baal and Ashtoreth. The Sidonians were linked with the kingdom of Israel against Syria. Scarcely a protest had been heard against these political and religious movements. Suddenly there appeared before the king and queen, perhaps as they were enthroned in their ivory palace, Elijah the Tishbite; rough in appearance, as he was bold in utterance. Above the ordinary height, of great physical strength, a girdle round his loins, and a sheepskin cloak over his brawny shoulders, his long thick hair streaming down his back, he was even in appearance a memorable man; and there was something very startling in this his sudden dash into the royal presence, to thunder out his curse, and the rebuke which no doubt preceded it. His appearance may be compared to the flash of lightning that for a moment makes everything which was before in darkness vividly distinct. Some points are worthy of note. 1. *The obscurity of his origin*. The Tishbite means the "converter," and would fitly describe his work. The endeavour to discover a town of such name in Palestine appears to have failed. The phrase, "from the residents of Gilead," does not necessarily imply that he was an Israelite. He may have been an Ishmaelite or a heathen by birth. It was designed that obscurity should thus hang over his origin. To the people he would seem to come all the more directly from God. The human element was overshadowed by the Divine. Show the mightiness of secret forces in nature, in thought, and in the kingdom of God. 2. *The signs of his fitness*. A rough man was needed to do rough work. The settler in the backwoods wants the strong sharp axe to effect a clearing, before more delicate implements are required. Elijah had his constitutional strength and courage fostered by his surroundings. Gilead was a wild, unsettled country compared with Ephraim and Judah. Instead of stately palaces and flourishing towns, it boasted tent villages and mountain castles; and desperate and frequent were the fights with surrounding freebooters. (See 1 Chron. v. 10, 19—22. Compare with it "Rob Roy," chap. xix.) The Gileadites were to Israel what the Highlanders, a century back, were to the Lowlands. Amid scenes of conflict, of loneliness, probably of poverty, this strong character was moulded. Compare with Moses in Midian, with John the Baptist in the wilderness. God gives each servant the right training for the service appointed for him both on earth and in heaven. 3. *The secret of his strength*. His name, Elijah, and his formula, "as the Lord God of Israel liveth," indicate it. An overpowering conviction that Jehovah lived, that He was near, that He was the God of this people, and that He would assert His supremacy over all false gods is implied in the verse. This is the secret of spiritual strength in all ages. The disciples were weak when Jesus was on the mount of transfiguration, strong when He returned; they were despondent after the crucifixion, exultant at Pentecost. The revelation of God's presence and power is what all Churches now need. 4. *The completeness of his consecration*. "Before whom I stand." This he said, not with a sense of God's nearness only, nor of His favour, but to express that he was the Lord's consecrated servant, through whom and by whom he might do what He willed. *Standing* is an attitude of attention, expectancy, readiness. So in ancient Scripture servants are represented as all standing looking towards the king, with loins girded, eyes intent, ready to do his will. Note: We cannot stand before the Lord until we have knelt before Him in penitence and humility and prayer. This Elijah had done in Gilead.

II. A MESSAGE FOR AN APOSTATE PEOPLE. "There shall not be rain nor dew these years, but according to my word." We assume here the credibility of miracles and content ourselves with indicating the suitability of this to its purpose. 1. *This was revealed in prayer*. Elijah had "prayed earnestly that it might not rain" (James v.) He felt that such a chastisement would move the hearts of the people, and turn their thoughts towards God, as it ultimately did. The prayer was the offspring of God's Spirit. The human utterance was the echo of the Divine

will. The mystery of prayer is revealed (1 John v. 14, 16). 2. *This was a response to the challenge of Baal-worship.* The productive powers of nature were adored under the idolatrous symbol. Here they were shown to be dependent on the unseen God. All natural laws are. They are the expressions of the Divine will. It was in vain to cry, "O Baal, hear us!" 3. *This man would affect all classes of the people.* They had shared the sin, and therefore must share the penalty. The loftiest are not beyond God's reach, the lowliest are not hidden from God's notice. The tiny garden of the peasant was cursed, as well as the splendid park of the king. National sin brings national calamities. The message, not to some, but to all, is, "Repent, and be converted." 4. *This was associated with estrangement from God.* It was to be "according to the word" of His servant. The change would be foreseen and foretold, not by the false priests, but by the praying prophet. The curse came because of sin, as had been proclaimed by the law. (See Levit. xxvi. 19; Deut. xi. 16; xxviii. 23.) It was removed on repentance (1 Kings xviii.) *Listen to the message God still sends to men, bidding them root out idolatry from every nation and from every heart.* May the God of Israel, before whom they stand, prosper all His messengers!—A. B.

Vers. 2—4.—*Strange Provision in a Sad Necessity.* The miracles associated with the ministry of Elijah and Elisha have led some to deny the historical credibility of the Books of Kings. It should be remembered that great miracles were rendered necessary by a great and general apostasy. It was essential to the survival of true faith that Jehovah should indicate His unseen sovereignty. In Israel such attestation was more required than in Judah, where the sanctuary and the priesthood, in the worst times, testified for God. This passage sets before us I. *Silent suffering.* II. *Divine deliverance.* III. *Restful retreat.* Each of which points we will consider.

I. **SILENT SUFFERING** is implied by all that we know of the prophet's circumstances. The famine he had foretold had come; and he shared the privations of the people. Others might have kindness shown them, but there was none for this man. Regarded as the cause of the calamity, he was an accursed outcast. Upon such a temperament the steady persistent pressure of hunger and hatred would tell severely. He would feel pity for others—for the poor dumb beasts, for the innocent children—and would be tempted to ask, "Was I right in praying for this, and bringing this woe on the people?" Meantime he was himself suffering the rigours of famine, and no chariot of fire came to bear him away from the desolated land. Like Samson, it seemed as if he had shaken the house, and was bringing destruction on himself as well as on the idolators. Yet not a word of complaint. He was sustained by the conviction that he had done right, and that God would see to the issues. Apply the teaching from this to occasions on which men are still called upon to do God's will, to utter God's truth, regardless of consequences. Sometimes we are able to "count the cost," and then we should do so. But often this is impossible. The love of Christ may constrain us to do, or to say, something which will place us in unexpected difficulties. Illustrate by Peter's zeal, which prompted him to step out of the boat upon the sea. He was terrified at a result he had not taken into calculation; but he was perfectly safe, for he was going towards Christ. Exemplify by instances from ordinary life—*e.g.*, an assistant in business refuses to tell a lie, or to act one, and loses his situation. A daughter confesses her love to Christ, and finds her home a place of torment, &c. The one thing that can support us in such circumstances is the humble, yet confident, conviction that we have done what God willed, and often from those straits He delivers us in the most unexpected way, before we ask Him, as He delivered Elijah.

II. **DIVINE DELIVERANCE.** 1. *It was unexpected.* No one would have imagined, and some cannot now credit the means adopted. The ravens have been a sore offence to critics. Discuss some of their theories—that they were merchants, Arabians, &c. The difficulties are not removed by the interpretations suggested, nor do they seem warranted by the text. Had men brought food to the hidden prophet, Ahab would soon have discovered his whereabouts; nor would they be

likely to bring food twice daily, when a store might have been conveyed with only one risk. The supernatural is always startling, but to those who reject materialism it is not incredible. If God notices a sparrow fall, and if diseases obey Him, as soldiers obey their general (Matt. viii. 8—10), this feeding by the ravens might well be. God often uses strange instruments to effect His purposes. Give examples from Scripture and history. Even the plans and the deeds of the wicked are under His control. All things work His will. 2. *It was revealed.* "The word of the Lord came to him." It comes to us. Sometimes the inward impulse after prayer impels us to take God's way; and sometimes all other paths are closed, and of the one left open Providence says, "This is the way, walk in it." Are we seeking to know God's will about ourselves? Are we concerned that our way should be His choice, and not our own? "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

**III. RESTFUL RETREAT.** Describe the wild ravine of the Kelt, which Robinson and Stanley identify, with some probability, as the Cherith. The precipitous rocks, in places 500 feet high, the caverns in the limestone, in one of which the prophet hid, &c. Such a man needed quiet. He had it afforded to him again in Horeb. No great activity for God can be worthily sustained without much waiting on Him. In this retreat Elijah had two sorts of provision. 1. *Daily bread.* It is only that which we are taught to expect, and pray for. The daily reception of blessing teaches us our constant dependence. The manna fell every morning, and could not be hoarded for the future. Daily strength, too, is given for daily duties. 2. *Quiet communion.* All nature would speak to Elijah of his God. The brook would whisper of the water of life; the birds would celebrate the care of God, &c. In the world around him, in secret converse with his own heart, and in earnest prayer to the God of Israel, before whom he stood, Elijah would get refreshment and strength for coming conflict and conquest. Refer to the invalid, to the aged, to the little children, as those to whom God gives a time of quiet, to prepare them for the future service.

1. *Expect God's deliverance whenever you are in the path of duty.* 2. *Be content that God should work in His own way.* 3. *Seek to have a spirit of contentment, and a heart that is "quiet from the fear of evil."*—A. R.

Ver. 16.—*The Widow's Cruse.* Describe this incident in the life of Elijah. Show some of the **ADVANTAGES** which arose from his visit to Zarephath; e.g., 1. *It was a means of blessing to himself.* He found a true worshipper of Jehovah even in the coasts of Tyre, where, under the rule of Jezebel's father, one was least to be expected. This would strengthen his faith, and it would keep alive his hope that his work in Israel would "not be in vain in the Lord." We may sometimes assure ourselves of the vitality of Christianity by witnessing its effects among the heathen. A visit to the South Sea islands would prove a tonic to debilitated faith. 2. *It was a means of blessing to the widow.* Not only was she kept alive in famine for the prophet's sake, but she received spiritual blessing. Christ refers to Elijah's visit as a sign of the care God had, even under the old dispensation, for the heathen peoples, where He left not Himself without witness. (Compare Luke iv. 25.) Show that as Elijah turned from Israel to Zidon, so the apostles turned to the Gentiles (Acts xviii. 6). Learn from the story the following general lessons:—

I. **THAT GOD PROVIDES FOR THE NECESSITIES OF HIS SERVANTS.** In the famine He had already made provision for Elijah at Cherith, and now that the supply there had failed, other resources were opened. Not always in our way, but in some way, He answers the prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread." He does not promise luxuries or wealth, but our "bread shall be given to us, and our water shall be sure." We are not to be anxious about our future, but are to remember that it is in the hands of God. It is said of our food and raiment, that our "heavenly father knoweth that we have need of these things." When a child is at home he learns his lessons, obeys the rules of his parents, &c., but he has no care about the food he will want on the morrow. He never dreams but that it will be provided. Such should be our spirit, whatever may be our powers of productive work. We are

diligently and earnestly to do whatsoever our hands find to do, feeling certain that "they who seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." The Israelites followed the cloud, though it led them into the wilderness, with the conviction that God was leading them; and when it was necessary He provided manna in proportion to their wants. If God does not ignore our temporal necessities, He will certainly not fail to supply our spiritual wants. In the Father's house there is bread enough and to spare. This we may prove on earth, but its highest fulfilment will be seen in heaven, where the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, shall feed us.

II. THAT GOD USES WHAT MEN WOULD DESPISE. With limitless resources, we should have imagined that God would miraculously create what was required, disregarding "the handful of meal" and the little oil left in a cruse. Not so, however. There is no waste in the Divine economy. The breath of men, the exhalations of plants, the refuse cast into the field, or into the sea, the rising mist, the falling shower, are all accounted for, and have a purpose to fulfil, a work to do. There is no physical force which becomes utterly extinct, though it passes from one form of manifestation to another. Motion passes into heat, heat into electricity, &c., in an endless cycle. The economy of force asserts itself everywhere under the rule of God. This, which is proclaimed by science, is constantly illustrated in Scripture. It is the same God who worketh all in all. If manna is given to the Israelites, it ceases directly the people can eat of the corn of the country. The supernatural rises out of the natural. The miraculous provision for Elijah was not a new creation, but an increase of what already existed; and in the use of this there was no prodigality or waste. Compare with Christ's miracle of the feeding of the five thousand. After showing that He had infinite resources, He said to His disciples, "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost."

III. THAT GOD REVEALS OUR WAY STEP BY STEP. Picture Elijah sitting by the brook Cherith, watching its waters becoming shallower day by day under the drought. He knew not what he should do next, but he waited, and trusted, and prayed; and when the brook was dried up, "the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, Arise, get thee to Zarephath," &c. God does not reveal the future to us, but draws across it an impenetrable, or at most a semi-transparent veil. We know not with absolute certainty what a day may bring forth. The advantages of this are evident—1. *It saves us from sorrow and from sin.* (1) *From sorrow*, because if we foresaw all that we should have to endure, if we knew the day of our death, the extent of our losses, &c., our burden would be greater than we could bear. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." (2) *From sin*, because we should grow absorbed in worldly occupations if we were certain life would be long; or become despondent and spiritless in work if we knew it would be short. 2. *It fosters in us the graces of trust and prayer.* If we know nothing of the future ourselves, and cannot feel confident about our own plans, we are led to confide in Him who foresees what is before us, and to ask Him in prayer for daily guidance and support.

IV. THAT GOD REWARDS OUR CONSECRATION OF WHAT WE HAVE TO HIM. It was a *generous* act towards a stranger, a *pious* act towards a servant of Jehovah, to fetch for Elijah the water which was now so costly, and to be willing to share with him what appeared to be her last meal. "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth." Even in temporal affairs this is true. Hoard seed in the springtime, and you cannot be enriched; scatter it, and the harvest will come. Give to the poor in the name of their Lord, and you will not fail of reward—either here or hereafter. We are to give, nowever, not for the sake of applause or recompense, but "as unto the Lord," to whom we owe all that we have. This woman not only gave to the prophet, but gave to him *in the name of a prophet*, and therefore "received a prophet's reward" (Matt. x. 40—42). May He who commended the widow when she gave her two mites so accept our gifts and services, and so approve our motives, as at last to say, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me!" (Matt. xxv. 40.)—A. B.

Ver. 21.—*Prayer for the Dead.* The portrait of the widow of Zarephath is remarkably natural. Her calmness in speaking of the trouble that was only

threatened (ver. 12), is contrasted with her agony when trouble actually comes (ver. 18). She believed in Jehovah though in a heathen kingdom; yet there was a blending of superstition with her faith. She supposed that God might have overlooked her sin, had it not been that He was present with His prophet in her home; and she confounded discipline with retribution. The latter was the mistake of the barbarians at Melita. (Compare Acts xxviii. 4.) See also our Lord's teaching, Luke xiii. 4. The death of this child is to be explained on the principle which asserted itself in the blindness of the man whom Jesus cured (John ix. 3), or in the illness of Lazarus, concerning which our Lord said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for glory of God" (John xi. 4). Rembrandt has depicted the scene brought before us in this chapter. In a roughly built upper room the dead child lies upon the bed; one hand rests upon his breast, while the other has fallen heavily at his side, giving a wonderful idea of the weight of death. Elijah stands on the further side of the bed with his rugged, earnest face upturned towards heaven and his hands clasped in an agony of supplication as he says, "O Lord my God, I pray thee let this child's soul come into him again!" This event was not intended to be wondered at as a prodigy, nor was it merely to benefit the widow, but for all time has spiritual significance. With this belief we see in it—

I. AN EMBLEM OF SPIRITUAL DEATH. The child had died suddenly, or Elijah would have been told of his illness. His death was real, and was more than the insensibility of Eutychus (Acts xx. 10). We say that a thing, susceptible of life, is *dead* when it cannot receive what is essential to its growth and well-being; e.g., a tree is dead when it is no longer able to absorb the nutriment without which it must fade, and ultimately fall. An animal is dead which can no longer breathe air or assimilate food. The mind is dead—as is that of an idiot—when it receives no true mental impressions. The soul is dead which is insensible to spiritual influence. As it is possible to have physical without mental life, so it is possible to have mental without spiritual life. "Spiritual death" is not a mere figure of speech. It may be illustrated by the condition of this child. The food provided for him was useless now, the tenderest words of his mother were unheeded, and the voice that so lately was musical with laughter was silent. Similarly the spiritually dead are indifferent to God's provision, unconscious of their own possibilities, irresponsive to the Father's voice. "Except a man be born again he cannot enter the kingdom of God." "He that hath not the Son hath not life." "Dead in trespasses and sins." "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live."

II. AN EXAMPLE OF INTERCESSORY PRAYER. A man of Elijah's strong nature would have strong affections, and we can imagine how intensely he had come to love this child. On hearing of his death he could only say to the distracted mother, "Give me thy son," and then carried him up to his own room, and cried to God in an agony of prayer. 1. *It was offered in solitude.* Not even the mother was there. Such intense crises in life must be met alone. Jesus Christ was wont to "depart into a solitary place" to pray. Understanding our needs He said, "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and shut to the door, and pray to thy Father which seeth in secret." "Jacob was left alone" when he wrestled with the angel. Compare Elijah's miracle with that of the Lord, who, when He went into the room where Jairus' daughter lay dead, "suffered no man to go in," beyond those who were one with Him in sympathy and prayer. 2. *It was peculiarly definite.* There was one want in his heart, one cry on his lips. Our prayers too often are meditations on the Divine attributes, or general confessions, and thanksgivings. If our King asked "What is thy petition?" we should sometimes be at a loss for an answer. Pray for one grace, for one unbelieving friend, &c. 3. *It was intensely earnest.* Elijah could not be denied. His was not a speech, but a cry. He looked for the awakening, and flung himself on the dead in an agony of earnestness as if he would infuse his own warmth and life. The touch was similar to that of Peter, when he took the cripple by the hand (Acts iii. 7)—not the *cause* of blessing, but the medium of blessing. The Divine power works through the human agency.

III. AN EARNEST OF TRUE RESURRECTION. Elijah could not give life, but he could

ask God for it. Nor can we arouse to new life by preaching, though God can do so through preaching. Our words are only the media through which the Holy Spirit works. The Atlantic cable is useless except as the message is flashed forth by mysterious unseen power. This distinguishes the miracles of our Lord Jesus from those of His servants. (Compare Luke vii. 14 with Acts iii. 12—16.) There is a resurrection wherein saints shall be raised by the power of God to a life of immortality, the promise and pledge of which we have in the resurrection of Christ, who is the "firstfruits of them that sleep." There is also a spiritual resurrection, to which Paul refers when he appeals to Christians as those "risen with Christ; and of this, as well as of that, is there an illustration in our text. Raised to newness of life we, like the child Elijah prayed for, have to live for awhile in the old sphere. The prophet gave the child to his mother. Jesus restored Lazarus to his sisters, the young man at Nain to his mother, and the ruler's daughter to her parents; and so to us, who have "passed from death unto life," He says, "Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done for thee." This miracle constrained the widow to accept as God's truth the declaration of His servant (ver. 24). How much more reason have we, who believe in the supernatural works of His Son, to say, "We know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him!"—A. R.

**Vers. 1—6.**—*Elijah the Tishbite.* One of the noblest of the noble figures that cross the stage of Old Testament history appears before us here. Few names have such a halo of glorious associations surrounding them as that of Elijah. The mystery of his origin, the grandeur of his mission, his physical and moral characteristics, the peculiar nature of his miracles, his wonderful translation and reappearance with Moses at the time of our Lord's transfiguration, together with the place that he occupies in the last utterances of inspired prophecy, and in the anticipations of the Jewish people—all combine to invest the person of this great prophet with a peculiar and romantic interest. This opening chapter in the story of his prophetic ministry is full of instruction. Note—

**I. HIS ABRUPT APPEARANCE.** There is nothing actually unique in this. Other prophets of the age are introduced thus suddenly (Ahijah, Jehu, Shemaiah, &c.) But considering the circumstances of the time it is remarkable. **1.** *It proclaims God's continued interest in, and sovereignty over, Israel as well as Judah.* The revolt of the ten tribes had not broken the bond between Him and them, or altered the fact of His supremacy. Nor had their religious defection nullified His purpose of mercy. **2.** *It is called forth by a dread moral crisis.* The seed sown by Jeroboam was fast developing its most deadly fruits. The Baal worship brought in by Ahab and Jezebel was a far worse "abomination" than the worship of the calves. A cruel persecution was raging, the prophets of the Lord were being slain, and it seemed as if the true religion would perish out of the land. **3.** *It was a revelation of irresistible power.* The worship of Baal was essentially the worship of power; probably the productive power of nature. Here is the messenger of Him "to whom all power belongeth," that great unseen Power that can arrest the order of nature, seal up the fountains of heaven, wither those resources of earth on which the life alike of man and beast depends. We are reminded of the various ways in which God may see fit to fulfil His sovereign purposes. All powers, human and material, are at His command. "All things serve his might." In the darkest hour in the history of church or nation, let us believe that still "the Lord reigneth." Let us trust Him to "plead his own cause," and vindicate the claims of truth and righteousness.

**II. HIS PERSONAL DIGNITY.** It is the dignity of one who sustains a special relation towards "the living God." His name implies this: "Jehovah is my God." And this solemn asseveration, "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand," is suggestive of the dignity (1) of personal fellowship; (2) face to face vision; and (3) Divine proprietorship; (4) consecrated servitude. One would think the old Jewish tradition were true. It sounds like the voice of an angel. But lofty as this utterance is, majestic as is the relation towards the Divine Being

which it indicates, it has its Christian counterpart. Think of St. Paul's words: "There stood by me this night the angel of God, *whose I am and whom I serve*" (Acts xxvii. 23). This is not an exclusive, exceptional dignity. We may all in our measure share it. And as no earthly position sheds any real glory upon a man except so far as he recognizes a Divine element in it, fills it as before God with holy fear; so there is no work or office of common life which may not be ennobled by this feeling. We stand there before God as His servants to do that very thing. "Such honour have all his saints."

III. HIS COURAGE. It is the courage of one who knows that God is with him, that he is the messenger of the Divine will, the instrument of a Divine purpose, the channel of Divine strength. He boldly confronts Ahab, "not fearing the wrath of the king," bearding the lion in his den. Does not mingle with the people, antedating their sufferings by spreading among them the evil tidings, but goes straight to him who is the fountain-head of the mischief and can avert the calamity by his repentance. Such is the brave spirit with which God fills his heroes. Whether in the defiance of danger, or the endurance of suffering, it is the sense of God—a Divine inspiration, Divine support—that has ever been the spring of the noblest form of courage. "Greater is he that is in you," &c. "If God be for us," &c. "Be not afraid of their terror, but sanctify the Lord God in your heart," &c. This is the principle—the solemn fear of God taking possession of a man casts out all other fear; in the sense of the sovereignty of a Divine claim, he fears nothing but the dread of being unfaithful to it. Now this brave spirit was not kindled in the breast of Elijah all at once. Such a moral phenomenon is not the birth of an hour or a day. We may believe that it was developed in him gradually among the mountains of Gilead—a fitting scene for the nurture of such a moral constitution as his. The fire burned within him as he mused on the degradation of his country. St. James speaks of the fervency of Elijah's prayer: "He prayed earnestly that it might not rain," &c. (James v. 17). No doubt the withholding of the rain was given as a "sign" in answer to his prayer; but after all, may we not regard his prayer most as the means of preparing him to be the prophet and minister of this great "sign"? Not that the order of nature was placed at the caprice of a poor, frail mortal; but that he, "a man of like passions with us," was able in the fervour of his faith and prayer to rise up and lay hold on the strength of God, to read the purpose of God, reckoned worthy to become the agent in the execution of that purpose. The historic incident is not so far removed as it may seem to be from the range and level of our common life. Heaven gives back its answer to suppliant faith. As regards the fellowship of the human soul with the mind and with the power of God, it must ever be true that "the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much."

IV. HIS EXTRAORDINARY PRESERVATION. A type of the providential care that God will ever exercise over those who are faithful to Him in the path of duty and of trial. Whether "ravens" or "wandering Arabians" were the instruments in his preservation, it little signifies, so that we recognize the positive Divine interposition. And what is the supply of our daily wants but the fruit of a perpetual Divine interposition? "Give us this day our daily bread." Walk uprightly before God, be true to Him in all the sacred responsibilities of life, and trust in Him to provide (Matt. vi. 33).—W.

Ver. 16.—*Entertaining a Stranger.* We naturally ask why Elijah should have been sent at this crisis to Zarephath. The fact that it lay so near to the birthplace of Jezebel, and in the very home of the Baal worship, may have had something to do with this. It might be a safer place of retreat for the prophet than it seemed to be, for Ahab would scarcely dream of following him there. But other reasons are suggested by the use our Lord makes of this incident (Luke iv. 25, 26). The prophet was not "accepted in his own country," but found a confiding welcome and generous hospitality at the hands of an alien. God rebuked the proud unbelief of His own people by making this poor lone widow, in the midst of her idolatrous associations, the instrument of His purposes. And thus that early age

had its foreshadowings of the grace that should hereafter be bestowed on the Gentiles. The lessons of the narrative lie upon the surface.

I. GOD'S SURE GUARDIANSHIP OVER HIS SERVANTS. Elijah is perfectly safe under the shield of Divine protection, as safe in the region of Sidon as he was by the brook Cherith. He who commanded the ravens to feed him can put it into the heart and into the power of the Phœnician woman to do the same. When one resort fails He can provide another. He causes one and another to fail that He may show how boundless His resources are. There is absolutely no limit to the possibilities of God's sustaining and protective power. "He shall give his angels charge concerning thee." The angels of God are many and various. There is nothing which He cannot make to be the instrument of His purpose, the vehicle of His power. And He causes them to wait in duteous ministry on those whom He has called to high and holy service in His kingdom. God has a grand mission for Elijah to accomplish in Israel and will take care that he shall be able to fulfil it. "Man is immortal till his work be done."

II. THE HONOUR GOD PUTS ON THE LOWLY. We see here not only the Divine preservation of Elijah, but a special act of grace towards the woman of Zarephath. It was a signal honour to have been thus singled out from the crowd for such a Divine visitation, to be used as an important link in the chain of great public events, to have her name handed down to future ages as the "woman of Sarepta," whose glory it was to "entertain a prophet in the name of a prophet and receive a prophet's reward." And in this there was not merely a providential arrangement of outward circumstances, but a gracious influence exerted on her own soul; for God lays His sovereign hand not only on the course of external events, but on the secret springs of moral life. Her readiness to respond to the prophet's appeal was from Him. Poor and humble as she was His eye was upon her for good. "He regarded the low estate of his handmaiden." Thus has God often put distinction upon those who might least have expected it. Let none think themselves beneath His notice, or too insignificant to be made by Him the instrument of some high and holy purpose. "Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly" (Psa. cxxxviii. 6).

"He hears the uncomplaining moan  
Of those who sit and weep alone."

The forlorn and desolate, if only they walk humbly and reverently before Him, are the objects of His tenderest regard. He is nearer to them than He seems to be, and often has surprising grace in store for them. The poor widow casts her two mites unnoticed into the treasury, but He to whom the secrets of all hearts are open clothes her with honour above all the rich pretentious people who only gave what they so well could spare. The sinful woman, in self-forgetting devotion, pours her rich ointment on the head of the incarnate Love; captious onlookers see no glory in her deed, but a word from Him crowns it with an everlasting halo of world-wide fame (Matt. xxvi. 13; Mark xii. 43, 44).

III. THE REWARD OF TRUSTFUL AND OBEDIENT FAITH. The poor widow "showed her faith by her works, and by works was her faith made perfect." At the prophet's word she drew freely from her scanty store, and "the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail." The reward of her faith came in the form of a miracle similar to that of Christ's multiplication of the loaves and fishes to feed the hungry multitude. It surpasses our comprehension, but is not more wonderful than the mysterious process that is ever going on in the building up of the tissue of plants and of the animal frame. Shall not the Power that is perpetually changing the elements of earth and air and water into nourishing food for man and beast be able to increase "the meal and the oil" as it pleases? The true life of faith is one of "patient continuance in well-doing," coupled with calm dependence on that ever-active power. Of the righteous God says, "Bread shall be given him," &c. (Isa. xxxiii. 16). "In the day of famine they shall be satisfied" (Psa. xxxvii. 19). Christ did not mock us when He taught us to pray to our Father in heaven,

"Give us this day our daily bread." Tread faithfully the path of duty, and "He that ministereth seed to the sower will both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness" (2 Cor. ix. 10).—W.

Vers. 17—24.—*Life from the Dead.* The miracles wrought by Elijah or associated with his name were for the most part of the nature of severe judgments, and present the person of the lowly prophet in a stern and terrible light before us. But the two miracles that mark the opening of his career were miracles of mercy, and show that there was another side to his character, one that was tenderly sympathetic and humane. Having at first brought hope and a new lease of life to the starving mother and her child, he now lifts the dark shadow of death from off the desolated home and turns its sorrow into joy. This narrative has a peculiarly pathetic interest, and is suggestive of lessons that touch the deepest realities of human life. It naturally divides itself into two parts, in which we see (1) the sadness of death and (2) the joy of restoration.

I. THE SADNESS OF DEATH. That the child was really dead we cannot doubt. "There was no breath left in him." The gleam of hope in the poor widow's condition was suddenly beclouded, and a strange, yet not altogether unnatural, revulsion of feeling took possession of her breast. Thus does an unexpected calamity, especially perhaps when it takes the form of personal bereavement, often work for a while a sad change in the attitude of the soul. 1. *It darkens the whole horizon of life*—quenches the light of other joys. The abundance of meal and oil, and the honour of the prophet's presence are as nothing while the child lies dead in the house. There are sorrows which seem utterly to blot out the sunshine of one's existence, and to be aggravated rather than relieved by the joys that accompany them. 2. *It creates resentment against the supposed, or perhaps the real, author of it.* "What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God?" The prophet, who had proved himself so beneficent a friend, is regarded as an enemy. 3. *It is a severe test of one's faith in God.* This woman, it may be, was in an intermediate state of mind between blind devotion to the old idolatries and the full acceptance of the faith of Israel. How rude a check did this event seem to give to her progress into clearer light! Thus is the faith of men often sorely tried by the adversities of life. This is part of their Divine purpose. The "fiery trial" seems "strange at first, but the meaning and reason of it are revealed afterwards." Happy they whose faith, in spite of the severe strain put upon it, holds fast to the living God—too deeply rooted in the soul to be torn up by any sudden sweeping blast. 4. *It awakens the sense of sin.* "Art thou come to me to bring my sin to remembrance?" It is significant that the thought of her own sin should be her first thought. The calamity brought this to her remembrance because it seemed to her a sign of God's remembrance of it. Learn that though particular afflictions are not always to be connected with any particular transgression as their cause (John ix. 2, 3), yet all sorrow must be traced ultimately to its source in moral evil. It is a true instinct that leads us to think of our sins in times of adversity. Whenever affliction comes to us it should produce tenderness of conscience and call forth the prayer, "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me," in order that if there be any secret wrong in ourselves that demands this severe discipline we may have grace to fight against it and cast it out.

II. THE JOY OF RESTORATION. The behaviour of Elijah is beautifully expressive of his deep human sympathy, and also of the intimacy of the relation between himself and God as a man of prayer and the instrument of the Divine energy. Having special regard to the nature and effect of this miracle of restoration, observe that—1. *It is typical of the beneficent ministry of Christ.* In Him the power of God came, as it never had before, into healing contact with the frame of our diseased and dying humanity. He took our nature upon Him that He might effectually cure its infirmities and sicknesses. "Virtue" continually went forth from Him. He was the great health-restorer and life-giver; and as all the healing ministries of former ages had anticipated His coming, so all true philanthropy

since has caught its highest inspiration from the constraint of His love and the force of His example. 2. *It is prophetic of the future glorious resurrection.* We see here one of the many witnesses that gleam out amid the obscurity of the olden times to the truth that God would surely one day "bring life and immortality to light," while it points us on to the time when, "at the voice of the son of God, all that are in their graves shall come forth." "Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory" (Isa. xxv. 8; 1 Cor. xv. 54). 3. *It illustrates the joy of a soul that for the first time is made fully conscious of the gracious presence and power of God.* "Now by this I know that thou art a man of God," &c. There is a tone of deep satisfaction in these words. It is the satisfaction that springs from the discovery of Divine truth and the vivid sense of God. There is no satisfaction of which the soul of man is capable that can be compared with this. The end of all forms of Divine manifestation—prophetic visitations, miracles, providences, &c.—is this. We reach the highest joy possible to us upon earth when we can say with St. John, "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life" (1 John iv. 20).—W.

Vers. 1—6.—*Elijah's Advent and Service.* I. THE GREAT PROPHET. 1. *His name: Elijah*, my God (is) Jehovah. It was a symbol of his spirit. It expressed his judgment of Israel's idolatry and the choice which with his soul's whole strength he had made of God. Light and fidelity are the only foundations of any true work for God or man. 2. *His origin.* The words ("of the inhabitants," &c.) seemed to indicate that he belonged to none of the tribes of Israel. (1) His mission was prophetic of that of the Gentiles. Israel, forsaking God, were to feel that God was also forsaking them (Rom. x. 19). The very meanness of the origin of God's faithful ones lends power to their testimony. (2) It proved the infinitude of God's resources. Ahab and Jezebel might slay His prophets; they could not arrest the progress of His work. From the most unthought-of quarter there arises a mightier than all whose lives had been taken. The power of a devoted life to make the world feel the impossibility of its prevailing in its contest with God. 3. *His attitude toward God.* "Before whom I stand." He was the Lord's servant. He lived for Him. His eye rested on Him. The whole man stood girded for prompt, unquestioning obedience. This is the spirit of all true service. Is God as real to us? Do we thus stand before Him?

II. HIS MESSAGE. 1. *The judgment.* It was that predicted from of old as the chastisement of Israel's idolatry (Deut. xi. 17). The land was to be consumed by drought. The blessings which God withholds from the soul that forsakes Him are imaged in those withheld from the land. There is "neither dew nor rain." The refreshment, the rich consolation, once imparted by the word or found in prayer, are no longer known. The stimulating of loving zeal after what is nobler and purer has ceased. 2. *Through whom it fell:* "According to my word." Those who reject God will be judged by man. God will still confront them in their fellows. God is magnified in His servants. The kingly power and priesthood of believers in their relation to the world.

III. HIS RETIREMENT. 1. *It served God.* Ahab and Israel were left face to face with Him. Man disappeared that the eye might rest on God alone. There are times when He is best served by silence. Many words often undo the effect of the homethrust dealt by a few. 2. *It was his safety.* He was shielded from Ahab's anger. We may be hid by affliction from the power of our great foe. Temptation and danger may have been darkening the path that lay before us when God led us aside and made us rest awhile with Him. 3. *It prepared him for after service.* He was taught God's unflinching power and care. His wants were provided for though no man knew of his dwelling place; and that by the most unlikely instruments. He learned how fully he might trust God. He to whom God is thus revealed will not fear the face of man.—U.

**Vers. 7—16.—Divine Care. I. THE ENDLESSNESS OF GOD'S RESOURCES.** 1. *The brook failed*; and one essential of life could no more be had there. But it was only that this wondrous provision might give place to greater marvels. When means are threatened, the heart sinks; but He who has provided these for a season knows of the failure; and He who sent to Cherith can send elsewhere. One channel of help fails only that the soul may be quickened by a fresh revelation of God's kindness. 2. *He was sent to what seemed to be the most dangerous of all places*—to the territory of Jezebel's father. And yet the very unlikelihood of his seeking shelter there increased his safety. God's path can only be trod by faith, but that faith is soon changed to praise. 3. *He was sent to a most unlikely quarter.* The hostess whom the Lord had chosen was a widow and one who possessed sufficient to furnish only one more meal for herself and her child. But here again faith was to break forth into praise. God's power is infinite, and the meanest as well as the mightiest may be used to glorify Him.

**II. THE REWARD OF OBEDIENT FAITH.** 1. *For Elijah.* He went undoubting; he sought the city, and lo, at the gate (ver. 10) he met his hostess. Those who act on God's promises will meet with the revelation of His truth and graciousness. 2. *For the woman* (vers. 11—16). It was her last meal. Love of her child and her own hunger must have made it hard to obey, but the seed she sowed in faith yielded a thousandfold. God's call to sacrifice for His service, for honesty and truth, is the path to plenty not to loss. 3. *For both.* The woman entered a new world. The unseen was unveiled; she knew God. Elijah found in a heathen land a home which God had sanctified. The communion of faith glorifies all human relationship.—U.

**Vers. 17—24.—Affliction and its Fruits. I. THE DISCIPLINE OF TRIAL.** 1. *It is no proof of God's anger.* Sorrow darkens the homes of God's beloved. This was a home of faith and ministering love. Affliction is no more proof of wrath than is the farmer's ploughing of his field. To him, with his eye upon the future harvest, it is only the needful preparation of the soil. And the great Husbandman, with His eye upon the eternal glory, must open up a bed within the soul's depths for the seed of life. 2. *God's blow may be very heavy.* Her son, her only child, is taken. God's plough sinks deep that His work may be rightly done. The very greatness of our anguish is a measure by which we may gauge the greatness of the Lord's purpose and of the love which will not suffer us to miss the blessing.

**II. THE FRUITS IT YIELDS.** 1. *It reveals our need.* She may have been conscious daily of the goodness of God and yet been blind to the fact that she needed more than she had yet received. God now awakens her (1) to the sense of her unworthiness: "What have I to do with thee?" (2) to the remembrance of her transgressions: "Art thou come to call my sins to remembrance?" The darkness of trouble is the shadow of guilt. There is discipline because there is need of salvation. Sins may be pardoned, but God must open up a gulf between the soul and them. The time of trouble is meant to be a time of heart-searching and of confession. 2. *It stirs up to prayer.* Elijah's heart was poured out in bold expostulation and earnest entreaty (vers. 20, 21). In the sharpness of our need our cry gains strength; we press, in our urgency, into the Divine presence. These times open up a way to God by which we find ready access ever after. 3. *It leads to the vision of God's glory.* "And the Lord heard," &c. (ver. 22). The prayer was followed by a revelation of God's power such as till then man had never seen: the dead was raised. "Ask and ye shall receive." The soul that asks will see God's salvation and be filled with the light of the Divine glory. 4. *It deepens trust.* "Now by this I know," &c. (ver. 24). When man's need meets God's help, the soul is bound to Him by the strongest ties.—U.

**Vers. 1.—7.—First Preparation of Elijah for his great Mission.** After Elijah's first appearance before Ahab to announce to him the Divine visitation of sterility and dearth which was to come upon the land as the chastisement of his sin, the prophet was sent away into a solitary place to prepare himself for his great and solemn

mission, which was to overthrow idolatry and vindicate the worship of the true God. This work of preparation was divided into two great periods. 1. The preparation of the desert. 2. The lonely life of the prophet in the house of the widow of Sarepta.

The Desert was, from the time of Moses to the days of John the Baptist, the great school of the prophets. These men of God were trained for their work: 1. By being brought face to face with their sacred mission in all its greatness, and free from the prejudices and petty influences of human society. There they could steadfastly contemplate the Divine ideal, undistracted by the rude realities of man's fallen condition. 2. There they were also cut off from all human aid, left to test their own strength, or rather to prove their own utter weakness, and, overwhelmed with the sense of it, to cast themselves wholly on Divine strength. Thus they received directly from God, as did Elijah, the supplies by which they lived, and realized the conditions of absolute and immediate trust in Him. Coming forth from this discipline of the desert, they were enabled to say with Paul, "When I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Cor. xii. 10). 3. This loving converse of the prophets with their God brought them into closer fellowship, more intimate union, with Him. Thus they came forth from the desert, like Moses from the Mount of Sinai, bearing unconsciously upon them the reflection of His glory. As St. Paul says, "We, beholding as with open face the glory of the Lord as in a mirror, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. iii. 18). Considerations like these have a fit application to the pastor, who ought to be much in solitary communion with God, in order to be raised above the compromises of principle so common in society, and to get his whole nature permeated with Divine strength. Every Christian soul has in like manner a prophet's mission, and ought therefore often to seek the desert solitude, in which the Invisible is brought near, and to frequent those sacred mountain tops of prayer, where the disciple, like the Master, renews his strength (Luke v. 16).—E. de P.

**Vers. 7—24.—Second Preparation of Elijah.** Elijah passed through his second phase of preparation under the humble roof of the widow of Sarepta. He is in the right attitude for gaining a holy preparedness for his work, for he has placed himself absolutely and directly under the guidance of God. When the word of God comes to him, he is ready to arise and go whithersoever it bids. Thus was Christ "led of the Spirit" to commence His public ministry (Matt. iv. 1); and throughout His whole course He recognized the same unfailing guidance. The purpose of God in sending Elijah to the poor widow was to show him, before he entered on the great conflict with idolatry, that he had at his disposal a Divine power which nothing would be able to resist. Elijah was, so to speak, to prove his arms, far from human observation, **BY A PASSAGE OF DEEP PERSONAL EXPERIENCE.** Hence the double miracle of the barrel of meal and the cruse of oil always full. Hence, yet more distinctly, that glorious miracle of the raising of the widow's son by the prophet. This miracle had no witnesses; nor must we marvel at this. God does not perform miracles to fascinate onlookers; He does not make a spectacle of His marvellous working. His glory is sufficiently magnified in the deliverance of a humble believer, like the widow of Sarepta, and in the qualification of the prophet for his mission. Jesus Christ refused to work any miracles for show, and the sublimest manifestations of His power were reserved for humble hearts and lowly dwellings. Elijah has learnt to know the strength of God which is in him; he has proved it in the secrecy of his soul. He has a full assurance that it will be manifested in him when he stands before Ahab, no less mightily than in the obscurity of the widow's house. This intimate personal experience of the grace of God is of incomparable value to His servants. If we would have Divine strength to use in the great conflict with sin around us, we must prove its marvellous energy in our private life. And let us remember also that our homes may be the scene of the mightiest manifestations of the grace of God, and of the most signal providential deliverances, if only our hearts be open to Him in humility and love, like the heart of the widow of Sarepta.—E. de P.

## EXPOSITION.

## CHAPTER XVIII. 1—46.

**ELIJAH'S RETURN AND THE ORDEAL OF MOUNT OARMEL.**—The preceding chapter having been exclusively occupied with the fortunes of Elijah during his enforced absence of three and a half years from the land of Israel, we are left to conjecture what the course of events in the northern kingdom during this period of drought and suffering must have been. But it is not difficult to picture in our minds the steadily increasing alarm and distress which the solemn ban he had pronounced must have occasioned. At one time, it may be, especially if the prophet up to that period had been unknown, both king and people, under the malign influence of Jezebel, professed to regard his threatening with contempt, the more so as the priests of Baal would not fail to assure them of the protection and blessing of "the Lord" of nature. But as the months and years passed by, and neither dew nor rain fell—as the heavens were brass and the earth iron—and the pastures languished, and the fruits of the earth failed, and the cisterns became dry, and man and child and beast began to suffer the extremities of thirst, we cannot doubt that the tone and temper of the country underwent a great change. At first, threats had been freely uttered against Elijah, who was perversely regarded as the author of all this misery, and that and the neighbouring countries were scoured to find him. Moreover, reprisals were made on the system which he represented, by a fierce persecution of the prophetic order, of which he was recognized as the head. But it is probable that when the drought lasted into the third and fourth year, and when absolute ruin and death stared the country in the face, that then defiance had given place to dread and regret in every bosom, save, perhaps, that of the queen and the sycophants who ate of her table. The conviction was steadily gaining possession of the minds of all Israel that Baal and Ashtoreth were vanities, and that the Lord alone made the heavens and covered them with clouds. The great drought, and the manifold sufferings which it entailed—suffer-

ings which the animated description of the prophet Joel (ch. i.) enables us to realize—were doing their work. The heart of the people was being slowly turned backward, and in the third year of his sojourn at Zarephath the time was ripe for Elijah's return, which our author now describes, together with the striking results which followed it. In the first fifteen verses, we have the meeting of Elijah and Obadiah; in vers. 16—20, the meeting of Elijah and Ahab; vers. 21—38 describe the ordeal of Mount Carmel; vers. 39, 40, its immediate results; while the remainder of the chapter depicts Elijah's prayer for rain, the bursting of the storm, and the return to Jezreel.

Ver. 1.—And it came to pass after [This word is wanting in the Heb. except in a few MSS.] many days that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year [From what date is this "third year" to be counted? The *prima facie* view is that the words refer to "these years" mentioned in ch. xvii. 1, i.e., to the date of the announcement of the drought, and this is the interpretation of the Rabbins and some of the moderns. But it is almost fatal to this view that the duration of the drought is distinctly stated in the New Testament to have been "three years and six months" (Luke iv. 25; James v. 17). It is every way better, therefore, to connect the words with ch. xvii. 7, i.e., with the date of the sojourn at Zarephath. It follows hence that the prophet spent about one year in the Wady Cherith, and two and a half in the house of the widow], saying, Go, show thyself [Heb. *be seen*] unto Ahab; and I will send [Heb. *give*] rain upon the earth. [Heb. *on the face of the ground*. Cf. xvii. 14.]

Ver. 2.—And Elijah went to show himself unto Ahab. And [or *Now*. It would, perhaps, have been better to begin a new verse here, as this is the beginning of a parenthesis, explanatory of the circumstances under which king and prophet met. It was the famine led to Obadiah's encountering Elijah on the road] there was a sore famine in Samaria. [The effect of a three years' drought would be to reduce the entire people to the verge of starvation. The severity of the famine was no doubt mitigated, as on a former occasion (Gen. xli. 57), by the importation of corn from Egypt.]

Ver. 3.—And Ahab called [Rather, *had called*. "The verbs קָרָא, קָרָא, &c. (vers. 3, 4, 5, 6), carry on the circumstantial

clauses" (Keil.) Obadiah [This name is almost as remarkable as Elijah's, or would be, if it were not more common. It means "servant of Jehovah." Compare the modern Arabic *Abdallah*. Although borne by one who "feared the Lord greatly" (ver. 3), and "from his youth" (ver. 12), it occurs too frequently (1 Chron. iii. 21; vii. 3; viii. 38; ix. 16; 2 Chron. xvii. 7; xxxiv. 12; Ezra viii. 9; Obad. i., &c.) to justify the belief that it was assumed or bestowed as an indication of his character (Rawlinson), which was the governor of his [Heb. *over the*] house. [See note on ch. iv. 6, and cf. ch. xvi. 9. Rawlinson says it "tells in favour of the monarch's tolerance that he should have maintained an adherent of the old religion in so important an office." But it is just as probable that it was *because* of his religion that he occupied this post of trust. Ahab could depend on his fidelity and conscientiousness]. (Now Obadiah [here begins a second parenthesis within the first] feared [Heb. *was fearing*] the Lord greatly.

Ver. 4.—For it was so, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord [Our author now instances a proof of Obadiah's devotion. The incident to which he refers is otherwise unknown to us, nor can we refer it with certainty to its proper place in the history. But it is extremely probable that this work of extermination was begun as an act of reprisals for the drought denounced by Elijah. Ver. 13 almost implies that it had taken place during his absence. We see here, consequently, an additional reason for his flight (cf. ch. xix. 2). These "prophets" are the same as those elsewhere called the "sons of the prophets, i.e., members of the prophetic schools; cf. 2 Kings ii. 3, 5, 7, &c.] that Obadiah took an hundred prophets [This would lead us to suppose that the great majority escaped. But see ver. 19 and ch. xxii. 6. That we find so large a number still in the land, notwithstanding the exodus (2 Chron. xi. 16), and the steady growth of impiety, shows that God had not left Himself without witnesses], and hid them by fifty [Keil would insert a second  $\text{לִפְנֵי}$  as do some MSS. (Gardiner), and as in ver. 13. Such a word might easily be omitted in transcription, it is true. But "*proclivi lectioni*," &c.] in a cave [Heb. *the cave*; but LXX. *ἐν σπηλαιῶν*. Similarly in ver. 13. What is the force of the article here it is somewhat difficult to say. It has been suggested that these caves were in the sides of Mount Carmel; there are large caves under the western cliffs (Stanley); more than two thousand, according to others; "often of great length and extremely tortuous" (Dic. Bib. i. p. 273); but this is mere guesswork, as Palestine, being

of limestone formation, abounds in caverns. See Stanley, S. and P. pp. 151, 52. From the earliest times we find men—outlaws and the like—taking up their abode therein. Cf. Josh. x. 17; Judg. vi. 2; 1 Sam. xxii. 1; Ezek. xxxiii. 27; Heb. xi. 38. Probably the division into two companies was partly for the sake of security (see Gen. xxii. 8), and partly for the sake of convenience. The greater the number to be fed, the greater the chance of detection. Compare also Jacob's precautions Gen. xxxii. 8, and fed them with bread [or, food] and water.] [It is to be observed, as bearing on ch. xvii. 4—6, that these hundred prophets, though preserved by the special providence of God, were nevertheless maintained through human agency and by natural means.

Ver. 5.—And Ahab said [had said] unto Obadiah, Go into [Heb. *in*] the land, unto all fountains [Heb. *places of fountains*. Cf. with  $\text{מִן הַמַּיִם}$  from  $\text{עַל הַמַּיִם}$  from  $\text{אֵר}$  &c.] of water, and unto all brooks [*wādies*; see on ch. xvii. 3]: peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive [It has been inferred from Ahab's concern for his stud that he viewed the sufferings of his subjects with comparative indifference, or at least regarded them as of altogether secondary importance. But this is a too hasty conclusion. His subjects were, for the most part, as well able to find water for themselves as he was for them, and he might safely trust to their instinct of self-preservation to do their best to meet the emergency. But the dumb cattle, confined to the stall, could not act for themselves. Hence this expedition in search of fodder], that we lose not all the beasts. [Marg. *that we cut not ourselves off from*, &c. But this rendering, and still more that of the text, misinterprets the force of the Hiphil  $\text{לִפְנֵי}$ . The literal translation is, "That we may not have to cut off from (i.e., a portion of,  $\text{כֶּסֶף}$  partitive, as in ver. 13 below,  $\text{כֶּסֶף}$ ). What Ahab means is that, unless they soon find fodder, they will have to slaughter a portion of their animals. So Bähr, *Und nicht von dem Vieh (einen Theil) umbringen müssen*. Similarly Keil.]

Ver. 6.—So they divided the land between them to pass throughout it ["This personal inspection by the king and one of his chief officers marks the extreme straits to which the Israelites were now reduced" (Rawlinson). The difference, however, between an Eastern and an European monarch must not be overlooked. "None of the emirs of Arabia or the chiefs of central Asia) think it beneath them to lead an expedition in search of grass or water" (Kitto): Ahab

went one way by himself [Heb. *alone*. Rawlinson says, "This does not mean that either Ahab or Obadiah was unaccompanied by a retinue," but it may very well mean that (𐤇𐤊), *solus*; LXX. *μόνος*; Bähr *allein*. Cf. ver. 22], if, indeed, it must not necessarily mean it; and ver. 14 certainly implies that Obadiah at least was unattended], and Obadiah went another way by himself.

Ver. 7.—And as Obadiah was in the way, behold, Elijah met him [Heb. *to meet him*]; and he knew [*i.e.*, recognized]. Same word, Gen. xxvii. 23; xlii. 7, &c.] him, and fell on his face, and said, Art thou that [Heb. *this*, probably used adverbially (like *hic*) for *here* = 𐤇𐤊] my lord Elijah? [The humble obeisance and the terms in which he addresses him alike show the profound reverence with which Obadiah regarded him, as well he might do, considering the terrible power he wielded. The whole land was, so to speak, at his mercy.]

Ver. 8.—And he answered him, I am [Heb. *I*]: go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here. [The last two words are not in the Hebrew, and the sentence is much more graphic without them.]

Ver. 9.—And he said, What have I sinned, that thou wouldst deliver [Heb. *that thou art giving*] thy servant into the hand of Ahab, to slay me?

Ver. 10.—As the Lord thy God liveth [Obadiah uses precisely the same adjuration as the widow of Zarephath, ch. xvii. 12. But then, though Jehovah was undoubtedly his God, He was in a more special and intimate manner Elijah's God. The oath corresponds well with the prophet's name], there is no nation or kingdom, whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee [Keil says the hyperbole is to be explained by the "inward excitement and fear" of the speaker. But the Orientals use similar exaggerations in their calmest moments. All that is meant is that all neighbouring and accessible courts had been communicated with. This search for Elijah shows that Ahab regarded him as the author of the drought, and did not recognize it as sent by God. The belief in occult and magical powers has always held possession of the Eastern mind]; and when they said, He is not there [Heb. *Not, and he, &c.*]; he took an oath [LXX. *ἐνέπρωσε*, which has been thought by some to point to acts of vengeance. But more probably it is a clerical error, perhaps for *ἐπίκρισε*, or *ἐνώκρισε*. On the frequency of oaths in that age see on ch. i. 51] of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not.

Ver. 11.—And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy

lord, Behold, Elijah is here. [Heb. *Behold, Elijah*. Obadiah echoes the words of ver. 8.]

Ver. 12.—And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that [Heb. *I shall go from thee, and*] the Spirit of the Lord shall carry thee whither I know not [These words, which literally translated are "*shall lift thee up upon where,*" &c., are to be explained by 2 Kings ii. 16, "lest the Spirit of the Lord hath taken him up" (same word) "and cast him upon some mountain," &c. Seb. Schmidt, Wordsworth, *al.* think that such a transportation must have already occurred in the history of Elijah, but the sudden, mysterious disappearance and the long concealment of the prophet is quite sufficient to account for Obadiah's fear. Compare Acts viii. 39. The words do suggest, however, that it had been believed by some that the Lord had hid Elijah, and it is not improbable that during his long absence rumours had often gained credence that he had been seen and had suddenly disappeared, just as later Jews have held that he "has appeared again and again as an Arabian merchant to wise and good Rabbis at their prayers or in their journeys" (Stanley)]; and so when I come and tell [Heb. *and I come to tell*] Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me [This is just what a prince like Ahab, or any prince who was under the guidance of a Jezebel, would do, out of sheer vexation at losing his prey when so nearly in his grasp]: but [Heb. *and*] I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth. [Obadiah's meaning clearly is not that he, "as a God-fearing man and a protector of the prophets, cannot have any special favour to expect from Ahab" (Keil; similarly Ewald), but that it was hard that one who was a steadfast worshipper of Elijah's God should be slain for his sake. It is extremely unlikely that Ahab knew of Obadiah's having protected the prophets. He could hardly have maintained him in his post had he known that the steward of the palace had thwarted the designs of his queen.]

Ver. 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 [Heb. *from*] the Lord's prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water? [Stanley happily calls Obadiah "the Sebastian of this Jewish Dioecletian."]

Ver. 14.—And now thou sayest [= "This is to be the reward of my devotion, is it?"]; Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here: and he shall slay me.

Ver. 15.—And Elijah said, As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand [This formula should be compared with that of ch. xvii. 1. The repetition is suggestive as

exhibiting the *habit* of the man. He was the ready and patient slave of Jehovah. The מִן־נֶפֶשׁ is apparently introduced not so much to "elevate the solemnity of the oath" (Keil, Bähr)—for surely Elijah would wish to make the affirmation of ch. xvii. 1 as strong and solemn as possible—nor yet to convey the meaning that "it is not Baal or Ashtaroth who are the rulers of the heavenly bodies" (Wordsworth), for Obadiah knew that perfectly well, but because it was thus better adapted for a believer. In addressing Ahab it suited Elijah's purpose better to give prominence to the idea that Jehovah was "the God of Israel", I will surely show myself unto him to-day.

Ver. 16.—So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him: and Ahab went [Very readily, it would seem. Anything was better than suspense and famine. And Elijah's very return contained in it a promise of rain] to meet Elijah.

Ver. 17.—And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he [Rather, *here*: same words as in ver. 7. "Do I at last see thee again? Hast thou ventured into my presence?"] that troubleth Israel? [Heb. *thou troubler of Israel*. For the word (רָעָה) see Gen. xxxiv. 30; Josh. vi. 18; vii. 25; Prov. xi. 17; 1 Sam. xiv. 29. When Rawlinson says that this charge of troubling Israel has "never been before brought against any one but Achan," he apparently forgets the passage last cited. "My father hath troubled the land." Wordsworth paraphrases, "Art thou the Achan of Israel?" but it is very doubtful whether this thought was in Ahab's mind.]

Ver. 18.—And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house [It has been supposed that Ahab "hoped to abash the Tishbite, perhaps to have him at his feet suing for pardon" (Rawlinson). If so, he must have completely misjudged his man. And why the prophet should sue for pardon, when he was so clearly master of the situation, it is difficult to imagine. It is quite as likely that Ahab expected denunciation and defiance such as he now provokes, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou [The change from plural to singular is instructive. Preceding kings and the people at large had broken God's commandments by the calf-worship, but Ahab alone had introduced the Baal-cultus into the land] hast followed [Heb. *goest after*] Baalim. [The plural may either refer to the various names and forms under which Baal was worshipped—Baal-Berith, Baal-Zebub, &c. (Bähr, *at.*)—or more prob-

ably to the various images or statues of this god set up in the land (Gesenius). "This boldness, this high tone, this absence of the slightest indication of alarm, seems to have completely discomfited Ahab, who ventured on no reply," &c. (Rawlinson). It is probable that, though he put on a bold front, he was from the first thoroughly cowed.

Ver. 19.—Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel [*i.e.*, by representation, the heads of the people, elders, &c. Cf. ch. viii. 2, 65; xii. 16, 18; xvi. 16, 17] unto Mount Carmel [Heb., as almost always, *the Carmel*, *i.e.*, the park. Cf. 1 Sam. xxv. 1—5. It is "the park of Palestine." It is indebted for this name to the luxuriant vegetation—"the excellency of Carmel" (Isa. xxxv. 2)—which clothes its southern slopes (Porter, p. 371; Stanley, S. and P. pp. 352—54, and App. p. 14; Van de Velde, i. pp. 317, 318). It is now generally called *Mar* (*i.e.*, Lord or Saint) *Elyas*, after the great prophet. No one who has seen the locality can have any doubts as to which part of the mountain was the scene of the sacrifice, or can fail to be struck with the singular fitness of the place to be the theatre of this thrilling history. Carmel is rather a ridge than a mountain, some twelve miles in length. Its western (or strictly N.N.W.) extremity is a bold headland, some 600 feet in height, which dips almost directly into the waters of the Mediterranean. Its highest point, 1728 feet above the sea level, is about four miles from its eastern extremity, which, at an elevation of 1600 feet, rises like a wall from the great plain of Esdraelon. It is at this point, there can be no question, we are to place the scene of the burnt sacrifice. The identification has only been effected in comparatively recent days (1852), but it is beyond dispute. Not only does the Arab name which it bears—*El Murahkah*, "*the Burning*," or "*Sacrifice*"—afford striking witness to the identity, but the situation and surroundings adapt themselves with such wonderful precision to the requirements of the narrative as to leave no reasonable doubt in the mind. For (1) it is a sort of natural platform, or pulpit, raised 1000 feet above the adjoining plain, and therefore well calculated to afford a view of the proceedings, or at least of the descent of the Holy Fire, to spectators of all Israel. The flame would probably be seen by Jezebel in her palace at Jezreel. This eminence is visible from Nazareth, some twenty miles away. "There is not a more conspicuous spot on all Carmel than the abrupt, rocky height of El Murahkah, shooting up so suddenly on the east" (Van de Velde, i. pp. 322, 323). "The summit . . . commands the last view of the sea behind and the first

view of the great plain in front" (Stanley). In fact, it was in its way just as well adapted for the solemn vindication of the law which took place there as *Jebel Sufsafeh* was for the giving of the law. (2) A sort of plateau near the summit—the table-land where the altars were built, &c.—would accommodate a vast number of spectators (ver. 21). (3) There is a spring of water close at hand—less than 100 yards distant—and a spring which is said to flow even in the driest seasons, which would supply the water of which we read in vers. 4, 33—35. Josephus (Ant. viii. 13, 5) says it came from the fountain. (4) The sea, though not visible from the plateau itself, is seen from a point some 300 feet higher, a detail which accords admirably with the account of vers. 42—44. It may be added that the place is still held sacred by the Drusea, and revered by "Jews, Christians, Moslems, and Bedouin as the site of these miracles of Elijah" (Thomson). The traveller, consequently, cannot doubt for a moment, as he stands on the table-land of *El Murahkah* and looks across the great plain to Jezreel and the heights of Galilee and Samaria, that he is on the very spot sanctified by the descent of the heavenly fire. It should be added, as explaining the selection of Carmel by Elijah, that its situation is central and convenient; that it is near the sea, from whence the rain-clouds would come; that it is easy of access from Jezreel; and that it was not only a holy place from earlier times (cf. 2 Kings iv. 23), but also had its altar of Jehovah, an altar, no doubt, in constant use when the people "sacrificed and burnt incense on the high places," but which had in later days fallen into neglect, and was now broken down. It was every way, therefore, a most appropriate locality for the public vindication of the despised and outraged law of God. "No place could be conceived more fitted by nature to be that wondrous battle-field of truth" (Tristram in Wordsworth), and the prophets of Baal [so called not because they were *Weissager und Verkünder* (Bähr) of the god, nor yet because they were teachers and emissaries of his religion, but because of the prophetic frenzy (ver. 28) into which they worked themselves (Keil)] four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves [Heb. of the *Asherah*, i.e., of Astarte, not "grove," as Rawlinson. See note on ch. xiv. 15] four hundred [Rawlinson remarks that "the number 400 seems to have been one especially affected by Ahab." He reminds us that we find 400 prophets at the close of his reign (1 Kings xxii. 6), and also remarks on "the prevalence of the number 40 in the religious systems of the Jews (Exod.

xxxvi. 24, 26; Deut. xxv. 3, &c.)" But when it is remembered that Baal's prophets were 450, and the prophets of ch. xxii. 6 were about 400 men, the solitary instance of the 400 prophets of Astarte—who, by the way, were Jezebel's rather than Ahab's ministers—affords but a slender basis for his conclusion], which eat at Jezebel's table. [Heb. *eat* of. There is nothing in the Hebrew to imply that they sat with her at the same board; and it is certain that this would be altogether repugnant to Eastern ideas of propriety. All that is meant is that they were fed by her bounty. See note on ch. ii. 7.]

Ver. 20.—So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto Mount Carmel. ["The persecuting king became a passive instrument in the hand of the persecuted prophet" (Stanley). His ready compliance with Elijah's request, notwithstanding the bitter hatred of the man which he had just betrayed, is easily explained. It was not so much that "he bowed before the spiritual supremacy of the prophet, which impressed him" (Bähr), as that he hoped, from his reappearance, that he was now about to speak the word (ch. xvii. 1) and give rain upon the earth, and Ahab was willing to take any measures which would conduce to that result. It would take some days to collect the representatives of the tribes.]

Ver. 21.—And Elijah came unto all the people [He is concerned not so much with the king as the people of the Lord. His object was not "to prove that Ahab and not he had troubled Israel," but to prove that Jehovah and not Baal was God. There is abundant room on the plateau, or "wide upland sweep" (Stanley), above referred to, to accommodate a large concourse of people], and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? [This is a faithful and felicitous rendering. But it must be remembered that "halt" is used in the sense of "limp." Vulg. *Usquequo claudicatis in duas partes*. The same word is used in ver. 26 of the swaying, tottering dance of the Baal prophets.] If the Lord be God [Heb. *if Jehovah the God*], follow him [Heb. *go* (i.e., walk straight) after him]: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word. [Not only were they awed by the presence of the king and the priests of Baal on the one side, and of Elijah on the other, but they were "convicted by their own consciences," and so were speechless (Matt. xxii. 12).]

Ver. 22.—Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain [Heb. *I, I am left alone*. Cf. Gen. xxxii. 24; LXX. *μονότατος*] a prophet of the Lord [Theius

hence concludes that the "hundred prophets" of whom we read in vers. 4, 13 had been discovered in their hiding place and had been put to death. But this by no means follows from Elijah's statement here or in ch. xix. 10 (where see note); and we know that the schools of the prophets had not ceased to exist (2 Kings ii. 3, 5, 7; cf. 1 Kings xxii. 8). All that Elijah says is that he stood that day alone as a prophet of Jehovah. "I only remain in the exercise of the office of a prophet" (Rawlinson). The rest might well hesitate, after the fierce persecution which they had undergone, to face the king and their bitter enemies, the Baal prophets. It must be remembered that Elijah had had no opportunity of communicating with them, and he may have been quite ignorant as to what number had remained steadfast and true. One thing he knew, that he alone was left to prophesy, and to confront the whole hierarchy of the false God; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. [It is clear, not only from the silence of this verse and of ver. 25, respecting them, but still more from the fact that they escaped in the general slaughter (ver. 40), that the prophets of Astarte were not present, and the natural inference is that either Jezebel had forbidden their presence or that they shrank from the ordeal. The LXX. inserts "and the prophets of the grove, four hundred," but the words are evidently added from ver. 19. The Baal prophets would doubtless have been only too glad to do the same, but they were under the immediate command of the king. It is not certain that they had any forebodings of evil, or dreaded reprisals on Elijah's part, but they had had proof conclusive of his power and of their impotence. We must remember that all through the triennium prayers and sacrifices had, no doubt, been constantly offered with a view to procure rain. We learn from Menander (Jos., viii. 13. 2) that even in Phœnicia supplication had been made for rain by Ethbaal.

Ver. 23.—Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces [same word Exod. xxix. 17; Levit. i. 6, 12; Judg. xx. 6], and lay it on wood [Heb. *the woods*], and put no fire under [Heb. *and fire they shall not set to*]; and I will dress [Heb. *make*, כָּפַף, like *κοῦν* in the LXX., is constantly used in a sacrificial sense = *offer*. Cf. Exod. xxix. 36, 38, 41; Levit. ix. 7; xv. 15; Judg. vi. 19, &c. This is to be remembered in interpreting our Lord's *τοῦτο κοῦτε, κ.τ.λ.* (Luke xxii. 19)] the other bullock, and lay it on wood [*the wood*],

and put no fire under [*and fire I will not set to*]:

Ver. 24.—And call ye on the name of your gods [As Elijah is still addressing the people, not the prophets of Baal (see ver. 25), this change of person is significant. He sorrowfully assumes that they have taken Baal and Astarte for their gods], and I will call on the name of the Lord; and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. [Heb. *he shall be the God, i.e., the true God and their God*. Cf. ver. 39. Not only was a "sign from heaven" (Mark viii. 11) ever esteemed a more powerful and direct proof of Divine energy—perhaps as being less liable to be counterfeited, and as excluding the idea of the operation of infernal powers (Matt. xii. 24)—but it must be remembered that Baal claimed to be the Sun-god and Lord of the elements and forces of nature; while Jehovah had already, according to the law, identified Himself with this token (Levit. ix. 24; 1 Chron. xxi. 26; 2 Chron. vii. 1). Indeed, this sign had a double fitness as a test of the true religion. It would not only put the powers of the rival deities to the proof; it would also at the same time decide which of the rival systems of worship was acceptable to the Supreme Being. It is observable that there is no mention of rain. We might have expected, after the long drought, that this would be the test. But that could not be promised until the Lord had first been recognized as God.] And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken. [Heb. *Good the word*. They accepted Elijah's proposition, but whether eagerly or reluctantly it is difficult to say. The Hebrew merely conveys that they admitted its fairness and reasonableness.

Having gained the assent of the people, for whose verdict he and the Baal prophets were now contending, and who were, consequently, entitled to be consulted as to the sign which would satisfy them, he turns to the band of 400 prophets, who, probably in all the bravery of their sacrificial vestments (2 Kings x. 22), occupied a separate position on the hill top, between the king and the people, and repeats his proposal to them.

Ver. 25.—And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress [or *offer*, as in ver. 23] it first; for ye are many [Heb. *the many*. Every pre-eminence and advantage which he gives to them will make his triumph, when it comes, all the greater. It is quite possible that he meant again to hint at their immense superiority in point of numbers. But no doubt he was only too glad to find a reason for their taking the

lead. "He is anxious that their inability shall be fully manifested before he shows his own power" (Rawlinson). Whether the idea was also present in his mind that they "could prepare their victim in a much shorter time than he could prepare his" (*ib.*) is by no means so certain; and call on the name of your gods [or *god, i.e., Baal*], but put no fire under. [The repetition (cf. ver. 24) shows that the ordeal was proposed separately to the people and the prophets.]

Ver. 26.—And they took the bullock which was given them [Heb. *which he (or one) gave; i.e., they declined to choose*], and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us [Heb. *answer us*. Same word as below. They thought they would be heard for their much speaking]. But there was no voice [Heb. *and not a voice*], nor any that answered. And they leaped [or *limped*. Same word as that translated "halt" in ver. 21. Gesenius thinks the word is "used scornfully of the awkward dancing of the priests of Baal." But it seems more natural to understand it as descriptive of what actually occurred, *i.e., of the reeling, swaying, bacchantic dance of the priests, which was probably not unlike that of the dancing dervishes or the Indian devil-worshippers of our own time*] upon [or *near, i.e., around*] the altar which was made. [Heb. *he, that is, one made, הָיָה* impersonal. But some MSS. and most versions read הָיָה.]

Ver. 27.—And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked [or *deceived*] them, and said, Cry aloud [Heb. *with a great voice*]: for he is a god [*i.e., in your estimation*]. "Here is one of the few examples of irony in Scripture" (Wordsworth); either he is talking [the marg. *he meditateth* is preferable. Cf. 1 Sam. i. 16; Psa. cxlii. 3. But the word has both meanings (see 2 Kings ix. 11), fairly preserved in the LXX., ἀδόλεσχία ἀνῶς ἔσται], or he is pursuing [Heb. *for he hath a withdrawal, i.e., for the purpose of relieving himself*. A euphemism. Cf. Judg. iii. 24; 2 Sam. xxiv. 3. Stanley attempts to preserve the *paronomasia, Πῶς, ἰψῶ*, by the translation, "he has his head full" and "he has his stomach full"], or he is in a journey [the thrice repeated הָיָה must be noticed. It heightens the effect of the mockery], or peradventure he sleepeth [Though it was noon, it is not clear that there is a reference to the usual midday *siesta* of the East], and must be awaked.

Ver. 28.—And they cried aloud [Heb. *in a great voice*, as above. It was not that they took Elijah's words *au sérieux*, but his scorn led them to redouble their efforts, if only to testify their faith in their god. The

frantic cries of the Greek Easter (see Porter, i. 168; Conder, 176—178) in Jerusalem, the prayers of the pilgrims for the descent of the holy fire, may help us to realize the scene here described], and cut themselves [cf. Deut. xiv. 1; Jer. xvi. 6; xli. 5; xlvii. 5] after their manner [Keil quotes from Movers, *Phöniz*. i. pp. 682—83, a description of the religious dances offered to the *Dea Syria*. "A discordant howling opens the scene. Then they rush wildly about in perfect confusion, with their heads bowed down to the ground, but always revolving in circles, so that the loosened hair drags through the mire; then they begin to bite their arms, and end with cutting themselves with the two-edged swords which they are in the habit of carrying. A new scene then opens. One of them, who surpasses all the rest in frenzy, begins to prophesy with sighs and groans," &c. In the "Contemporary Review," vol. xxvii. pp. 371 sqq., Bishop Caldwell has graphically described the devil-dances of Southern India—a description which may be read with profit in this connexion. One sentence may be transcribed here: "He cuts and hacks and hews himself, and not unfrequently kills himself there and then." Kitto mentions "the furious gashes which the Persians inflict upon themselves in their frantic annual lamentation for Hossein." Rawlinson says this was also common among the Carians and Phrygians] with knives [Heb. *swords*] and lancets [Heb. *lances, spears*. The A. V. is misleading. The instruments they used were weapons of heavy-armed troops. For הָיָה, see Num. xxv. 7; Judg. v. 8; Jer. xvi. 4], till the blood gushed out upon them. [Heb. *until the shedding of blood upon them*. It is perfectly clear that their faith in Baal was sincere and profound. Making due allowance for the fact that they were under the eyes of their king and patron, and of representatives of the entire people, it is still impossible to doubt their sincerity. Some of them, it is probable, were Phœnicians. "Of one thing I am assured—the devil-dancer never shams excitement" (Caldwell).]

Ver. 29.—And it came to pass, when mid-day was past [Elijah allowed them all the time he could, consistently with the great work he had himself to do, which would absorb all the rest of the day], and they prophesied [Notice the striking coincidence with the description of the worship of Ashtoreth given above. We are not to think of vaticinations, but of frenzied cries, &c. It is not clear, however, that any fresh element in their worship is intended, as Keil imagines. Their service as a whole, seeing they were *prophets*, would be called

a "prophesying," and the word, consequently, may merely mean "they pursued their calling," "they cried and prayed," &c.] until the time of the offering [Keil and Rawlinson would translate, "until towards the time," &c. There is certainly some indefiniteness in the words  $\text{עַד שָׁעֵר}$   $\text{לְהַנְחִיל}$ , until [the hour] for placing, &c., but we may well believe that their dances and cries continued up to the moment of Elijah's prayer (ver. 36)] of the evening sacrifice [Heb. the *Minchah*, i.e., the meat offering or unbloody sacrifice. In Gen. iv. 3—6 the word would appear to be used of any offering; but at a later day it was restricted to bloodless offerings, and was opposed to  $\text{זֶבַח}$ . Cf. Psa. xl. 7; Jer. xvii. 26. Directions as to the offering of the *Minchah* are given, Exod. xxix. 38—41; Num. xxviii. 3—8. The evening sacrifice was probably offered then, as it certainly was at a later day, at the ninth hour. Cf. Acts iii. 1; x. 3, 30, and see Jos., Ant. xiv. 4. 3. Wordsworth thinks this synchronism very significant, as suggesting that the true worship of God was that of the temple in Jerusalem], that there was neither voice, nor any to answer [as in ver. 26], nor any that regarded. [Heb. and not attention. The LXX. has a curious variation and addition here: "And Elijah the Tishbite said to the prophets of the idols, Stand back; I will now make ready my offering."]

Ver. 30.—And Elijah said unto all the people [He has now done with the priests. They have had their opportunity; his turn is come], Come near unto me. [Hitherto they had gathered round the altar of Baal, and some, it may be, had joined their prayers to those of the priests (ver. 24). In ver. 21, he "drew near"—same word—to them. Now they must stand round the altar he is about to build. He will have "eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses" (Keil). There must be no suspicion of imposture.] And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down. [It has been already suggested that this altar may have dated from the time when there was no house built unto the name of the Lord. But it is just as likely that it had been restored, if not raised, by some of the "seven thousand who had not bowed their knees unto Baal," or by some of the faithful remaining in Israel after the calf-worship and the hostility between the two kingdoms had made worship at Jerusalem an impossibility. Anyhow we can hardly be mistaken in holding that this was one of the "altars" (ch. xix. 10) "thrown down" by command of Ahab or Jezebel. Elijah's repairing it was an act

of profound significance. It showed him as the restorer of the law and the true religion.]

Ver. 31.—And Elijah took twelve stones [This number, too, was full of significance. Not only would it carry back their thoughts to the giving of the law (Exod. xxiv. 4; xxviii. 21), and to their fathers' entrance into the promised land (Josh. iv. 3, 9), but it would remind them of the essential unity of the people, notwithstanding the division of the kingdom. The act was thus a protest against the schism. We cannot hold with Keil, Wordsworth, *al.* that it was "a practical declaration on the part of the prophet that the division of the nation into two kingdoms was at variance with the will of God," because we are distinctly told that that division was "from the Lord" (ch. xii. 15). But it was certainly a witness against a divided Church, and a reminder of the unity of the race], according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the Lord came [Gen. xxxii. 28], saying, Israel shall be thy name. [He thus protests against the exclusive assumption of the name of Israel, and the exception of the southern kingdom from the glorious heritage and calling of Israel, by the ten tribes. But we cannot follow Bähr in the belief that Jacob received "from Jehovah the name of Israel," i.e., the "soldier of God," because he commanded his house to "put away the strange gods" (Gen. xxxv. 2, 10 sqq.), or that Elijah would teach that "only those who did as Jacob did had a claim to his name." The great idea is that the people are one, and are the Lord's.]

Ver. 32.—And with the stones [the twelve he had chosen out of the ruins. Cf. Exod. xx. 25] he built an altar in the name of the Lord [not "by the command of Jehovah" (Bähr), but rather as the minister and for the service of Jehovah, or, as Keil, "by the authority and for the glory of Jehovah." Nor is it certain that "he called, as he built it, on the name of Jehovah, and so dedicated it to His service" (Rawl.). See Gen. xii. 8; xiii. 4; xxxiii. 20; xxxv. 7; and he made a trench [or *channel*, 2 Kings xviii. 17; Isa. vii. 3; xxxvi. 2; Ezek. xxxi. 4. The word implies that it was for holding the water, not for keeping off the people] about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed [Heb. as the *inside* (lit., *house*) of two *seahs* of seed. These words have been variously interpreted. Keil, with Thenius and Wordsworth, understands that "the trench was so large that you could sow two *seahs* of seed upon the ground which it covered." But apart from the fact that  $\text{לְשֵׁנָיִם}$  must refer to capacity rather than superficial extent, one does not measure a

trench, as Bähr observes, by the ground which it covers, but by its depth. He would follow Gesenius in understanding that the trench was so deep as to hold two seahs of seed; i.e., as deep as the grain measure containing two seahs. The **וַחֲדָ** was the third of an ephah. Cf. Jos., Ant. ix. 4, 5, and the *oára rπia* of Matt. xiii. 33.]

Ver. 33.—And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood [Rawlinson says “He obeyed, that is, all the injunctions of the law with respect to the offering of a burnt sacrifice (see Levit. i. 3—9), and adds, “He thus publicly taught that all the ordinances of the law were binding on the kingdom of Israel.” But it is very probable that the priests of Baal had done the same things. All sacrifice involved such manual acts. Cf. Gen. xxii. 9, where the same word **וַחֲדָ** is used. No doubt the prophet did everything in an orderly and regular way; but the people could hardly learn a lesson of obedience from such elementary acts as these, and the less so as the law provided that the sacrifice should be offered only “by the priests, the sons of Aaron” (Levit. i. 8), and Elijah’s ministrations, consequently, might seem to warrant or condone the ministrations of Jeroboam’s intrusive priesthood. That they did not lend any real sanction to those irregularities is clear, however, to us. For, in the first place, priests were not to be had, all having long since left the kingdom. In the second place, the higher commission of the prophet embraced within itself the authority for all necessary priestly acts. Cf. 1 Sam. xvi. 2. Elijah acted, as Grotius well observes, *jure prophetico, minoribus legibus exsolutus, ut majores servaret*], and said, Fill four barrels [Heb. **דְּרִיבָה**. Cf. ch. xvii. 12. It designates the ordinary water-pitcher, generally carried then, as now, by women: Gen. xxiv. 14—20; Judg. vii. 16; Eccles. xii. 6] with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood. [The water, as already remarked, was doubtless brought from the adjoining spring (though it is clear from ver. 40 that the Kishon was not dry, and Thomson thinks that its sources, and particularly the fountain of *Saadteh*, furnished the supply). “In such springs the water remains always cool, under the shade of a vaulted roof, and with no hot atmosphere to evaporate it. While all other fountains were dried up, I can well understand that there might have been found here that superabundance of water which Elijah poured so profusely over the altar” (Van de Velde, i. p. 325).]

Ver. 34.—And he said, Do it the second time. And they did it the second time.

[Heb. *Repeat, and they repeated.*] And he said, Do it the third time. And they did it the third time. [See note on ch. xvii. 21.]

Ver. 35.—And the water ran round [Heb. *the waters went round*] about the altar, and he filled the trench also [i.e., the trench, which was only partially filled with the water of the twelve **דְּרִיבָה**, hence filled to the brim] with water. [The object of these repeated drenchings of the victim and altar was to exclude all suspicion of fraud. It would almost seem as if tricks not unlike that practised year by year at the Greek Easter at Jerusalem were familiar to that age. Some of the fathers expressly state that the idolatrous priests of an earlier time were accustomed to set fire to the sacrifice from hollow places concealed beneath the altar, and it was an old tradition (found in Ephrem Syrus, and Chrysostom) that the Baal prophets had concealed a man for that purpose beneath their altar, but that he had died from suffocation (Stanley). Bähr, however, sees in these 3 × 4 vessels of water a symbolical act. The significance of this combination, he says, is unmistakable (cf. “Symbolik” i. pp. 150, 169, 193, 205), though we cannot be certain as to the precise meaning of the prophetic act. His only suggestion is that it points to abundance of rain as the reward of keeping the covenant (Deut. xxviii. 12, 23). But all this is extremely precarious, and the more so as the pitchers may have been filled any number of times before the trench was full.]

Ver. 36.—And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice [see note on ver. 29], that Elijah the prophet [this designation of Elijah is unusual. Cf. Mal. iv. 5. Elsewhere he is “the Fishbite,” or the “man of God”] came near, and said, Lord [Heb. *Jehovah*]. Not only does the sacred name stand at the head of his prayer, it is also mentioned thrice (LXX, four times) God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel [Two things are to be noticed here: first, that this formula had only once before been used, and that by God Himself, before the giving of law, at the burning bush. It was when God revealed Himself in *flaming fire* that He had proclaimed Himself the God of Abraham, &c. Secondly, that the variation “Israel” is made designedly (cf. ver. 31), not only to proclaim the Lord as the “God of Israel” (cf. ch. xvii. 1), but also to suggest that the name and privileges of Israel belonged to all the sons of Jacob. The LXX. adds, “Hear me, O Lord, hear me this day by fire”—most of which is clearly borrowed from the next verse], let it be known this day that thou art God in

Israel [according to ver. 24, "the God that answereth by fire, &c.], and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things according to thy word. [LXX. *δὸς αἰ*. Not only the earlier proceedings of the day, but the three years' drought, &c. Keil would include the miracle about to be performed, but the people could hardly doubt that that, when done, was done according to the Divine word. It is interesting to compare with these words ch. xvii. 2, 3, 8, 16, 24, and ch. xviii. 1, all of which mention the "word of the Lord."]

Ver. 37.—Hear me, O Lord [*Jehovah*], hear me [or *answer me*; same word as in vers. 24, 26, and 29], that this people may know that thou art the Lord God [Rather, "that thou, *Jehovah*, art the God." Same expression as in ver. 24, "let him be the God"], and that thou hast turned their heart back again. [Cf. Mal. iv. 5, 6: "He ("Elijah the prophet") shall turn the heart of the fathers," &c. He speaks as if the miracle were already wrought (cf. John xi. 41), and the people already repentant. His prayer is that they may understand that the prodigy about to be performed was wrought for their conversion.]

Ver. 38.—Then the fire of the Lord [*Jehovah*]. Not lightning, but supernatural light and heat emanating from God Himself. Cf. Levit. ix. 24; 1 Chron. xxi. 26; 2 Chron. vii. 1; Heb. xii. 29] fell, and consumed [Heb. *ate up, devoured*] the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones [in *calcem redigit, Cler.*], and the dust [Bähr translates *die Erde*, and understands this to be the earth with which the altar of twelve stones had been packed. Similarly Rawlinson. But it is very doubtful whether *פֶּחַם pulvis*, could be used in this sense. It may mean *dry earth*, but this altar had been deluged with water], and licked up [*לָקַח*] is clearly onomatopoeitic, like our *lick*; Germ. *lecken*; Gr. *λείνω*, &c. It expresses well the action of *tonques* of flame] the water that was in the trench.

Ver. 39.—And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces [As in Levit. ix. 24; 2 Chron. vii. 3; cf. Num. xxii. 31; Josh. v. 14; Rev. xi. 16. They recognized in the fire, that is to say, the token of the Divine Presence]: and they said, The Lord [*Jehovah*]. The connexion of this verse with the three verses preceding is obscured by our translation, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God. [The echo of ver. 24. The Hebrew words are the same. Stanley remarks that it is as if (by a slight inversion) they turned "the name of the prophet himself into a war-cry, 'Eli-Jah-lu.'"]

Ver. 40.—And Elijah said unto them,

Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. [Elijah's promptitude is extremely striking. The people had hardly recovered from their terror and awe before he proceeds to judgment. The narrative has the air of truth, and was doubtless reduced to writing by an eye-witness.] And they took them: and Elijah brought them down [Heb. *caused them to go down, i.e.*, had them brought down. He could but lead the way, as they numbered 450] to the brook [*Wady*]. "Like most of the so-called 'rivers of Palestine,' the perennial stream forms but a small part of the Kishon" (Grove)] Kishon ["Tortuons," now called *Nahr el Mukatta*, the "river of slaughter." See Thomson, L. and B. ii. pp. 140, 141; Porter, pp. 383—4; Dict. Bib. ii. p. 45. It flows directly under Carmel], and slew them there. [Obviously, he merely superintended the slaughter. That he slew them all with his own hand is altogether out of the question. Nor is it clear that "sword in hand he stood over them" (Stanley). Josephus rightly explains: "they slew the prophets at Elijah's instigation." It is almost certain, from their resorting to the Kishon for this purpose, that it was not quite dry at the time. Their blood would mingle with its waters, and the flood which the "great rain" would presently produce (cf. Judg. v. 21) would carry their corpses down to the sea. It has often been supposed that the mound near the Kishon, known as *Tell el Cassis*, "the mound of the priests," derives its name from this slaughter of the prophets of Baal. But Conder (p. 90) remarks that "Cassis is the word applied to a Christian priest, and the word Kohen or Kamir would more naturally be expected if there was any real connexion with the idolatrous priests of Baal."]

This action of the prophet Elijah in instituting this wholesale slaughter in the hour of his triumph has been repeatedly arraigned and denounced, but most unjustly. According to some, it was an act of gross fanaticism and cruelty; others have seen it in a wild and terrible *vendetta* for the murder of the Lord's prophets. By some, indeed, it has been justified on the principles of the *lex talionis* (Exod. xxi. 24, &c.); on the ground, that is to say, that the men who had instigated Jezebel in her attempted extermination of the prophetic schools had merited extermination in their turn. But it is a fatal objection to their view, first, that we not only have no proof, but no reason for thinking, that it was at their

instigation that the queen "cut off the prophets of the Lord;" and, secondly, that it is not clear that she succeeded in her sanguinary purpose, or that many lives were sacrificed to her fury. And Elijah's action needs no such lame apologies. As the Lord's prophet, as the vindicator and restorer of the law, there was no other course open to him. If the Mosaic law was then written, and this very incident is one of the proofs that it *was* then written; if, however it had fallen into contempt or desuetude, it was still binding upon Israel; and if Elijah was justified in executing its provisions, and was required to execute them, however repugnant they might be to his inclinations (Deut. xxvii. 26; Gal. iii. 10), then he could not have done otherwise than he did. For it was an essential part of that law, it was an obligation that was laid, not once or twice, but on three separate occasions (Exod. xxii. 20; Deut. xiii.; xvii. 2—7), on the Jewish people, it was a duty they were to perform, however distressing and harrowing it might be (Deut. xiii. 6—9), to provide that the worshipper of false gods, and especially the teacher of such worship, should be put to death. It was primarily, of course, the duty of the authorities, of the theocratic king and his subordinates, to execute these injunctions. But the king of that age was corrupt and powerless—nay, was himself idolatrous. So great was the depravity of the time that the false prophet enjoyed the favour and protection of the court, and the true prophet was everywhere being hunted to death. The execution of this law, consequently, could not be expected from the king. It must be executed, if at all, in spite of him, and in disregard of his protests. It was only Elijah, therefore, could put it into force, and Elijah only in the hour of his triumph. And the *jus zelotyparum*, the right claimed by every faithful Jew to execute vengeance, after the example of Phinehas (Num. xxv. 11), upon any gross breach of the Divine law committed in his presence, was not his only warranty; he held a commission, higher than the king's, as the prophet of the Most High. He had just proved that the Lord He was God. It was now for him to prove that God's law was no dead letter. It was

for him to cut off the men—some of them renegades from the faith of Israel, some of them foreign emissaries introduced into the land—who had corrupted his countrymen, and threatened the very existence of the true religion. It is necessary, therefore, for those who challenge his conduct in this respect, who call him sanguinary, vindictive, &c., to settle their account with the law which he obeyed, and, indeed, with Him who has approved this deed, and has forewarned us that He too will act in like manner (Luke xix. 27). For this terrible retribution is by no means an exceptional or isolated act, in contrast to the general spirit of that dispensation; on the contrary, it is in thorough accord with the system out of which it sprung. We gain nothing, therefore, by repudiating this one transaction. For clearly, in the first place, it was allowed and approved of God, who otherwise would hardly have answered the prayer which Elijah presently offered, and (2) other similar acts have distinctly received Divine commendation (Exod. xxxii. 25—28; Num. xxv. 7—13; 2 Kings i. 9 sqq.) It is true that the spirit of Elias was not the spirit of Christianity (Luke ix. 56), but it is forgotten how different was the dispensation of Elijah from that of the New Covenant. In that age idolaters must receive their just recompense of reward, because the judgment *to come* had not then been revealed; because justice must be measured out to men in this life. We do not avenge idolatry or irreligion now with fire and sword, not because the thing is any the less sinful, but because the duty has been taken out of our hands; because our religion instructs us to leave it to Him who has said, "Vengeance is Mine," &c. It is perhaps worth remarking here that there is nothing in this history half so dreadful as might be seen on a thousand battle-fields—and those not battle-fields for truth and right — on which, nevertheless, Elijah's critics have learned to look with complacency. It may, however, be objected to this view that the punishment denounced by the law was stoning (Deut. xiii. 10; xvii. 5). But surely it is easy to see why, in this particular, the law was not kept. It was simply that the exigency of the occasion did not

permit of its being kept. It was because the 450 traitors to God and their country could not be stoned within the few hours that remained before the night closed in and the multitude dispersed, that a more speedy punishment, that of the sword, was adopted. And it would have been a sacrifice of the spirit of the law to the letter had some few false prophets been stoned and the rest thereby been afforded the opportunity to escape, and, under Jezebel's protection, to renew their efforts against truth and morality and religion.

Ver. 41.—And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up [It is clear from the word  $\text{אָרָא}$  that the king had gone down with the crowd to the Kishon. Curiosity had perhaps impelled him to witness the slaughter which he was powerless to prevent. And no doubt he had been profoundly awed by the portent he had just witnessed], eat and drink [It is hardly likely that there was aught of derision in these words. It is extremely probable that the excitement of the ordeal was so intense that the king had barely tasted food all day long. Elijah now bids him eat if he can, after what he has witnessed. There is now, he suggests, no further cause for anxiety or alarm. The people being repentant (vers. 39, 40), and the men who have brought a curse on the land being cut off, the drought can now be abated (cf. 2 Sam. xxi. 1, 6, 14). The next words assign the reason why he should eat and drink. It is a mistake, however (Ewald, Rawlinson), to suppose that he was lidden to "eat of the feast which always followed a sacrifice," for this was a whole burnt offering and had been entirely consumed (ver. 38). It is probable that the attendants of the king had spread a tent for him upon the plateau, and had brought food for the day along with them]; for there is a sound of abundance of rain [Heb. for a voice of a noise— $\text{קוֹל מַיִם}$ ; cf. *hum*, an onomatopoeic word—of rain. Gesenius and Keil think that the prophet could already hear the sound of the drops of rain, but if so, it was only in spirit (cf. ver. 45). The words may refer to the rise of the wind which so often precedes a storm, but it is more probable that Elijah speaks of signs and intimations understood only by himself. This was the "word" of ch. xvii. 1.]

Ver. 42.—So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top [Heb. *head*] of Carmel [It is clear from ver. 43 that this was not the actual summit,

nor can it have been, as Bähr supposes, the outermost promontory towards the sea, unless he means the foot or slope of that ridge or promontory, for from this  $\text{צָרְחָר}$  the sea was not visible. It also appears from the  $\text{הַרְצֵי}$  of ver. 41 that this point must have been at a lower elevation than the plateau where the altar had stood and where Ahab's tent was]; and he cast himself down upon the earth [Same word 2 Kings iv. 34, 35, of Elisha's prostration upon the dead child. But if Elijah "stretched himself full length" upon the earth, as the Easterns constantly do in prayer (see Thomson, i. 26, 27) it was but for a moment, as we presently find him kneeling], and put his face between his knees. ["The Oriental attitude of entire abstraction" (Stanley). The posture witnessed to the intensity of his supplication.]

Ver. 43.—And said to his servant [of whom we now hear for the first time. It is an old tradition that this was none other than the son of the Sareptan, who was afterwards known as the prophet Jonah (Jerome, *Praef.* in *Jonam*). See note on ch. xvii. 24], Go up now, look toward [Heb. *the way of*] the sea. [It is a striking confirmation of the theory which identifies *El Murakkah* with the scene of Elijah's sacrifice that the sea, though not visible from the plateau itself, is from the crest of the hill, a few feet higher. Van de Velde writes, "On its west and north-west sides the view of the sea is quite intercepted by an adjacent height. That height may be ascended, however, in a few minutes and a full view of the sea obtained from the top." Similarly the latest authority, Mr. Conder: "The peak is a semi-isolated knoll with a cliff some forty feet high, looking south-east. . . . The sea is invisible, except from the summit, and thus it was only by climbing to the top of Carmel, from the plateau where the altar may have stood, that the prophet's servant could have seen the little cloud," &c.] And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times. [Cf. Josh. vi. 15—20; 2 Kings v. 14; Matt. xviii. 21; Psa. cxix. 164. The idea here is that of sufficiency, of completion, rather than, as elsewhere, of covenant. And yet it must be remembered that Elijah was only praying for what God had already promised to grant (ver. 1). This earnest prayer for rain under these circumstances suggests that the former prayer "that it might not rain" (James v. 17) had also been inspired of God. But it is worth considering whether Elijah's attitude was not one of reverent and assured expectation, as

much as of prayer. When Rawlinson says that "the faithfulness and patience shown [by the servant] in executing this order without a murmur, imply devotedness of no common kind," he surely forgets that the drought had lasted for three years and a half, and that the servant had that day seen the fires of God descend at Elijah's prayer. It is inconceivable, under such circumstances, that any man could murmur.]

Ver. 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. [שׁוֹבֵל לֵחַ, *palm*, hollow of hand. Cf. Luke xii. 54, "When ye see the cloud (Gr. τὴν νεφέλην) arise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is." "Still in autumn the little cloud comes up like a man's hand and swells till huge thunder pillars are piled black and high above the mountains" (Conder). But it is not in Palestine alone that a little cloud on the horizon is frequently the harbinger of rain]. And he said, Go up [see note on ver. 42], say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot [Heb. *bind*], and get thee down [Keil, Stanley, and others assume that Ahab's chariot was waiting at the foot of the mountain. But it is to be noticed that the command to harness the horses precedes that to "go down." The writer rode down from *El Murahkah* to the plain, and it is quite conceivable that the royal chariot may have conveyed Ahab to the plateau of sacrifice and have waited for him there], that the rain stop thee not. [After heavy rain (Dy?) the Kishon, which "collects the whole drainage of this large basin" (Conder), the Great Plain, soon becomes an impassable swamp (Judg. v. 21). "I can tell you from experience that in wet seasons it (the Wâdy) is extremely muddy, and then the Kishon causes great tribulation to the muleteers. Rarely indeed do they get over it without some of their animals sticking fast in its oozy bottom" (Thomson, L. and B. ii. p. 218).]

Ver. 45.—And it came to pass in the meanwhile [Heb. *unto thus and unto thus*, i.e., till now and then (cf. Exod. vii. 16; Josh. xvii. 14). Gesen., Bähr, *al.* support the rendering of the A. V. Ewald, Keil, *al.* understand "while the hand is being moved hither and thither," i.e., very speedily. The practical difference is not great], that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. ["The cry of the boy from his mountain watch had hardly been uttered when the storm broke upon the plain" (Stanley). "The

storm" [over "the dark slate-coloured ridge of Carmel," witnessed by Conder in 1872] "burst suddenly, the rain descending with violence, hissing on the ground, as if not able to come down fast enough, and accompanied with gusts of wind, thunder, and lightning."] And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel.

Ver. 46.—And the hand of the Lord was on Eltjah [Same expression 2 Kings iii. 15; Ezek. i. 3; iii. 14; viii. 1; xxxiii. 22; cf. also Exod. ix. 3; Judg. ii. 15; Ruth i. 13; Acts xi. 21; xiii. 11. Some of the commentators understand the words of Divine guidance, some of a supernatural strengthening. There is no need to exclude either interpretation. An impulse from on high impelled him to "gird up his loins" and go with the king; a strength not his own sustained him whilst "he ran," &c. The distance across the plain to Jezreel is about fourteen miles; the royal chariot would drive furiously, and whatever fleetness and endurance the prophet had acquired in the wilds of Gilead, it seems hardly likely that, after the fatigues and excitement of that day, he would have been able, without the hand of the Lord upon him, to keep ahead of the chariot horses], and he girded up his loins [i.e., gathered round his waist the *abba*, or "mantle"—the תרנגול (cf. ch. xix. 13, 19; 2 Kings ii. 13, 14) was so-called from its ample size—which would otherwise have impeded his movements. Probably this, apart from the girdle, was his sole garment. (See Dict. Bib. vol. ii. p. 232)], and ran before Ahab [Thomson (vol. ii. p. 227) mentions an interesting illustration of this incident which he witnessed. The fore-runners of Mohammed Ali Pasha "kept just ahead of the horses, no matter how furiously they were ridden, and in order to run with the greatest ease they not only girded their loins very tightly, but also tucked up their loose garments under the girdle." But such a spectacle is of common occurrence in the East. Kitto remarks that the *Shatirs* of Persia keep pace with ease with their masters' horses. They also are tightly girded. His object was apparently twofold. First, to honour the sovereign whom he had that day humbled in the presence of his subjects. The great prophet, by assuming the lowly office of a foot-man, or forerunner (see note on ch. i. 5), would give due reverence to the Lord's anointed, like Samuel on a somewhat similar occasion (1 Sam. xv. 30, 31). Secondly, he may have hoped by his presence near the king and court to strengthen any good resolves which the former might have made, and to further the work of reforma-

tion which he could not but hope the proceedings of that day would inaugurate. That this tribute of respect would be grateful to Ahab, who hitherto had only regarded Elijah as an adversary, it is impossible to doubt. And that Elijah believed he had struck a death-blow to the foreign superstitions fostered by the court, and especially by the queen, is equally certain. It is not clear, as Bähr assumes, that his servant accompanied him on the road. He may have rejoined him later on in the day or night] to the entrance [Heb. *until thou comest to*. The Arab aversion, which Elijah is supposed to have shared, to entering cities, has often been remarked. But there were other and deeper reasons why he should not adventure himself within the city. Probably the same guiding hand which led him to Jezreel impelled him to lodge out-

side the walls. It was impossible to say what Jezebel, in her transports of rage, might do. After such a day, too, any prophet would shrink from familiar contact with men and from the strife of tongues] of Jezreel. [Ahab had a palace here (ch. xxi. 1). But Samaria was still the capital, and so remained till the captivity (ch. xxii. 37; 2 Kings xv. 13, 14; xvii. 5, 6). The selection of Jezreel as a royal residence is easily accounted for. It stands on "a knoll 500 feet high" (Conder), overlooking both the plain of Esdraelon and the valley of Jezreel. In fact, it is the finest situation in the "Great Plain." Hence perhaps its name "the sowing-place of God." See Stanley, S. and P. pp. 336 sqq.; Porter, p. 353; Diet. Bib. vol. i. p. 1030; Van de Velde, vol. ii. p. 370.]

### HOMILETICS.

**Vers. 3, 4.—The Governor of Ahab's House.** There are few things in these books of Scripture more surprising and suggestive than the position of Obadiah in the palace of Ahab. Consider—

I. THE AGE. We have seen that during this reign (ch. xvi. 30, 33; xxi. 25), and especially in the capital city of Samaria (ch. xvi. 32), the wickedness of Israel had reached its zenith. From the accession of Jeroboam, and the schism which followed it, the northern kingdom had steadily gone from bad to worse, till its apostasy and impiety culminated under the malign influences of Ahab and Jezebel. Their joint reign marks a new departure in the religious history of the ten tribes. Hitherto men had worshipped the God of their fathers, though in an irregular and unauthorized way, and idolatry, though not unknown, had not been open and unblushing. Now, however, the whole nation, with but few exceptions, abandoned itself to the licentious worship of Phœnician gods, and the ancestral religion was proscribed, its altars were overthrown, and a determined effort was made to stamp out its prophets and professors.

II. THE PLACE. We should expect, consequently—what Elijah really believed to be the case (ch. xix. 10)—that to find a pious man we must search the land as with a lantern. We should expect to find some Abdiels, "faithful among the faithless found," but we should look for them away from the haunts of men, in "caves and dens of the earth," in the brook Cherith, or the cottage of Zarephath, or wandering about "in sheepskins and goatskins," &c. (Heb. xi. 37, 38). But we should hardly hope to find them in the cities of Israel, in the broad light of day, in conspicuous positions, and least of all should we look for them in Samaria, where Satan's seat was, the fortress and citadel of Baal.

Or if we were so sanguine, notwithstanding the godlessness of the times and the genius of the place, as to count on some saints in Samaria, we should never betake ourselves to the great men (Jer. v. 5); we should go in search of piety in the cottages of the poor. We should never dream of finding any followers of the Lord occupying an exalted station, living under the shadow of the palace, or in close contact with the determined and unscrupulous queen.

III. HIS POSITION. But if we were assured that even in Ahab's palace, under the same roof with Jezebel, a devout and steadfast servant of Jehovah was to be found, we should certainly have expected to find him in some insignificant servitor, some poor retainer of the place. That any high official, that a minister of state could retain his piety in that cesspool of corruption, that hotbed of idolatry and immorality, and at the very time that Jezebel was cutting off the Lord's prophets, would seem

to us altogether out of the question. "What communion," we should ask, "hath light with darkness? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?"

IV. HIS PIETY. Yet we find that Obadiah, the intendant of the palace of Samaria, the trusted and faithful minister of Ahab, the "third ruler in the kingdom," "feared the Lord greatly" (ver. 3), and, though surrounded by Baal-worshippers, never bowed the knee to Baal; though risking his life by his devotion to Jehovah, yet served Him truly, and succoured His prophets.

We have a parallel to this, and a still more striking instance of piety under the most adverse and discouraging circumstances in the New Testament. We have something like it, indeed, in the case of Daniel and the three Hebrew children; something approaching it in the case of Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward (Luke viii. 3); but we find a still closer analogue in the saints of Cæsar's household (Phil. iv. 22).

When we remember that the saints of Rome were the talk, the admiration, the patterns of the early Christian Churches "throughout the whole world" (Rom. i. 8); that among the saints of Rome, those of the palace or of the barracks (Phil. i. 13) attached to Cæsar's palace on the Palatine, were conspicuous, at least (ch. iv. 22) for their charity, for the crowning Christian grace of *φιλανθρωπία*, the stamp and seal royal of the saints (John xiii. 35; 1 John iv. 20); when we remember, too, that this was in Rome, at that period the very worst city in the world, the resort—their own writers being witness—of all the knaves and charlatans and libertines of the empire; that this was in the year A. D. 63, when the palace of the Cæsars was occupied by Nero, of all those born of women perhaps the meanest, basest, most infamous, most profligate; that this Nero was murderer of brother, murderer of mother, of wife, of paramour; persecutor and butcher of the Christians, sworn foe of goodness and purity in every shape, patron and abettor of every kind of abomination, according to some the "Beast" of the Apocalypse; when we consider that under his roof, in the pandemonium which he had created around him, *saints* were found, meek followers of the unspotted Christ, we cannot but be impressed with the fact that the wisdom of God has preserved for our encouragement two conspicuous instances—one under the Old Dispensation, one under the New—of fervent piety living and thriving in a palace under the most adverse circumstances, amid the overflowings of ungodliness. And these facts may suggest the following lessons:

1. "*Let every man, wherein he is called, there abide with God*" (1 Cor. vii. 20, 24). The temptation to desert our post, because of the difficulties, seductions, persecutions it affords, is peculiarly strong, because it presents itself under the garb of a religious duty. We think we shall "one day fall by the hand of Saul" (1 Sam. xxvii. 1). We fear the temptation may be too strong for us, and we consult, as we fancy, only for our safety, in flight. But we forget that "every man's life is a plan of God;" that we have been placed where we are by Him, and placed there to do His work. We forget also that His "grace is sufficient" for us; that with every temptation He can make a way to escape (1 Cor. x. 13); that He will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able to bear; and that flight under such circumstances must be mere cowardice and faithlessness. It was a great mistake of the hermits and the religious of a past age to leave the world because it was so wicked, for this was to take the salt out of the earth, and to leave it to corruption. If the men who alone can leaven society shut themselves up in a cloister or a study, it is simply leaving it to the devil to do his worst. This is not to fight, but to flee. Except these abide in the ship, how can it be saved? (Acts xxvii. 31.) It is egregious selfishness to hide our candle under a bushel, lest perchance the blasts of temptation should extinguish it. Obadiah was called by the providence of God to be governor of Ahab's house. The post must have been one of extreme difficulty, of constant trial and imminent peril. We see from vers. 10, 14 the kind of man he had to deal with, and how, from day to day, he carried his life in his hand. But he did not desert the state of life into which it had pleased God to call him. He considered that he was there for some good purpose; that he had a work to do which only he could do, and he resolved to stop and do his duty. Perhaps he remembered the ruler of Pharaoh's house, and the deliverance *he* wrought for Israel (Gen. xlv. 7, 8).

Anyhow, he waited and endured, and at length the opportunity came. When Jezebel would exterminate the Lord's prophets, then the steward of the palace understood why he had been placed in that perilous and responsible position. It was that he might save much people alive (Gen. 1. 20). Then he did what, perhaps, only he could have done—took a hundred of the Lord's prophets, hid them in two caves, and fed them with bread and water.

2. *The saints make the best servants.* It is scarcely less strange to find Ahab employing Obadiah than to find Obadiah serving under Ahab. Some have seen herein a proof of the king's tolerance, but it is much more like a proof of his sagacity. Whether he knew of Obadiah's faith may be uncertain, but we may be sure that he had proved his fidelity. It was because Obadiah was "faithful in all his house" that he was retained in this position. It was not to Ahab's interest to have a Baal-worshipper at the head of his retainers. Bad men do not care to be served by their kind. They pay piety and probity the compliment—such as it is—of encouraging it in their dependants and children. They find, as Potiphar did, as Darius did, that the God-fearing bring a blessing with them (Gen. xxxix. 5). For if there is no special benediction of their basket and store, of their fruit and fold (Deut. xxviii. 4, 5), yet they are guarded against speculation and waste (Luke xvi. 1). How many, like Ahab, have found that those who share their sins or pleasures cannot be entrusted with their goods; that if they would have faithful servants, they must have God-fearing ones. (See Krummacher, i. secs. 145—149.)

3. *It is only the power of God could keep men holy in Ahab's or Nero's palace.* Coleridge has somewhere said that there are two classes of Christian evidences—Christianity and Christendom; the system in itself, its pure morality, its beneficent teachings, and its results, its conquests, and achievements in the world. For it is altogether beyond the power of human nature to work the moral changes which Christianity has wrought either to convert men or to preserve them from falling. That a man who is notorious in his neighbourhood, the talk and terror of the country side, a chartered libertine, an *âme damnée*, or even like St. Paul, a persecutor and injurious; or like Augustine, or John Newton; that such an one should be suddenly stopped, transformed, ennobled, should preach the faith which he once persecuted—this is very difficult to account for on human grounds. And that men with every temptation to sin, everything to lose and nothing to gain by godliness, worldly interest, pride, passion, shame, everything combining against religion—that these should, nevertheless, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, live soberly, righteously, and godly (Titus ii. 12) in the Sodom around them—this is no less a miracle of Divine grace. The influences that preserved an Obadiah, a St. Paul, a Pudeus, and Linus, and Claudia (2 Tim. iv. 21) must have been from above. We know only too well what human nature, unassisted by grace, is capable of. We know it tends inevitably, not to bear a rich crop of virtues, but, like the cereals, to degenerate, to run to seed. In Socrates and Seneca—"half-inspired heathens"—we see it at its best, and yethow wide the gulf between Nero's preceptor and the saints of Nero's household. When we see our nature, planted in a hotbed of grossness and profligacy, nevertheless yield the "peaceable fruits of righteousness," then we know that the hand of the great Husbandman must, if silently and unseen, yet assuredly, have been at work.

4. *If religion held its own in Ahab's or in Nero's court, it will hold its own and win its way anywhere.* How can we ever despair of our religion so long as we have such proofs that it is the "power of God unto salvation"? Society, both in England and on the continent of Europe, may be very godless; it may be changing for the worse; we may be preparing for an outbreak of Communism, Nihilism, Materialism, Atheism; the masses in our large towns may be very brutal and besotted and animal, may be utterly estranged from religion in every shape; but, whatever England is like, and whatever Europe is like, its state is nothing like so desperate as was that of Rome under Nero. The savages to whom we send our missionaries, again, no doubt they are debased, sensual, apathetic, or even hostile to our religion; but are they really worse, is their case more hopeless, than that of Ahab's or Nero's subjects? And if the days of persecution are not ended; if in

China, and Melanesia, and Turkey the sword is still whetted against the Christian, can we find among them all a more truculent persecutor than Jezebel, a more savage and unprincipled inquisitor than Tigellinus. But we cannot pretend that our sufferings are anything like theirs. No longer are the prophets hunted like partridges; no longer are they clad in the skins of wild beasts, or dipped into cauldrons of pitch; no longer do we hear the sanguinary cry, *Christianos ad leones*. And yet, despite those terrible mockings and scourgings, those agonies in the amphitheatre, those privations in the caves, religion, in Samaria and in Rome alike, held its ground. In Israel, seven thousand true-hearted confessors would neither be tempted nor terrified into bowing the knee to Baal. In Italy, the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church; neither Nero, nor Decius, nor Diocletian could hinder the onward march of Christ's baptized host, and now it is matter of history how one day the empire woke up to find itself Christian.

5. *If men could be saints in Ahab's and Nero's palace, they may be saints anywhere.* How constantly do men plead the adverse circumstances in which they are placed as a reason why they cannot serve God. Sometimes it is a godless street or wicked hamlet; sometimes it is an irreligious household or infidel workshop; or their trade is such, their employers or associates are such, that they cannot live a godly life. But the example of Obadiah, the example of those saints of the Praetorium, convicts them of untruth and of cowardice. They cannot have greater temptations or fiercer persecutions than befell those Roman Christians. If they proved steadfast, and lived in sweetness and purity, which of us cannot do the same wherever we may be placed?

6. *The saints of Ahab's and Nero's courts shall rise up in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it.* In a wicked city, in an impure court, through fire and blood, they kept the faith. Christianity is now established in the land. Kings are its nursing fathers. Its holy rites are celebrated freely and openly. Yet how many dishonour or deny it! how many are ashamed of their religion! With what shame will they meet the brave confessors of the past! They will need no condemnation from their Judge (Matt. xii. 41; John v. 45).

Vers. 17—20.—*The King and his Master.* For three and a half years king and prophet have not met (Luke iv. 25). For three and a half years, forty and two months, twelve hundred and sixty days (Rev. xi. 2, 3; xii. 6; xiii. 5; Dan. vii. 25), the mystical period of persecution and blasphemy, the plague of drought has afflicted the land. But now the time—God's "fulness of time"—has arrived for its removal. The time to favour Israel is come, and king and prophet meet again. It was an anxious moment for each of them. It was a critical moment in the history of the Church. Let us mark their words; let us observe how they bear themselves; we shall surely learn something from their carriage and discourse.

I. *The king goes to meet the prophet.* Elijah would seem to have waited in the place where Obadiah left him until Ahab appeared. He is not going to take the place of a suppliant. Subject though he is, he is Ahab's superior. He has a commission higher and nobler than the king's. It is his task to reprove the king; hence, in a manner, he summons him before him. The proud monarch who has scoured all lands in search of him must now humble himself to go before the prophet. "Behold Elijah."

II. *Ahab fears to meet Elijah.* It is true he is the first to speak, and accuses the prophet of troubling the land; but we may well believe that, despite his brave words when Jezebel was at his side, and the cheap courage he manifested when he had the court and the priests of Baal at his back, he must have looked forward to this meeting with something like dismay. He had good cause for misgivings and fears. First, he was to encounter a true prophet, and one vested with supernatural powers. Of one thing he could have no doubt, as to the "sure word of prophecy" in Elijah's lips. No less than the Sareptan, he had proved that the word of the Lord in Elijah's lips was truth (ch. xvii. 24). "He spake and it was done." He had denounced a drought, and it had come to pass, a drought beyond all precedent, a drought which still cursed the country, and was at that moment taxing its resources

(*ver. 5*) And of another thing Ahab must have been equally certain, that this drought was no chance which had happened him. The coincidence between the word and the event negated that idea. He must see in it the finger of God; he must recognize in the prophet the power of God. But (2) the man for whom he had been searching over hill and dale, in town and hamlet, in his own and in adjoining lands, now proposes a meeting. Clearly, then, *he* is not afraid. He almost compels an interview—"I will show myself unto him to-day." (3) Even if Ahab ascribed his power to magic or witchcraft, still men tremble in the presence of a sorcerer. We cannot wonder, therefore, if his courage almost failed him, and if he looked forward to the meeting with something like dread. But he remembers his imperious consort; he thinks how full of threatening and fury he himself has been, and he feels he must put on a bold front; he must carry himself proudly; he must tax the prophet with wrong-doing. And so, when at last they meet, the king is the first to speak. "Art thou here?" he cries, almost frightened at the sound of his own voice. "Art thou here, thou troubler of Israel?" Words have often served to conceal men's thoughts, often been a veil to hide their abject fears.

Now, we have heard words like these, we have read of them in other mouths than Ahab's. It is a common charge against the prophets and people of God. The saints are always in the wrong. It is always they who "turn the world upside down" (Acts xvii. 6, 8); always they who "do exceedingly trouble our city" (*ib.*, xvi. 20). Our Lord was accused of sedition. The first Christians were called "enemies of the human race." All manner of evil is said against them falsely. Ahab only speaks "after his kind." He saw that Elijah had been instrumental in bringing down the drought and the terrible famine which accompanied it. He never pauses to ask what moved Elijah to call for a drought; what caused Elijah's God to send it. The herald is accused as the cause of the war. "There is nothing new under the sun." The same charge is made, and with the same unreason and perversity at the present day. The lamb must have fouled the stream, whichever way it flows. If the Baptist comes neither eating nor drinking, they say, "He hath a devil." If the Son of man comes eating and drinking, they say, "Behold a gluttonous man and a winebibber." If we pipe, they will not dance: if we mourn, they will not lament (Matt. xi. 16 sqq.)

III. *Elijah denounces the king to his face.* "I have not troubled Israel, but thou," &c. "The righteous are bold as a lion." There is no trace of fear in these words. The truth has nothing to fear. And the truth it was then, and is now, that the trouble and suffering of the world spring out of sin, out of forgetting and forsaking God. If men will leave Him out of their thoughts and lives, their sorrows cannot but be multiplied (Psa. xvi. 4). It is like leaving the sun out of our solar system—the world would revert to primæval chaos. The French revolution shows the result of the negation of God. Communism and Nihilism do the same. "There is no peace to the wicked." But not only do they "pierce themselves through with many sorrows," but they trouble *Israel* (Eph. vi. 16), the peaceful people of God. But for them this world would be a Paradise. It is they who make wretched homes and broken hearts. It is they who necessitate our armies, our police, our gaols, our poor rates. It is they who sometimes make us wonder, with some of the ancients, whether this earth is not really a place of punishment. But for them, and the confusion and misery they cause, men would never ask "whether life is worth living;" still less conclude that "the greatest good is never to have been born into the world, and the next to die out of it as soon as possible." We are entitled, therefore, like Elijah, to denounce the godless and the vicious as the enemies of society, as conspirators against the world's peace and prosperity. "The only common disturber of men, families, cities, kingdoms, worlds, is sin." It is one of the arguments for our holy religion that, sincerely practised, it ensures "the greatest possible happiness of the greatest possible number." It is the brand of Atheism that it brings trouble, uncleanness, selfishness, suffering, at its heels.

IV. *The king endures the upbraiding of the prophet.* To Elijah's "Thou art the man," he makes no reply. He is taxed with the ruin of his country, and is

speechless. His courage has soon evaporated. He who would accuse Elijah cannot defend himself. Though anointed king, he is weak and helpless (2 Sam. iii. 39), and owns his subject his superior. How soon have they changed places! Ahab has been hunting for the prophet's life, has been vowing vengeance upon him if found. Now he has found him, and he trembles before him. And this because conscience has made him a coward. He knows in his inmost heart that Elijah has spoken the truth; that God is on his side; and he is afraid of him, just as Saul, giant and king though he was, was afraid of the stripling David. And men are still afraid of a true saint of God. They regard him with almost a superstitious dread. Sometimes it is fanaticism they fear; but sometimes it is the holiness which condemns their sinfulness (Luke v. 8).

V. *The king obeys the prophet's commands.* Elijah might be king from the commands he issues. "Send and gather to me"—observe "to me"—"all Israel unto Mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal," &c. Did Ahab know why they were wanted? Did Elijah then tell him of the ordeal by fire? It is extremely improbable. It is probable that, though Ahab hoped for rain, still he anticipated no good to his or Jezebel's prophets from this meeting. He would have disobeyed this command if he dared. But he has found his master, and it is in the uncouth, untutored Gileadite. We are reminded of Herod and John, of Ambrose and Theodosius, of Savonarola and Lorenzo de' Medicis, of Mary of Scots and John Knox. At Elijah's bidding, his posts go throughout the land. The prophet has had a triumph already. Truth and the consciousness of right, and the power of God's presence, have proved greater than sceptre and crown.

Vers. 21—40.—*Israel's Conversion.* It has been remarked elsewhere that in the history of the Israelitish people we may see portrayed the trials and experiences of a Christian soul.

And not only is that true of this history as a whole, but it also holds good of various periods of that history, of various crises in the nation's life. It holds good of that great crisis recorded in this chapter. For from the conversion of Israel on the day of Carmel, we may gather some lessons as to the true doctrine of conversion, the conversion of a man from sin to righteousness, from the power of Satan unto God. From the turning of their heart back again (ver. 37), we may learn something as to the change to be wrought in our own. Let us consider, therefore—

1. What it was. 2. How it was accomplished. 3. What were its results.

I. WHAT IT WAS. It was—

1. *A change of mind.* It was a *μετάνοια*, a change of thought and view. Of course it was more than this, but this it was pre-eminently and primarily. On that day of the Lord's power (Psa. cx. 3) the views of king and people were altered. The king and court—and Ahab was not without his ministers and courtiers to witness the ordeal—had many of them believed in Baal, and served him. It is true some had wavered (ver. 21) between Baal and Jehovah; but the people as a whole had held Baal to be Lord and God, prince of nature, source of life, not to the exclusion of Jehovah, but along with Him. The first thing for them to learn, consequently, was that an "idol is nothing in the world;" that Baal was no more than a log (ch. xv. 12), a senseless stock, powerless for good or evil. It is clear that Elijah's first object was to demonstrate before this great convocation on Carmel the absolute impotence and nothingness of their idol deities. He had been proving for three years past and more that Baal had no dominion over the clouds; that he could not discharge that primary function of a God, viz., to control the course of nature, and give his votaries rain from heaven and fruitful seasons (Levit. xxvi. 4; Deut. xi. 17; 1 Sam. xii. 17; 1 Kings viii. 36; Psa. lxxviii. 9; Jer. v. 24; Joel ii. 23; Amos iv. 7; Acts xiv. 17). And now he offers to prove that Baal has as little power over the fire, that recognized emblem and property of God (Gen. iii. 24; Exod. xix. 18; Levit. ix. 24; Deut. iv. 36); only known to men, according to an ancient tradition, because it had been stolen from heaven. He will also prove that the Lord whom he serves can give both fire and rain; and by these facts he will gain their understandings, the assent of their minds to the

conclusion that the Lord alone is God. This was his first task, his main object. And this is the first step towards the conversion of a soul—that it should “*know* the only true God and Jesus Christ,” &c. At the basis of conversion lies the knowledge of God and of self. There is a knowledge which “*bloweth up*,” while “*charity buildeth up*” (1 Cor. viii. 1). There is also a *γῶσις* which is life eternal. He is the converted man who can say, “We have *known* and believed the love that God hath to us” (1 John iv. 16). It was a favourite saying of St. Theresa that if men really knew God, they could not help loving and serving Him. By nature they do not know Him; they have false and unworthy ideas of Him; they think Him to be altogether such an one as themselves (Psa. l. 21), because the devil, the “*slanderer*” (*διάβολος*), who is not only the “*accuser of the brethren*” before God (Rev. xii. 10; Job i. 9), but also the accuser of God before the brethren (Gen. iii. 5), poisons their minds against God, traduces and misrepresents Him, so that the opening of the eyes (Acts ix. 18; xvi. 14; xxvi. 18; Luke xxiv. 45; Eph. i. 18), the enlightening of the mind, the shining of the glorious gospel of Christ in the darkened heart (2 Cor. iv. 4, 6)—this is the beginning of our conversion. A conversion which rests, not on knowledge, but emotion, cannot be real and lasting.

2. *A change of affection.* Believing Baal to be God, they had yielded him their homage, their service. The heart, for the most part (Rom. vii. *passim*), goes with the understanding. If the latter be firmly persuaded, the former is enlisted. “As he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Prov. xxiii. 7). Those who regarded Baal as their helper and benefactor could not help reverencing and loving him (ch. xix. 18; cf. Job xxxi. 27). But when they learnt his impotence; when they saw that they had been deceived (Acts viii. 9); when it was forced upon them that these things were dumb idols, lying vanities, and that the Lord alone had made them, sustained them, blessed them, then there was a strong revulsion of feeling; their heart was turned back again; their affections went forth to Him whom they had slighted and wronged. And so it is in our conversion. It is not a purely intellectual process; it stirs the lowest depths of the heart. When a man realizes that God is not hate, but love; that he is a Father, not a hard master; that the devil has deceived him and enslaved him, while promising him liberty; that the world has cheated him, and its pleasures have mocked him, it would be strange indeed if this apocalypse did not affect the whole man; if the knowledge did not lead at once to loathing and love; loathing for the enemy who has played us so false and slandered our gracious Father; love for Him who first loved us, and sealed His love by pain and sacrifice. And with the new-born love there will be compunction; grief that we have grieved the Eternal Love. This is what we call repentance. It is a part of the *μετάνοια*.

3. *A change of conduct.* If the head does not always carry the heart with it, the heart always controls and governs the man. It is the mainspring of our nature. The heart is the helm that turns the ship “whithersoever the governor listeth” (James iii. 4). We have no record, indeed, of any permanent change in the religious life of Israel, and it has been too readily assumed that all the congregation that witnessed the descent of the fire, and confessed their belief in Jehovah, straightway lapsed into paganism. But it is clear that, for a time at least, there was a change in their conduct. The readiness with which they slew the priests of Baal shows it. Indeed, without this there would have been no conversion at all. For that word, though constantly used in a purely conventional and non-natural sense—to express, in fact, a mystical change in the man, a peculiar conscious transition which the heart is supposed to experience—really describes a change in the life and conduct (Acts xv. 8; Luke xxii. 32; Matt. xviii. 3; James v. 19). The secret inner change the Scripture always calls “repentance” (Matt. ix. 13; Luke xv. 7; Acts xx. 21; Rom. ii. 4; Heb. vi. 6, &c.) Conversion is the outward and visible change resulting from the former, and corresponding with it. Hence St. Peter’s words, “Repent and be converted” (Acts iii. 19). This conversion of Israel was not an emotion, an experience, an ecstasy, but a change from Baal-worship to Jehovah-worship; from impurity and devilry (Deut. xxxii. 17; 1 Cor.

x. 20) to righteousness; it was a turning "from idols to serve the living and true God" (1 Thess. i. 9).

## II. HOW WAS THIS CONVERSION BROUGHT ABOUT?

1. *By the ministry of a prophet.* The appeal of Elijah (ver. 21) had some influence; the works he wrought—he was a prophet of deed—had much more. He was God's messenger to turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just (Luke i. 17). We are reminded here of the place which the ministry of the word occupies in the New Dispensation. "How shall they hear without a preacher?" "We preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities," &c. (Acts xiv. 15). No one says that a preacher is indispensable, but no one can deny that he is God's ordinary instrument for the conversion of men (1 Cor. i. 18, 21).

2. *By the chastening of God.* The drought and the famine prepared their stubborn hearts for Elijah's appeal, and disposed them to decision. At another time he might have addressed Israel in vain. And sorrow and pain, privation and bereavement are still not unfrequently found to dispose the rebellious mind to hear the message of God. "When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Isa. xxvi. 9; cf. ver. 16).

3. *By the terrors of the Lord.* It is the "still small voice" wins most for God; but the wind and earthquake and fire have their preparation work to do. The law preceded the gospel, and even the gospel has its stern threatenings. Apostolic preaching did not overlook the terror of the Lord (2 Cor. v. 11). We can hardly doubt that fear played some part in the conversion. As on a former occasion, the giving of the law (Exod. xx. 18), so at this solemn vindication of the law, "the people were afraid by reason of the fire" (Deut. v. 5). Why, then, should we call that common which God hath cleansed? Why discard an instrument which God has sanctioned?

4. *By a supernatural token.* For the fire was the turning-point in this conversion. It was at the awful "sign from heaven," this evidence of a Divine Presence, that the great cry arose, "The Lord, He is the God." The bones were dry until the breath came into them. And may not this remind us that there is a supernatural element in our conversion too? Man cannot change himself. Only by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit which descended in fire (Acts ii. 3; Matt. iii. 11), can the eyes be opened, the heart softened, repentance wrought, or true and lasting conversion to God be accomplished. This is the dispensation of the Spirit. It is His to convince of sin (John xvi. 8), to testify of Christ (John xv. 26), to renew the heart (Titus iii. 5), to give peace and joy (Gal. v. 22).

5. *After prayer to God.* Not only the prayer of vers. 36, 37, offered before the restored altar of God (ver. 30); Elijah had prayed for many years. The discipline of drought was an answer to his prayer. Nor can we think that he was alone in his petitions. The seven thousand would assuredly pray for the regeneration of their country. The triumph of Carmel is the answer to those cries of God's elect (Luke xviii. 7). And prayer is still one of the instruments of our conversion. It is significant how prayer is mentioned in connection with the example of Elias, and with conversion in James v. 17—20. Nor is the mention of prayer in connection with St. Paul's conversion less instructive (Acts ix. 11). It is one step the soul takes towards God; and by persevering in prayer the goal is reached, for "Every one that asketh, receiveth" (Matt. vii. 8). Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved (Acts ii. 21). A prayer of half a dozen words once sufficed for justification (Luke xviii. 14).

6. *It was the result of a sudden decision.* "How long halt ye?" &c. He will have them make up their minds one way or the other. It is better to be cold than lukewarm (Rev. iii. 16). We cannot serve two masters. How many conversions are deferred because men will not look facts in the face! That is all the preacher asks of them. "If there is a God, then serve Him. If there is a judgment, then prepare for it." Decision of character is necessary to the great change. When the prodigal says, "I will arise," the first step has been taken. And "it is only the first step that costs."

III. WHAT WERE ITS RESULTS? It is well to ask this question, for some forget that conversion is not the end, but the beginning. It is the entrance on the life of reconciliation and obedience; it is the door to sanctification and perfection. This conversion was (1) evidenced by—

1. *Obedience.* The law enjoined that the false prophet should be put to death (Deut. xii. 1—11). The sin of seducing the Lord's people was so heinous that it merited a capital punishment. It has been objected against Elijah that, in the massacre of these 400 men, he displayed a sanguinary and revengeful spirit. But it would have been strange if he, the restorer of the law, had ignored one of its provisions. We should have suspected this conversion had the false prophets been spared. "This sacrifice was no less pleasing to God than that other." For the true convert sets himself to do God's will. Whatever grace and favour God may have showed him cannot release him from the discharge of duty. He must still "keep the commandments" if he would enter into life (Matt. xix. 17). Obedience is the touchstone of conversion (Luke vi. 46; John xiv. 21).

2. *Watchfulness.* No doubt one reason why the false prophets were put out of the way was that they might no longer be able to tempt God's people. The convert will be careful to avoid all occasions of sin; he will cut off the right hand that causes him to offend. He will keep himself that the wicked one touch him not (1 John v. 18). If strong drink has been his snare, he will abstain; whatever his besetting sin, he will put it away. But (2) it was followed by—

3. *Blessing.* After the conversion came the rain, and a renewal of prosperity and plenty (James v. 18). Not until the people had turned to Him with all their hearts, could He "be jealous for his land, and pity his people" (Joel ii. 12, 18). The drought, the punishment of apostasy, was removed on their repentance. Once more the thirsty land drank in the grateful showers; once more a plentiful rain refreshed God's inheritance, and the land brought forth its increase (James v. 18)—a picture this of the blessings which attend the reconciled soul. "Rivers of living waters." "The water of life freely." "The fruit of the Spirit." "The peaceable fruits of righteousness."

Vers. 41—45.—*Effectual Ferocious Prayer.* It is pre-eminently in the matter of prayer that Elijah is proposed to us as an example in the New Testament. From the long list of Hebrew saints and worthies he has been selected by St. James (v. 17, 18) to prove and illustrate the proposition that "the prayer of a righteous man availeth much in its working" (ver. 16, Revised Version). His prayers for drought are not mentioned by our historian, but his prayer for rain may not unreasonably be supposed to be referred to in the account of vers. 42—45. Let us notice its more prominent features.

1. *It was the prayer of a righteous man.* The prayers of unrighteous men are sometimes heard (Luke xviii. 14; 2 Chron. xxxiii. 19), but only their prayers for grace and pardon. The intercessions of the wicked for others are of no avail, any more than the prayers of the impenitent for themselves. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psa. lxxvi. 18). Common sense teaches that God is not likely to grant the requests of impenitent rebels. "To the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do" with intercession? "Get thee to the prophets of thy father," &c. (2 Kings iii. 13). "Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen" (Judg. x. 14). But "he will fulfil the desire of them that fear him" (Psa. cxlv. 19).

2. *It was the prayer of a man of like passions with us.* We are not to think that Elias stood on a pedestal apart from the rest of his kind. He is not pictured to us, as are the heroes of so many biographies, as perfect. We are not sure that that great "day of Carmel" passed without sin. We are quite sure that he betrayed fear and unbelief in his flight, impatience and discontent in the desert. Yet his prayers availed much. Let us, therefore, though compassed about with infirmity, and stained with many sins of ignorance and imperfection, come boldly to the throne of grace.

3. *It was fervent.* "He prayed with prayer" (*προσευχῇ προσήτατο*), says St. James. His attitude reveals its fervency—it was that of complete self-abstraction, of intense

inward entreaty. We must seek "with all the heart" (Psa. cxix. 2; Jer. xxiv. 7). Seeking *early* (Prov. i. 28; viii. 17; Psa. lxxiii. 1; lxxxviii. 34; Isa. xxvi. 9) does not mean seeking in youth, but seeking eagerly, intently. Compare the expression, "rising up early," &c. (Jer. vii. 13; xxv. 3, 4; xxvi. 5; xxxv. 15, &c.) Some one has said that there are not many persons who really and truly *pray* half a dozen times in their lives. We offer up formal or lukewarm petitions, and then marvel that we receive no answers. Prayer must be *ἰκετής* (Luke xxii. 44). It is not that God is hard to persuade; it is that He will have us mean what we say. There is no difficulty with Him. We are straitened in ourselves.

4. *It was persevering.* He was not daunted by the laconic "nothing" (Heb. *not aught*) of his servant. "Go again seven times." It is not enough to pray; we must "pray and not faint" (Luke xviii. 1; Eph. vi. 18; Col. iv. 2). We must "diligently seek him" (Heb. xi. 6). St. Paul besought the Lord thrice (2 Cor. xii. 8), after the example, it is probable, of our Blessed Lord (Matt. xxvi. 44). Compare the example of Abraham (Gen. xviii. 23 sqq.) Daniel prayed three times a day (Dan. vi. 10). The "seven times" of Elijah means that he will pray until the covenant God hears his petitions (cf. Levit. iv. 6, 17; viii. 11; xiv. 16).

5. *It was touching God's kingdom.* This is the proper subject for our prayers (Matt. vi. 33). We may have doubts whether some of the blessings we would fain crave are good for us, but we always ask "according to his will" when we pray, "Thy kingdom come." Our prayers for rain or fine weather are often selfish. Elijah only desired the drought, only supplicated for rain, as a means of influencing Israel and advancing God's work. It is partly the selfishness of our prayers which has led men to question the efficacy of all prayer. If men want to have their own way with the elements, or to make God's power further their private ends, is it strange if He declines to hear them? If we are to "obtain our petitions," we must "ask those things that please him."

6. *It was believing.* He never doubts the promise of ch. xviii. 1. He has already announced the rain to Ahab, before he prays for it. Similarly our Lord gave thanks at the grave of Lazarus: "I thank thee that thou hast heard me" (John xi. 41), just as if the dead man had already come to life again. We must ask in faith (James i. 6, 7; Matt. xxi. 21, 22; Mark ix. 23). No wonder if God does not hear the petitions of the man who doubts whether God is, or is the rewarder of those who seek Him. Before we pray we should at least be clear that there is One who hears and can help us. Unbelief makes God a liar.

7. *It was humble.* "Cast himself down upon the earth." What self-abasement before God! And he was heard in that he feared (Heb. v. 7). God has respect unto the lowly, and giveth grace to the humble (James iv. 6; 1 Peter v. 5; Psa. ix. 12; x. 17).

8. *It was in the Holy Ghost* (Jude 20). This prayer was first inspired. Elijah would never presume to ask either for drought or rain, unless the prayer had been put into his heart. As he mused in the wilds of Gilead over the apostasy of Israel, and vexed his righteous soul with the news of the Baal-worship, he felt constrained to cry to God, as we find His saints constantly doing, to awake, to make bare His arm, to vindicate His outraged honour. And what could he pray for, except that God would enforce the penalties He had Himself denounced? His prayer for drought is the outcome of his zeal for God's law, with which God had Himself inspired him. And we, too, are promised supernatural help and guidance in our prayers (Rom. viii. 26, 27; Jude 20).

9. *It availed much.* It opened the windows of heaven. "There was a great rain" It gave life to those who were sitting in the shadow of death. "The earth brought forth her fruit." The desolate land became as Eden. Man and beast drank and lived.

10. *It availed immediately.* While he was yet speaking, God heard (Isa. lxxv. 24). If that word is ever true, *Bis dat qui cito dat*, it was true of this occasion. Indeed, the answer almost anticipated the prayer (ch. xviii. 1, 41). God is more ready to give than we to pray.

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

**Vers. 1—6.—The Cry for Life.** For three years and six months the heavens were as brass. Throughout the summers the sun glared and flamed in a cloudless sky, and the temperature, even at night, never sank to the dew-point. Throughout the winters, if the temperature reached that point, the elements were so boisterous that no dew could settle upon the herbage, and the winds carried the aqueous vapour away to other lands. In the absence of dew and rain, vegetation, excepting only that near rivers or fringing streams fed from the deepest springs, was scorched and blasted. The mortality, therefore, amongst animals was frightful, and men suffered incredible things. The agony of distress had now risen to such a pitch that throughout the land there was one earnest, plaintive cry for life.

**I. SOME CRIED FOR LIFE TO NATURE.** 1. *Such was the case with Ahab.* (1) He had worshipped Baal, the fire of nature. But Baal was now punishing his votaries. Such is the manner in which the "god of this world" repays his dupes. (2) Yet did not Ahab repent of his folly. For, instead of seeking the living God, who was proving Himself the superior of Baal, he divides the land between himself and the governor of his house, to search for herbage. (3) Note also the heartlessness of the idolater. He is more concerned for his *stud* than for his *people*. "Peradventure we may find grass to save the *horses* and *mules* alive, that we lose not all the *beasts.*" 2. *He was a specimen of a class* (1) His queen was of the same way of thinking. She had been brought up to worship Baal. She had a masculine temper and swayed the mind of her husband. (2) The courtiers and the majority of the nation, who thought more of court fashion than of the holy service of Jehovah, bowed the knee to Baal.

**II. OTHERS CRIED FOR LIFE TO GOD.** 1. *Of this number was Elijah.* (1) He recognized God as above nature, when he announced that there would be a departure from the ordinary course of nature in the withholding of dew and rain for successive years. Still he recognizes this when he shows himself to Ahab, believing that God would now give rain (ch. xvii. 1; xviii. 1, 2). (2) He recognized God as above nature before these assurances, for he received them in answer to faithful prayer (see James v. 17, 18). This is not mentioned in the history, but implied in his character as a man of God. Note: A man of God is a man of prayer. 2. *Obadiah also was of this number.* (1) He "feared the Lord greatly." This arose from the strength of his faith. We cannot fear that in which we do not believe. (2) His faith was fruitful in good works. He screened one hundred of the Lord's prophets from the violence of Jezebel, and sustained them. "Bread and water," like "daily bread" in the Lord's prayer, is an expression for things needful for the body. And in thus sheltering and nourishing the servants of God, Obadiah hazarded not only the loss of his situation, but also of his head. (3) One who feared the Lord greatly after this fashion would pray to Him. *Piety* would move him to it. *Patriotism* also would move him at this juncture. 3. *There were many more who cried to God.* (1) There were the "prophets of the Lord" preserved by Obadiah, and doubtless others also who escaped the vigilance of Jezebel. These would cry to God for life. (2) And if there were so many prophets, or sons of the prophets, there would be a considerable number of devout persons in Israel notwithstanding the abounding apostasy (see ch. xix. 18). There is a great deal of goodness where men little expect to find it.

God is the source of life, not only to the body, but also to the soul. Let us seek to Him for life.—J. A. M.

**Vers. 7—16.—The Servant of the Lord.** Such is the meaning of Obadiah's name; and so truly descriptive of his character is it that we may take him as a typical servant of God.

**I. HE FEARED THE LORD FROM HIS YOUTH.** 1. *Piety is not natural.* (1) On the contrary, we inherit a depraved heart (Gen. v. 8; Psa. li. 5; Rom. v. 12; Eph.

ii. 3). (2) And this depravity is complete (Gen. vi. 5; Isa. i. 5, 6; Rom. iii. 9—19). (3) Life is only tolerable through the meliorating influences of the "gospel of the grace of God." To these must be attributed whatever seems good in unconverted men (Rom. i. 28—32). 2. *Grace is free.* (1) All are *directly* the subjects of its illuminations, restraints, and encouragements (John i. 9; 1 Cor. xii. 7). (2) Some are *indirectly* specially favoured. Being surrounded by Christian influences. Being children of godly parents. (3) These opportunities, if duly improved, will infallibly lead to salvation (Titus ii. 11—14). 3. *Those who fear God from their youth have great advantages.* (1) They have not given evil habits time to consolidate into rigidity. Time is necessary to this, for habits are strengthened by repetition. The hard crystallization of bad habits renders the conversion of old sinners very difficult. Therefore, how few are such conversions, comparatively! (2) They have a splendid opportunity of founding a strong character of godness. When the habit of resisting temptation is formed, it becomes more and more natural and easy to resist. Hence, like Obadiah, who "feared the Lord from his youth," they will come to fear Him "greatly."

II. HE FEARED THE LORD GREATLY. See the manifestation of this in his—1. *Respect for the ambassador of God.* (1) He "knew Elijah." Probably he had been present when the prophet warned the king that his fire-god would be made to punish his votaries in the absence of dew and rain (ch. xvii. 1). The godly, having sympathy with the ministers of God, are quick to recognize them. (2) He "fell on his face before him." This was the form of a most respectful salutation. He honoured in him that God whose ambassador he was. Obadiah feared the Lord too greatly to give to any creature the homage due to God alone. (3) He addressed him reverently, "My lord Elijah." And he spoke of himself as "thy servant." This was proper on his part; but we note how Elijah transferred the style to Ahab—"Go tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here." 2. *Kindness to the servants of God.* (1) Through the sin of Jeroboam the priests and Levites went into Judah (see 2 Chron. xi. 13, 14). To supply their lack in Ephraim, prophets' colleges were established. The students in these colleges were called "sons of the prophets" (see 2 Kings ii. 8, 5, 7). (2) These, together with their masters, or "fathers," were probably the objects of Jezebel's resentment when Elijah could not be found. They are called "prophets of the Lord" (ver. 13; compare ch. xxii. 35, 38, 41). (3) At the time of that persecution Obadiah sheltered and fed one hundred of these. This he did at the hazard of his life. Because he feared the Lord greatly, he feared not the wrath of the king (compare Heb. xi. 23, 27). 3. *Faith in the power of God.* (1) He believed that Jehovah might raise a wind that could carry Elijah away from the power of Ahab. He doubtless knew that Enoch had been translated into the heavens, and may have known of examples of translations from one locality to another, not recorded in the earlier Scriptures (compare 2 Kings ii. 11—16; Ezek. iii. 14; Acts viii. 39). (2) A being who could do such wonders, and whose power was now terribly manifest in the drought, was greatly to be feared (see Matt. x. 28; Luke xii. 5). (3) But while God is of all enemies the most formidable, He is an Almighty Friend.

III. HE FAITHFULLY SERVED HIS KING. 1. *God-fearing men make good citizens.* (1) Wicked as Ahab was, he preferred Obadiah to the courtiers of Jezebel in the high office of chamberlain. (2) This is not a solitary case. Joseph over the house of Pharaoh. Daniel in the house of the kings of Babylon. Christians were in the household even of Nero. (3) The qualities of a servant of the Lord—truth, honour, diligence—are those sought after for places of trust. "Godliness is profitable unto all things" (1 Tim. iv. 8; Isa. lviii. 14). 2. *God preserves them in their faithfulness.* (1) Service in a licentious court Obadiah would not have chosen. But he is in it and maintains his integrity. They that fear the Lord need not go out of the world. (2) They have a testimony for God. (3) They have opportunities of serving the servants of the Lord.

Let us not murmur at our providential lot. God can change it if He see fit. If He does not change it, then He has a purpose in it which we should endeavour to fulfil.—J. A. M.

Vers. 17, 18.—*The Troubler.* Elijah, who during the terrible drought was concealed, now, at the word of the Lord, came forth to show himself to Ahab, as God was about to give rain. What a meeting! One of the worst of kings with one of the noblest of prophets. What confrontings will there be in the great day of judgment! Here each charges the other with being the troubler of Israel. Observe, then—

I. THAT THE WICKED SEEK TO MALIGN THE GOOD. 1. *Ahab accused Elijah.* (1) He assumed that all the horrors of the famine were the work of the prophet, and therefore sought to slay him. How many precious lives, in all ages, have been sacrificed to the theories of tyrants. (2) This persecutor was terribly in earnest. He sought the prophet in Israel. Then in neighbouring kingdoms. He even took an oath of the kingdoms that they did not shelter him. It were well for the world if men were as earnest in good as they are in evil. (3) But God can hide His servants from the fury of their adversaries. In the solitudes of Cherith. In the stir of Zarephath. (4) Now Ahab accuses the prophet to his face. But see how his courage cools in the presence of the man of God. He frames his accusation mildly in the form of a question, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" Conscience makes tyrants tremble. 2. *He found a pretext.* (1) Theorists can easily find pretexts for tyranny. Ahab seized upon Elijah's words (ch. xvii. 1), and drew his own inference. (2) As these words were verified to the letter, the tyrant saw, or affected to see, his theory confirmed. This kind of reasoning is very common. (3) Why did he not accuse God? Elijah acted as the servant of God. He feared to do this in form, though he did it in fact (see Prov. xiv. 81; Matt. x. 40—42; xxv. 40, &c.; Acts v. 39; ix. 1—15; Heb. vi. 10). 3. *He had a motive.* (1) Why did not Ahab accuse himself? His conscience no doubt did this for him. (2) But he could not afford publicly to bear the odium of having brought the miseries of the famine upon his people. (3) Therefore he shifts the responsibility on to the shoulders of the prophet. How essentially does the spirit of the lie enter into all sin!

II. TRUTH COMES HOME IN DUE TIME. 1. *Goodness will be vindicated.* (1) It may suffer long under the reproaches of liars. This is permitted because God is long-suffering. He makes the trial a blessing to "those who are exercised thereby." (2) But God is jealous for His servants. Therefore the triumphing of the wicked is but for a season. If the vindication takes not place in this world it certainly will in the next. (3) Elijah had his opportunity. He repudiated the imputation of Ahab. Good men are true patriots. The trial on Carmel settled the question. 2. *Sin will be shamed.* (1) Let it only be brought home, and it will cover the sinner with confusion. (2) "Thou and thy father's house" have troubled Israel "in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord." Complicity in the sin of Jeroboam is specified here. This sin was a breach of the first and second commandments of the decalogue. It was also a forsaking of the Levitical law, which prescribed ceremonies that were but parodied in Ephraim. This offence was carried to its height in the statutes of the house of Ahab which were those of Omri (see Micah vi. 16). (3) "And thou hast followed Baalim." This was a sin introduced by Ahab himself, no doubt prompted by Jezebel. The way of error is from bad to worse.

Sin is the troubler of humanity. It invaded the tranquillity of Eden and broke it up. It brought down judgments of God upon individuals and communities. Upon Cain. Upon the antediluvians. Upon the cities of the plain. Upon Israel. It has provoked wars, in whose wake came pestilences and famines. It troubles the abyss of hell.—J. A. M.

Vers. 19—21.—*Christ or Belial!* Here is a curious phenomenon. A monarch, who had searched all kingdoms for a prophet that he might reek anger upon his life, now sought out and confronted by that prophet, and submitting to his orders to call an assembly of the nation! How God can turn about the hearts of princes! Conspicuous in this vast concourse are the idolatrous priests with gnashing teeth. Elijah stands alone undaunted, a witness for Jehovah, and, appealing

to the multitude, he accuses them of unworthy hesitation between irreconcilable services.

**I. WHY HESITATE IN SEEKING HAPPINESS?** 1. *No joys can compare with the heavenly.* (1) There are, indeed, sad professors of the true religion. (a) Some are constitutionally melancholy. This is a disease which certainly is not aggravated by the sense of the favour of God. (b) Some have false views of religion. They caricature it into a sepulchral thing. They do it injustice. (c) But the case most common is that sad professors do not experience what they profess. They halt between Jehovah and Baal—between Christ and Belial. In fashion. In friendships. In pursuits. So conscience stings them sore. (2) When religion is true there is the best reason for joy. (a) It brings emancipation from the slavery of sin. (b) Deliverance from the tyranny of Satan. (c) Adoption into the family of God. (d) Heirship to everlasting life. The true heir has the title-deeds of his inheritance in his heart (Eph. i. 13, 14; 2 Cor. v. 4, 5). Thus does he antedate the very bliss of heaven (Luke xvii. 21; Eph. i. 3). 2. *If sinners be not sad, the more shame.* (1) For sin degrades the man below the brute. As far below as the powers of a man are superior. The degradation of a devil would be impossible to a brute. If a man can be transformed into a compound of swine and devil and not be sad, this is the climax of depravity. (2) Sin is perfidy to infinite love. Such ingratitude can only be reconciled with the absence of sadness upon the ground of the most shameful perversity. (3) The sinner is befooled by Satan. In his reflective moods he must loathe himself; but Satan whirls him away from his reflections into some mad dance, and drowns the voice of his conscience in some boisterous laugh. So the fool still befooled exults in his folly. O shame!

**II. WHY HESITATE IN SEEKING SALVATION?** 1. *Life is the determining period.* (1) It is the seed-time for the reaping in eternity. The yield then will be according to the sowing now. In quality: "After its kind." Also in quantity. (2) Therefore the young have a splendid opportunity. They have time in their favour. "How long shall ye?" 2. *Procrastination is precarious work.* (1) "How long (חַדְשׁ) hop ye?"—this word denotes the passing over from one place to another—"between two opinions." It is used scornfully of the awkward leaping of the priests of Baal, in ver. 26. As the squirrel hopping from branch to branch may miss its footing and fall, so may the halting sinner hop into ruin. (2) Consider the uncertainty of life. Read the gravestones. How enormous is the mortality amongst the young! Unroof hell! (3) Consider the solemnities of eternity. The freshness and vividness of memory in the disembodied state. What a preparation for the day of judgment!

**III. FOR INDECISION THERE IS NO DEFENCE.** "The people answered him not a word." But there are motives to evil when there are no good reasons. Such are—1. *Conjugal influence.* (1) Ahab's heart was estranged from God by the influence of Jezebel. His predecessors suffered from the same cause. Notably so Solomon. (2) Beware of contracting ungodly matrimonial alliances. Remember the famine in Samaria. The same God still "ruleth in the kingdom of men." 2. *The smile of favour.* (1) Idolatry was favoured at court. The priests of Ashere feasted "at Jezebel's table." Mean-spirited Israelites sought court favour at the expense of the favour of God. (3) True worshippers were persecuted. Elijah had to hide himself at Cherith and Zarephath. The sons of the prophets had to hide in the caves of Obadiah. To keep a whole skin many hesitated. Will you encounter the frown of God to escape the sneer of an old companion? 3. *The force of example.* (1) Elijah stood alone as the prophet of the Lord. He had with him a handful of laymen. Obadiah was conspicuous amongst them. If the prophets fed by Obadiah had issued from their caves, they did not stand forth on Carmel in their official character. (2) The pronounced idolaters were a larger company. There were the prophets of Baal four hundred, and the prophets of Ashere four hundred and fifty, with a proportionate following. (3) Still "the people" were vacillators. These were the majority. The power and influence of numbers were with the moderate people who would fain keep good terms with God and the devil. The

halters are still the majority. How few amongst the multitude of the wicked have resolved in heart and soul that they will go to the devil! It is time you made up your mind one way or the other. How long halt ye?—J. A. M.

Vers. 22—24.—*The Test of Fire.* Elijah had appealed to the people on their inconsistency in hesitating between services so widely different and so utterly irreconcilable as those of Jehovah and Baal. He got no response. "The people answered him not a word." Then he proposed the test of fire to determine which was worthy. The conclusiveness of such an appeal could not be challenged; so the people with one voice answered, "It is well spoken."

I. THE TEST WAS UNEXCEPTIONABLE. 1. *For Baal was the fire-god.* (1) His name designates him as the *lord or ruler*. It comes from the verb (בעל) to own or possess, to be master of. But the sun, from its splendour and central position, accounted the visible lord in the material heavens, was their Baal. Sanchoniathon says the Phœnicians thought the sun to be the only lord of heaven, calling him *Beelsamen*, which in their language is *lord of heaven*. In "Beelsamen" we at once recognize the Hebrew בעל שמים. (2) Baal was the *fire* or body of the sun, rather than its *light*. So in 2 Kings xxiii. 5 we find *Baal* (בעל) distinguished from (שמש) the *solar light*. (See Parkhurst under שמש.) Parkhurst points out that the Runic or Islandic BAAL signifies *fire*, the Saxon BÆL, and BÆL-FYR, a *burning pile, a pyre, a bonfire*. Probably our *bonfire* is simply a corruption of *Bael-fyr*. (3) The image of this idol was a *bull*. This animal was by the ancients regarded as the emblem of *fire*. The similitude seems to have been in its red colour, in the curled hair upon its forehead giving the idea of flame, in the horns budding from its head suggesting the darting of rays of light from the sun. In Tobit (i. 5) we read of "the heifer called Baal." We have the name of this god still preserved in our English *bull*. 2. *The controversy was whether Baal was independent of Jehovah.* (1) His worshippers claimed this for him. (2) Elijah maintained the opposite. And with cogent reason, for during three years and six months Jehovah made Baal punish his votaries. (3) Now the prophet proposes the further test of a sudden miracle. If Baal be god, if he be independent of Jehovah, let him come down and consume the sacrifice offered to him. If he cannot, then why should he be worshipped? If Jehovah can send fire on his sacrifice, then is He manifestly Lord of Baal, and should be so acknowledged. (4) That suitable acknowledgment of God which such a miracle demands, implies—(a) Recognition of His almighty providence and lordship over the material and moral universe. (b) The engagement of all our powers in His worship and service.

II. SO WAS THE MANNER OF THE TEST. 1. *The prophets of Baal had precedence.* (1) Not because Baal was entitled to it, for that would be a concession of the argument, but because they were many. Elijah stood alone the prophet of the Lord, while the idolatrous prophets were 850 men. (2) They were to provide the sacrifices. They were wealthy. Elijah was poor. They could not object to the test when the sacrifices were of their own selection. 2. *The experiment was to be fair.* (1) Not only might the priests of Baal choose their bullock, cut it in pieces after their approved method, lay it on the wood of the altar; but they must "put no fire under." Else where would be the proof of the ability of Baal? Under some heathen altars holes were dug in which fire was concealed, which communicating with the altar set the wood on fire to make the simple people believe that the sacrifice was consumed by miraculous fire. This Elijah would not permit. (2) Ordinarily the sacrifices offered to Baal were offered in fire; and sometimes human sacrifices were so offered. "They built the high places of Baal to burn their sons with fire, for burnt offerings" (Jer. xix. 5). The Phœnician Baal seems to have been identical with the Ammonite Molech. "They built the high places of Baal which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire to Molech" (Jer. xxxii. 35). (3) Ashtaroth also were virtually the same as "Baalim;" under which plural term are included diversified Baals, as Baal Peor, &c.; and so in ver. 25 the prophets of Baal are

said to have (אלהים) "gods," in the plural. (4) These had their various images, in some of which the man and bull came into union. The Assyrian man-bull so conspicuous in the Nineveh marbles, is probably one of these.

Let us bless God for our Christianity. It is pure light. Compared with its other systems are dark with ignorance, superstition, and error. It is supreme benevolence. Happy is its contrast to the characteristic cruelties of idolatry.—J. A. M.

Vers. 25—29.—*The Failure.* When the appeal of Elijah to the people had gained their applause, he had the prophets of Baal at his command. The test he had proposed was so fair that they could not reasonably object to it, and the voice of the people rendered it impossible for them to evade the trial. The prophet of the Lord accordingly pressed the matter home upon his adversaries in the words of the text. They were obliged to proceed to the trial which ended in their discomfiture.

I. THEIR PRAYER WAS EARNEST. 1. *They began early.* (1) Everything seems to have been in readiness soon after daybreak; so that almost as soon as their Apollo looked out of the eyelids of the morning the cry arose, "O Baal, hear us!" (2) Worshipers of Jehovah should not be less zealous. The early morning was chosen by His devoted servants (see Gen. xix. 27; xxii. 3; Exod. xxiv. 4; Job i. 5; Psa. v. 3; lix. 16; lxxxviii. 13; Mark i. 35). Such exercises will be a noble preparation for the day. 2. *They persisted.* (1) They continued their supplications until noon. As the sun rolled upwards in the heavens their hopes rose. As it neared the zenith they felt it was now or never, and 850 voices in full chorus cried, "O Baal, hear us!" (2) Even when the noon point was turned and their god was sinking in the west, still they urged their suit, adding to their entreaties frantic gestures and mingling their own blood with their sacrifice. (3) Idolatry is essentially cruel, and in this contrasts strongly with the service of Jehovah (see Levit. xix. 28; Deut. xiv. 1). The cruel penances of Rome are kindred to those of Baal's servants. "The devil is a murderer." Of bodies. Of souls. (4) Perseverance should mark the servants of God. Jacob wrestled all night with the angel at Penuel, and at daybreak prevailed. The parable of the importunate widow was given to impress this lesson. We should ask *until* we receive. (5) How blessedly has persistence been rewarded! Ministers have seen this; parents; Sunday-school teachers; tract distributors.

II. BUT IT WAS MISDIRECTED. 1. *Their god was contemptible.* (1) He was destitute of the attributes they ascribed to him. The sun, though a glorious body, is but matter. It has no more intelligence than a flint. How the intellects as well as the eyes of men are dazzled with splendour! (2) How different is the true God! He is a Spirit—invisible—omniscient—omnipresent—omnipotent—holy—just—good. He claims, and should receive, the homage of all our faculties. 2. *Their worship, therefore, was ridiculous.* (1) So Elijah thought when he stung them with mockery. "He is a god!" (כִּי אֱלֹהִים הוּא) he is a supreme god! Here is a fine stroke of irony. This weapon of rhetoric was used by our Lord—"Art thou a master in Israel and knowest not these things?" (2) "He is *talking*." He is so stunned with the thunder of his own voice and with the voices of his associates in the pantheon that he cannot hear the ordinary voices of mortals. Therefore "cry aloud." Or "he is *meditating*" (margin)—in a brown study, in a reverie—and must be roused. (3) "Or he is pursuing," or "hath a pursuit." He is so engaged with some other matter that he cannot hear your feeble voice. What sort of god is yours? (4) "Or he is in a journey"—so far away that your prayer will be useless unless you can cry aloud. (5) "Or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awaked." You must first raise a clamour about his ears to arouse him, or you pray in vain. How doubtful must be the success of any worship paid to such a god! 3. *Ridicule was righteously applied.* (1) It should never be substituted for reason, as too often it is. It is a favourite weapon with sceptics who are at a loss for an argument. (2) But where reason is wasted upon stupidity then it is fitting. Elijah was silent from sunrise till noon, when the experiment had a fair trial and failed. Then he rallied the idolaters with a ridicule that was

full of argument. (3) When evening set in they gave up the contest in despair. There is an evening coming in which all contests with Jehovah shall so terminate.  
—J. A. M.

Vers. 30—35.—*The Preparation.* As the time of the evening sacrifice approached, Elijah left the priests of Baal prophesying in despair. Satan, if permitted, could have brought fire down (see Job i. 12, 16; Rev. xiii. 13, 14); but God restrained him. The people were now convinced that Baal was not able to hear his priests; so they drew round Elijah, and observed the order in which he proceeded with his preparation.

I. HE REPAIRED THE ALTAR OF THE LORD. 1. *Then there had been an altar of the Lord on Carmel.* (1) Some great man, as Abraham or Samuel, had built an altar there. Its relics remained a memorial of the piety of earlier times. Influence for good or evil is posthumous. (2) This mount was, in consequence, reputed as holy. Perhaps this determined Elijah in his choice. Holy places were formerly more important than they are under this spiritual dispensation (see Mal. i. 11; John iv. 20—24; 1 Tim. ii. 8). 2. *But this altar had been "broken down."* (1) Not only had it fallen into decay, but it had suffered from the hand of violence. Probably this was one of the sad evidences of the wicked zeal of Jezebel. It was significant of the apostasy of the times (see ch. xix. 14; Rom. xi. 2, 3). Idolatry was in favour at court; courtiers therefore favoured it; so did the multitude who followed the fashions. (2) Such influences still are potent. Idolatrous fashions in dress. In furniture. Even in religion. 3. *Elijah would not use the altar used by the priests of Baal.* (1) The service of Jehovah must be pure. It must not be contaminated by the remotest connection with idolatrous abominations. Let us search our hearts (see 2 Cor. vi. 15—18). (2) In repairing the disused altar of Jehovah, Elijah showed that his was no new religion, but that of the fathers of the nation. So he significantly rebuked the apostasy. 4. *Twelve stones were employed in the repairs.* (1) This was "according to the number of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name." This was done to show that, though *ten* of the tribes had separated from the house of David, still, in worship there should be no division (see Gen. xxxii. 23; Exod. xxiv. 4; Josh. iv. 5, 20). (2) "The twelve stones being for the twelve tribes were the mystical body of Him who was their sacrifice and altar both, or who offered His own body, and suffered in it, and who was promised to be accepted in the name (אִשְׂרָאֵל) *Israel*, i.e. (רַצוֹן) *pleasing to, right with, or upright before* (לַיהוָה) *the Lord*" (see Matt. iii. 17). *But* (3) It was also prophetic of the healing of all schisms in the mystical body of Christ in the happy time to come (see Ezek. xxxvii. 21, 22). (4) All this the prophet did "in the name of the Lord" (ver. 32). By His direction; therefore with notable significance. For His glory. And since God so expressly authorized such a deviation from the Levitical law, does it not indicate that that law had its principal value in its typical teaching, and that when the antitypes came it should pass away? (See Col. ii. 22; Heb. viii. 13.)

II. HE PREPARED THE SACRIFICE. 1. *"He put the wood in order."* (1) Why did he not dispense with the wood? The celestial fire certainly did not need it, for it fell upon the sacrifice before it touched the wood, and was so fervent that nothing could stand before it. Stones and dust could no more resist it than wood. Had the wood been intended for fuel, would the prophet have overflowed it with water? (2) The order was usual in sacrifices. It was observed for typical purposes. The holocaust was a type of Christ, our Sacrifice, who, when consumed in the holy fires of the Godhead on the altar of Calvary, was laid on the wood of the Cross. 2. *He poured water upon the sacrifice.* (1) He poured it in great quantity and with much deliberation, for in preparing the altar he dug a trench to receive the overflow (vers. 32—35). The water probably came from a deep well-spring in the mountain side rather than from the Kishon. The Mediterranean seems out of the question. Josephus states the well to have been the source (Ant. viii. 13). (2) It was conveyed in four barrels, and these were filled and emptied three times, thus making twelve. Here again we meet with the number of the tribes of Israel.

The order, viz., in sets of four three times repeated, was that of the stones in the high priest's breastplate, upon which were engraven the names of the tribes. (8) Could this sign be intended to show that a plentiful rain would shortly come upon all Israel? And further, that it should come through the repentance of the people for whose sin it had been withholden? That it should come through the return of the people from the altar of Baal to that of Jehovah? If so, then in this sign the gospel also is preached to us. We too must be saved from spiritual drought and death through repentance towards God and faith in Christ.—J. A. M.

Vers. 36—40.—*The Triumph.* While Elijah completed his preparations for offering up his sacrifice, the prophets of Baal, who had failed to vindicate their religion, were hoping that the servant of Jehovah likewise might fail. It was matter of history that Jehovah had answered by fire. (See Gen. iv. 5; Levit. ix. 24; Judg. vi. 21; 1 Chron. xxi. 26.) About a century before this that fire came from heaven which was still kept burning upon the altar at Jerusalem (2 Chron. vii. 1). But Carmel is not Jerusalem; and Jehovah has not promised to record His name here. And, should Elijah fail, then would they fall upon him and destroy him. Yet, on the other hand, he is an extraordinary servant of Jehovah; his word concerning the rain and dew has come true; so may his confidence respecting this answer of fire be honoured. Such thoughts flashed through their minds; but the moment has arrived; the preparations are complete. Now observe—

I. THE PRAYER. 1. *It is offered at the time of the evening sacrifice.* (1) The stated evening sacrifice is now on the temple altar. Elijah holds communion with that altar. He, too, though on Carmel, is a true worshipper of the God of David. There are differences in religious worship sanctioned by God which must not be accounted schism. Protestant Nonconformists are not necessarily schismatics. (2) It is the "hour of prayer." Prayer should ascend with the sacrifice; Christ should be in all our supplications. The hour of prayer was the "ninth hour" (Acts iii. 1), that hour in which Jesus "cried with a loud voice, and yielded up his spirit" (Matt. xxvii. 50). So in submission must we yield up our spirits with his in prayer to God. 2. *It pleads for the honour of God.* (1) It reminds Him of His covenant. "Jehovah Elohim of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel." With these patriarchs He had established His covenant. They knew nothing of Baal's covenants. (2) "Let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel." Let those who will not acknowledge Thee be confounded. (See Josh. ii. 11.) Let those who repent be reconciled to Thy favour. (3) "Let it be known this day in Israel that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word." Else to have so acted would have been the height of presumption. But with the authority of God mistrust would have been presumption. We are bound to believe the promises of God. 3. *It sues for mercy to the penitent.* (1) "Hear me, O Jehovah, hear me, that this people may know that thou art Jehovah Elohim;" that Thou art the self-existent, covenant-keeping God. (2) "And that thou hast turned their heart back again." The blessings of the covenant are conditioned upon faith. Without repentance there is no true faith. (3) How few are the words of this prayer! No vain repetitions. How wide the contrast with the clamour of Baal's priests!

II. THE RESPONSE. 1. *Then the fire of the Lord fell.* (1) There was no mistake about it. It was indeed the "fire of Jehovah"—miraculous fire; for it worked downwards, contrary to the ordinary operation of fire, which works upwards. The sacrifice was soon consumed. Then the wood. The water was licked up. The very stones and dust were vitrified and melted. (2) The destruction of the altar pointed to the pleasure of God that patriarchal high places should be removed, and that all Israel should henceforth worship at the Levitical altar of the temple at Jerusalem. This is the last instance on record in which God accepted a sacrifice offered on a patriarchal altar. (3) But where now is Baal? Is not that celestial fire which was worshipped as a god completely in the hands of Jehovah? 2. *The demonstration was irresistible.* (1) "When all the people saw it they fell upon their faces." Here was an act of reverence towards God. It was the sign also of

their renunciation of Baal. (2) This confession in symbol was accompanied by a corresponding confession in words. "And they said, Jehovah, he is the Elohim; Jehovah, he is the Elohim." Words are signs of a fuller expression. (3) But words must be followed up by deeds. The prophets of Baal have now to be sacrificed. The law required this. (See Deut. xiii. 1—11.) They were accordingly slaughtered by the brook Kishon. Thus was returned upon their heads the slaughter of the prophets of the Lord. (See vers. 4, 13.) (4) The retribution was complete. Some are of opinion, because the "prophets of Baal" only are mentioned, that the 400 prophets of Ashere were absent and escaped. But this does not follow, for the prophets of Ashere might be included under the designation "prophets of Baal," as Saul's sons are included in his name. (See 1 Sam. xxxi. 8—13; 2 Sam. xxi. 13.) The prophets of Ashere certainly were present. (See vers. 19, 20; also ch. xix. 1.) Let us confess the Lord. In *signs*: observing His sacraments and ordinances of worship public and private. In *words*: confessing Him before men upon all fitting occasions. In *deeds*: bringing forth the fruits of good living, and sacrificing the idolatries that would lead us astray.—J. A. M.

Vers. 41—46. *The Sound of Rain.* The fire has fallen upon the sacrifice of Elijah. The people are convinced, renounce Baal, confess Jehovah supreme, and evince their sincerity by slaying the idolatrous priests. Now there is "a sound of abundance of rain."

I. THIS WAS THE SOUND OF SALVATION. 1. *Rain was salvation to the nation.* (1) Three years and six months of drought brought it to the point of extinction. The heavens were brazen; the earth was scorched. The people were blackened with excessive heat, and worn with want. Their numbers were thinned by death; survivors moved like skeletons on the edges of their graves. (2) To such the sound of rain is tidings of life. Let it come, and soon, in such a climate as Palestine, vegetation will burst into verdure. There will be "seed for the sower and bread for the eater." 2. *It was a sign of spiritual blessings.* (1) The kingdom of nature was constituted to furnish apt similes of the kingdom of grace. The blooming of the desert after rain is a familiar figure of spiritual revival. (See Isa. xxxv. ; lv. 10—13.) (2) The descent of rain is a figure of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the receptive soul (Isa. xxxii. 15). Water, a purifier, refresher, vitalizer, fittingly sets forth His energies; and as these are *active*, so in baptism the element should come upon the person as rain upon the passive earth. (See Acts i. 3, 4, 17, 32; x. 44—48.) 3. *Revivals have their premonitions.* (1) The sound comes before the rain. It is heard in the branches of trees, and in the waves of seas and lakes. So is a coming revival discerned in the Church by emotion under the word, interest in religious services public and private, and increased evangelistic activity. (2) This is first heard by the spiritual. Elijah was the first to hear the sound of the coming rain. It begins in the higher heavens before it reaches the earth. Those who are much in prayer have the sensitive ear to hear "afar off." (Compare 2 Peter i. 9.)

II. THE CONDITIONS HAD BEEN FULFILLED. 1. *Sin was repented.* (1) The people saw the impotence of Baal. He could not answer for himself. They were now convinced of their folly in submitting to such a delusion. So it must be with every sinner whose eyes are opened. (2) They destroyed the authors of their delusion. They slew the prophets of Baal. Not one escaped. So in the most complete manner must our evil lusts be slain. No power must be left to them to lure us from the truth again. 2. *Christ was accepted.* (1) Elijah must show himself to Ahab as a condition of rain (ver. 1). Ahab so far accepted him as to submit to his directions. But Elijah was a type of Christ, without whose revelation of Himself to us we can have no spiritual grace. (See ch. xvii. 1.) (2) Elijah was a type of Christ in his *person*. His name (אֱלֹהִים and אֱלֹהֵי) is "My God Jehovah," or, "Whose God is he," expresses the union of God and man in Christ. (3) He was a type of Christ also in his *office*. All prophets were types of the One Great Prophet. Elijah, who was remarkable amongst the number, eminently so. (4) He, too, united with his office of *prophet* the functions of the *priest*. He

offered up the sacrifice on Carmel. In this sacrifice the people accepted Jehovah as their covenant God. So must we likewise accept God in Christ. In token of their communion with Jehovah they appear to have feasted on the sacrifices. With the burnt offering there were doubtless peace offerings, for these were usual accompaniments, upon which the worshippers feasted. This was the *eating and drinking* to which Elijah moved Ahab (ver. 42). (5) Elijah also was a type of Christ in his character of *Intercessor*. While Ahab and his people were partaking of the peace-offerings, "Elijah went up to the top of Carmel, and cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees." He bowed reverently in prayer with his head towards the ground—an attitude still observed in the East. So Christ, in the heights, makes intercession for us. 8. *The blessing came.* (1) While Elijah interceded he sent his servant to look for the signs of the coming blessing. In this parable, in which the prophet is still the type of Christ, his servant stands for the *Church*, whose duty it is to look for the fruits of the Redeemer's pleadings. Are we thus looking? (2) The servant went, and went again and again before he witnessed any sign, in which the lesson to us is that while Christ pleads we must never be discouraged, but "hope to the end." (3) At the *seventh* time the promise appeared in a cloud as of a man's hand rising out of the sea, which was to be followed by others in rapid succession until the heavens were "black with clouds and wind," and the thirsty earth was visited with copious showers of refreshing rain. This was prophetic of that *seventh* time, or "fulness of time," when the hand of God shall act *in the sea*, or among all nations, and raise that "plentiful shower" which shall *refresh His weary inheritance* (Psa. lxxviii. 9). Meanwhile Elijah sent his servant to Ahab, saying, "Harness the horses, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not." (4) Now the parable is changed. Ahab, the king of Israel, after the destruction of the prophets of Baal, riding as in triumph, and attended by the blessings of heaven, is the type of Christ. So Elijah runs before him in the spirit and power of God. The Baptist accordingly came "in the spirit and power of Elias," as the forerunner of Christ, in His first advent, to establish His *spiritual* kingdom. But Elias, *in person*, will be His harbinger when He comes again, in the fulness of His blessing, to establish a *visible* and everlasting kingdom (Mal. iv. 5).—J. A. M.

**Vers. 7—16.—Obadiah.** It is a proof of the extremity of distress to which the land had been reduced by famine that the king himself with one of his highest officers, the governor of his household, should have gone forth on this expedition in search of water and pasturage. The reverence the person of Elijah inspired is seen in the behaviour of Obadiah towards him when they met. The brief notice we have of this man is highly instructive.

**I. HIS FIDELITY.** His name, Obadiah, "servant of Jehovah," is suggestive of the strength of his religious character. And it was probably no vain boast that he had always sustained it (ver. 12). It may seem strange that so good a man should have been willing to remain in the service of such a king, and of a state so demoralized and disorganized by the spirit of idolatry. But note—1. *Religious fidelity wins respect even from those whose own life is most at variance with it.* Ahab must have known that his servant remained true to the God of his fathers, and his being continued in such a post was a testimony to his moral and practical worth. Like Joseph in the court of Pharaoh, and Daniel in Babylon, "the Spirit of God was in him," and the king could find none more worthy of his trust. The fear of God is after all one of the highest qualifications for the secular businesses and responsibilities of life, and "when a man's ways please the Lord he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Prov. xvi. 7). 2. *It is often a noble thing to stand at the post of duty, however uncongenial the moral atmosphere may be.* We have no reason to believe that Obadiah retained his position by any kind of moral laxity. He did not violate his conscience in maintaining his secular allegiance. Naaman the Syrian, in the zeal of his new devotion to the God of Israel, asked a dispensation of forgiveness if he should bow with his master in the house of Rimmon (2 Kings v. 18), but we have no evidence even of such a com-

promise as this in the case of Obadiah. There are times when religious principle itself dictates that men should refuse to relinquish positions of peculiar danger and difficulty; but when fidelity to an earthly master is absolutely incompatible with fidelity to God, an upright spirit will not long hesitate. 3. *God may have some great purpose for His servant in such a case to fulfil.* Obadiah's mission may have been to mitigate as far as possible the horrors of the famine, to save as he did the lives of the sons of the prophets (ver. 13); to exert, perhaps, some kind of restraining influence over the conduct of the king. At all events the presence of such a man in one of the high places of the land would be a standing proof that God had not utterly abandoned His people. Every situation in life has its grand opportunities; when there is no possible way of turning it to good account we may well forsake it.

II. HIS FEAR. "What have I sinned?" &c. Faithful as Obadiah was, there was an element of timidity in his nature. He shrank from the risk the commission of the prophet imposed on him. His timidity has two aspects. 1. *So far as it meant distrust of Ahab it was natural.* He knew only too well his capricious and despotic temper, and could not rely either on his justice or his clemency. "The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel" (Prov. xii. 10). "Let me not fall into the hands of man," &c. (2 Sam. xxiv. 14). 2. *So far as it meant distrust of Elijah or of the protective providence of God it was wrong.* Could he think that the prophet would abuse his confidence, or that God would be unmindful of him, and after allowing him, for no fault of his own, to be involved in danger, would leave him to his fate? This shows weakness, and was unworthy of the character he bore. The best of men have their seasons of weakness, and fall sometimes under the pressure of unwonted circumstances to maintain the very virtues for which they are most distinguished. The meek-spirited Moses is impetuous; the saintly David falls a prey to grovelling passion; the brave Peter proves a coward.

III. THE TRIUMPH OF HIS FIDELITY OVER HIS FEAR. The solemn asseveration of Elijah (ver. 15) rouses the braver spirit in him, and he responds to the call and goes to meet Ahab. When there is true nobility of character in a man, a word, a flash of light upon the realities of the situation, will often be enough to move him to put forth all his strength and shake off the spell of meaner feeling that may for a while have fallen upon him.—W.

Ver. 21.—*A solemn alternative.* It must have been by special Divine direction that Elijah was moved thus to put the relative claims of God and of Baal to a public test. The command to gather the priests and people together on Carmel was one that Ahab, defiant as he was, dared not resist. We may suppose these words to have been uttered just before the crisis of the tragedy, when the people were waiting in breathless silence and suspense upon the issue. Nothing is more impressive than a pause like this before some expected catastrophe. The prophet improves it by making one brief pointed appeal to the judgment and conscience of the people. "How long?" &c. His voice of stern, yet sorrowful, rebuke must have struck deep into many hearts; but "they answered him not a word." "Halting between two opinions" was probably a true description of the mental condition of the great mass of the people. Some, no doubt, were blind devotees of the reigning idolatry; others consented to its rites, and practised them through fear of the penalty of resistance, or in hope of some form of secular reward. But the greater part of them were just in this state of moral hesitancy, leaning sometimes to one side and sometimes to the other, swayed by the influences that happened to be strongest upon them at the time. It was the fatal defect of their national character, the sad heritage of earlier days—the "forty years' provocation in the wilderness." What have we here but a true picture of religious indecision? Learn from the prophet's remonstrance—

I. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF EVERY MAN AS REGARDS HIS OWN RELIGIOUS OPINIONS. That the people are rebuked for "halting between two" implies their power and obligation to decide. "Opinions," mental judgments, convictions (marg. "thoughts"), these are the root from which the fruits of all religious feeling and action grow. Here

lies the secret guiding and formative power of a man's life. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." It is thought that inspires affection, moulds character, guides the will, determines conduct, rules the man. We cannot well exaggerate the importance of the relation thought bears to the highest interests of our being. But how are these "thoughts" of ours determined? Every man's religious ideas and beliefs, say some, are determined for him by a thousand influences over which he has no control—by early education, by the books that fall in his way, by human associations, native temperament, conformation of brain, &c. There is a measure of truth in this that we dare not ignore. These things have a great deal to do with the matter, and the fact should modify our judgment of the mental position of others in relation to religious truth, and teach us to watch carefully the bearing on ourselves of such influences. Many of us owe our Christian beliefs far more than we imagine to the force of favouring circumstances. We may well thank God that it is so; for as we mourn to think how many things there are that tend to distort the truth and hide it from man's eyes, so we rejoice that there should be so many channels through which the Light of Life may find its way into the soul. But however this may be, God holds every one of us under obligation to think for himself, judge for himself, believe for himself; to use with uprightness of spirit all the means within his reach for the formation of right opinions, to welcome and follow the light that shines from heaven upon his way.

II. THE DUTY OF A PRACTICAL CARRYING OUT OF ONE'S OWN HONEST CONVICTIONS. "If the Lord be God, follow him." The startling "sign" that was about to be given them was intended to decide this grave alternative. "The God that answereth by fire, let him be God." It was great condescension in Jehovah to suffer His claims to be thus put in seeming competition with those of Baal. But the prophet would have the decision of the people to spring from real conviction, and that conviction to be based on sufficient proof. And then let it be a practical decision—final, conclusive, manifest. Let there be an end to all this miserable vacillation, this shameful subserviency to the leading of Ahab and Jezebel and the Baal priesthood, this dark dishonour done to the God of Israel by the multiplication all over the land of heathen groves and altars. All true religious thoughts and opinions have reference to a true life. They are hollow and worthless unless consummated in this. "Faith without works is dead being alone" (James ii. 17). A heavy condemnation rests on those who "profess that they know God, but in works deny him" (Titus i. 16). It is a fatal inconsistency to believe in a God and yet not "follow Him." Have you true religious ideas and convictions? Translate your thinking into life.

III. THE URGENCY OF THE NEED FOR THIS PRACTICAL DECISION. "How long?" &c. We may suppose that the prophet was not only impressed with the tardiness of that generation in declaring once for all for the service of Jehovah, but with the memory of the weary provocation of the past. When will Israel be true and steadfast in her allegiance to her God and King? It is in every respect unreasonable, unmanly, and infinitely perilous to allow the question of your religious position to remain unsettled.—W.

Ver. 21.—*Religious Indecision.* Describe the gathering of the people upon Mount Carmel: the suffering they had endured from the long-continued drought; the eager expectancy of the secret worshippers of Jehovah, and the reappearance of Elijah the prophet; the general readiness to obey the summons to witness a decisive contest, &c. *The descent into national idolatry had been gradual.* One step had made the next easy, and sometimes inevitable, till now the chosen nation was in the deepest degradation. Of this many of them were scarcely conscious. They had followed the example set by the court without remonstrance and without reflection. *The opportunity for consideration had come at last.* Elijah abruptly threw himself into the current of national life—like a gigantic rock in the stream, which cannot itself be stirred, but whose presence must make itself felt, and may divert the stream into another channel. *The test he proposed to the people was obviously fair; indeed, it appeared to give every advantage to the worshippers of Baal.* It was not

fire but rain that the thirsty land required; but had he said, "The God that answereth by rain, let him be God," Baal's priests might argue that it was not water but fire that their God could rule. Elijah would fight the idol on his own chosen ground. Show how often advantage seems to be given to God's adversaries, as if they were allowed to make out the best cause they could, yet all to no effect. The wisdom of the world was left to the Church's foes. The people were not asked to do what was irrational, but were to have evidence, and this evidence was to be adapted to their ensuous character. Religion appeals to a man as to a rational being. The sin with which Elijah charged the people on Carmel was *religious indecision*, which we now consider.

I. THE CONDITION OF INDECISION. 1. *It implies some enlightenment on religious subjects.* Many heathen exist even in a Christian land. Living under the shadow of our sanctuaries, they are profoundly ignorant of God, of His claims, and of His gospel. They are not halting "between two opinions," for they have no opinion about a religious life, but are decided in their godlessness. Such was not the condition of Israel, nor of their modern representatives. There is no want of intellectual knowledge of scriptural truth complained of here. 2. *It implies contradiction between theory and practice.* The Israelites would not have denied the Divine interpositions of the past, and many would have admitted that the temple at Jerusalem was originally the true place for worship, &c. Like some in Crete, in Paul's days, "they profess that they know God, but in works they deny him." 3. *It implies dissatisfaction with present condition.* They were like men longing for something which they have not yet resolved to seek. So at Athens, some who heard Paul felt that his words were so wise and weighty that they exclaimed, "We will hear thee again of this matter." They were moved by transient feeling, like Felix (Acts xxiv. 25) and Agrippa (Acts xxvi. 28). To all such comes this protest against vacillation.

II. THE CAUSES OF INDECISION. 1. *Want of thoughtful consideration.* Many speculate about religion who have never yet cried, "What must I do to be saved?" A busy life diverts them from earnest thought, their powers being absorbed in worldly affairs. Or a frivolous habit of mind may prove their bane. 2. *Deficiency of personal courage.* It would require courage under Jezebel's rule to become worshippers of Jehovah. Give instances of the difficulties which beset earnest men in modern life, the necessity sometimes arising for true heroism on the part of those who would follow Christ. 3. *Tendency to procrastination.* To-day is devoted to that which is evident to the senses, to-morrow to that which concerns the soul. Examples:

III. THE CONSEQUENCES OF INDECISION. 1. *Increase of difficulties.* Evil habits grow in strength. The simple spray of ivy can be gathered by a child's hand, but after the growth of years, though it is killing the tree, you cannot tear it off. A worldly man, who is now impervious to good never meant to be what he is, but he expected that when the stress of making his position was over he would have time and inclination to attend to affairs of the soul. Imperceptibly God seems to have "given him over to a reprobate mind, because he did not choose to retain God in his knowledge." 2. *Loss of opportunity.* Even if it were easier to decide for God next year, it would be madness to delay. "Boast not thyself of to-morrow," &c. Read the parable of the Rich Fool—Luke xii. 3. *Irreparable ruin.* If God's opportunity is lost, it will not be re-created after death. See how Christ spoke of Capernaum, of Chorazin, and of Jerusalem. "But now they are hid from thine eyes." "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still." In face of such penalties press home the question on the undecided, "How long halt ye between two opinions?"—A. R.

Ver. 44.—*Elijah's Prayer for Rain.* The wonders which accompanied the ministry of Elijah were not meaningless prodigies. Those who question the wisdom of miracles should remember that the condition of those for whom they were intended rendered them necessary. Sensuous men must learn through their senses, and worshippers of material force must be met by physical displays of power. We do

not try to instruct a child by an essay, or to convince a savage by a syllogism. God could speak directly to the devout patriarchs; but when the worshippers of Baal were to know that there was a living God, they saw the fire from heaven, and heard the bursting of a storm after years of drought. Idolatry had just been swept away by a whirlwind of popular execration. The time had therefore come for the curse to be removed. Elijah with a premonition of the distant rain bade king and people eat of the sacrificial feast, while he went up the mountain to pray. Six times his servant ascended the loftiest peak of Carmel, and came back to say that there was no sign of change; but the seventh time, gazing over the blue expanse of the Mediterranean, he saw a cloud tiny as a man's hand, which was the pledge of answered prayer, for soon the heavens were "black with clouds," and over the thirsty land there was "a great rain." In dealing with events of Old Testament history, we must guard ourselves against giving a fanciful interpretation which can not be reasonably justified; but we must not forget, on the other hand, that such incidents reveal great principles which run through the whole economy of God, in the moral as well as in the physical world.

I. THE SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BLESSING SOUGHT. The New Testament justifies us in regarding the rain which Elijah prayed for as a type of the Holy Spirit, without whom our hearts are barren, and the moral world is dead. See, for instance, how boldly the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews evolves from the tabernacle what those who constructed it little imagined. Take as another example the allusion which Paul makes to the rock in the wilderness, in which he says emphatically, "That rock was Christ." Recall passages in which the descent of the Spirit is likened to the falling of rain and the distilling of dew. Points of analogy: the grounds on which the heavenly blessing is withheld; the misery that follows its absence; the preparation and prayer for its coming; the subsequent fertility of the barren land, &c. The sins of our age are not unlike those of Elijah's time, though they are less gross in form. The enervating luxuries of civilization, the indifference of many to the decline of religion, the deification of force and of lust, are examples. There has been a forsaking of the Lord on the part of His people, and hence this barrenness of good, in spite of all our toil; because there is a withholding of the gracious influences of the Divine Spirit. May He "come down as rain upon the mown grass, and as showers that water the earth."

II. THE SPIRITUAL PREPARATION FOR THE BLESSING PROMISED. 1. *Self-forgetfulness.* Elijah was personally provided for, and would lack nothing. His heart bled, however, for the suffering people. For them he prayed. We want more of such soul-burdening on the part of parents and pastors. 2. *Reformation.* By the execution of the false prophets, Elijah had done all that in him lay to put away evil. Sins are obstacles in the way of descending blessings. We cannot win the Holy Spirit by good conduct, but we may hinder His work by our sin. Sin is a bar across the sluice-gates of benediction, and must be removed or broken before the dry channel can be flooded. 3. *Prayer.* It is in the Epistle of James that we are told that Elijah's prayers brought both the drought and the rainfall. The fact that the prophet heard the sound of abundance of rain stimulated his supplication, and did not prevent it. He did not argue that God would send the storm whether he prayed or not, but believed that the reception of blessing was inseparably connected with the offering of prayer. Similarly the Holy Spirit was promised to the disciples, but they met to pray till He came. "Ask, and you shall receive." 4. *Watchfulness.* Elijah was so sure of God's fidelity and goodness that he sent his servant seven times to look for the faintest sign of rain. We need watchfulness for the following reasons: (1) *The answer to prayer does not always come when and how we expect it.* E.g., we ask for holiness, and God sends an illness, in which our murmuring closes our heart against the very blessing that is then nearing us. Or we pray for spirituality, and have the possibility of it presented to us in some unexpected joy, which too often makes us more worldly than grateful. Or we entreat God for the salvation of our child; and because we do not watch, we fail to recognize the sign and pledge of the Holy Spirit's work in the child's eager questioning and simple prayer. (2) *The answer to prayer may be long delayed.* Elijah

was not discouraged even by the sixth repetition of the despairing phrase, "There is nothing." Yet on that very day his one earnest cry had instantaneously brought down fire from heaven. How often like the Psalmist we say, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" "Wait on the Lord, wait patiently for him." (3) *The answer to prayer may begin in what seems trifling.* A cloud the size of a man's hand, hardly describable on the horizon, was enough to transfer Elijah's prayer into praise. Little in itself, it was the beginning of a glorious blessing. The baptism of the Holy Spirit will not suddenly fill the world with worshippers; but it will be seen, perhaps, in the turning to God of one lad, who shall prove the Elijah of his age; or in the new light given to one who has long been under the shadow of doubt; or in some holy resolve, some noble thought that shall presage blessing to the world. Slight and insignificant as it may seem, gratefully welcome it, and still hope, and wait, and pray, till He "come and rain righteousness upon us."—A. R.

VERS. 21—40.—*The God that answereth by fire.* I. ISRAEL'S SIN (VER. 21). 1. *Its nature*: indecision, a want of whole-hearted devotion; "How long halt ye?" &c. They tried to combine both worships, bowing before Jehovah in secret, and publicly before Baal in the assemblies commanded by the court. There are two who contend to-day for our devotion and service—the world and God (1 John ii. 15). The world has its rewards and demands; God has His. 2. *Its folly.* Both cannot be served. What we build in obedience to one we cast down in obedience to the other. "If the Lord be God, follow him," &c. 3. *The necessity for its abandonment.* The messenger sent to announce blessing (ver. 1) must first convince of sin and secure its removal. The blessings of God stand at the door, but they can enter only as our sins are cast out.

II. THE CHALLENGE (VERS. 22—24). 1. *A false test rejected.* Baal seemed triumphant. Elijah stood alone, the prophets of Baal were many, and yet the cause had still to be decided. The pretensions of a faith are not established by numbering its adherents and weighing their influence. Truth has often stood alone, and may stand alone again. 2. *The true test proposed.* Baal's claims and Jehovah's are put to the proof. There is wrath against the land; which will remove the cause of it? By which will the sin offering laid upon the altar be accepted and the iniquity be removed? That test which alone met Israel's need could alone prove Israel's God. 3. *The true test accepted.* "And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken." Israel's answer will yet be the cry of all nations. The heart of the world will yet acknowledge the true God's work.

III. THE DECISION (VERS. 25—39). 1. *Baal tried and found wanting.* (1) The first choice was given to the priests of Baal. The world has had time enough to prove the truth of its pretensions, and to show whether it can meet man's need. The sacrifice has long lain upon its altar. (2) The earnestness of the false prophets. The failure is not due to lack of effort on the part of the world's votaries. There is no path which has not been trod to find whether the world has aught to satisfy the cry of man's soul; there is no sacrifice it has called for that has been withheld. (3) Their perseverance. Midday, the hour of the sun's might, was past, yet still they cried and cut themselves, &c. The boundless faith and unwearied efforts of the world's worshippers. (4) The failure. The sacrifice lay unconsumed upon the altar, lay still there hastening to corruption, when the darkness fell and the priests lay weltering in their blood. 2. *God tried and proved.* (1) God's altar built in the face of the world's discomfiture (vers. 29, 30). It was reared about the time of the evening sacrifice. "In the fulness of the times." "After that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased," &c. (1 Cor. i. 21). The vanity of the world's way was proved ere Christ was manifested. (2) The altar was one on which God had been served before ("He repaired the altar of the Lord which was broken down"). What was lost in the first is restored in the second Adam. The accepted sacrifice must be offered upon a perfect manhood. (3) God proved to the uttermost (33—35). There is nothing where that sacrifice is set which the fire of God will not kindle and change into the glory into which that sacrifice itself is lifted. (4) The answer. The fire fell; the accepted sacrifice went up in

living flame which kindled all things round it—wood, stones, dust, water. We cannot test God in His own way without receiving an answer which will lift from the heart's depths the cry, "The Lord, he is God."

IV. THE JUDGMENT OF THE FALSE PROPHETS. The manifestation of God's glory is the hour of sin's overthrow.—J. U.

Vers. 41—46.—*The return of blessing.* I. ELIJAH'S ASSURANCE OF GOD'S MERCY. "There is a sound of abundance of rain," but it was only as yet a sound in the prophet's ear. 1. *The ground of the assurance.* (1) God had promised (ver. 1), He would therefore fulfil His word. (2) The preliminary work which He had sent him to do was accomplished. The people's heart was turned. Their sin was washed away. The curse would surely, then, be also removed. We build a still mightier trust on God's consistency. "He that spared not his own son," &c. 2. *The use he made of it.* "He said unto Ahab," and through him to all Israel, "Get thee up," &c. The work of the believer is to comfort God's people, and strengthen their expectation of good.

II. HIS PREVAILING WITH GOD. 1. *The assurance of God's mercy does not exclude prayer.* "Ahab went up to eat and drink," but "Elijah went up to the top of Carmel." The worldling may expect good and know nothing of supplication; not so with the man of God. Expectation is but encouragement to prayer. The desire that the blessing might come at once and cause the seed of faith to spring up in the people's hearts, made earnest prayer more necessary to Elijah than the refreshment which his body craved. 2. *The utter lowliness of the true worshipper.* "He cast himself down upon the earth." His face was hid. The man who stands nearest God is the lowliest of all God's worshippers. 3. *His importunity.* He did not cease till his prayer was granted. Again and again was the servant sent till the small cloud was seen.

III. HIS ATTEMPT TO PREVAIL WITH MAN. 1. *His message to Ahab ("Prepare," &c.) showed his care for the king.* He was a foe to the sin, but not to the man. 2. *He honoured him.* He "ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel." The mighty prophet became the erring king's servant. The ministers of God must seek to win the sinful as well as to smite their sin. Hatred and contempt will neither advance God's cause nor man's well-being.—J. U.

Vers. 1—46.—*Elijah and the Prophets of Baal.* Elijah is now prepared for his work. He who had sent him into the desert now commands him to enter into open conflict with idolatry. God makes His will known to him in two ways.

I. BY AN INWARD IMPULSE.

II. THROUGH HIS MEETING WITH THE YOUNG OBADIAH, the protector of the prophets, and the faithful servant of God in the midst of the impure court of Ahab. Let it be ours to seek such a twofold assurance of the will of God. Let us not rest satisfied with an inward impulse, lest we be led astray by an illusive mysticism; let us watch also the indications of Providence. The wisdom that cometh down from above is not a blind leading; it can give a reasonable explanation of its motives. It learns to read the will of God at once in the book of the heart and in that of Providence. In his decisive interview with Ahab, Elijah shows us how we are to contend with the idolatry which is always at the root of every doctrine hostile to God. 1. The first element of strength is *his manly and indomitable courage.* To the king's insolent question, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" he replies, "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" (ver. 18). He only will be victorious in the battle for the right who does not fear to denounce, without finching, the sin of his people, and to say, like John the Baptist to the mighty ones, whether in the realm of society or of science, "It is not lawful for thee" (Matt. xiv.) Wherever sin is, the witness for truth and righteousness must first strike home to the conscience before attempting to convince the mind. 2. Everything in the language of Elijah breathes a *full assurance of victory.* He knows that he has on his side that strength of God which he has proved. To believe that we shall be

victorious is already to have half won the battle. 8. Elijah's irresistible weapon is prayer. "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" (ver. 37). If we now look away from Elijah himself to the plan he proposed to pursue in his warfare against idolatry, we shall see that no better is possible for us to-day. He does not multiply arguments in dealing with his adversaries; he meets them on the common ground of experience. He gives practical rather than theoretical demonstration of the power of God. Here are the priests of Baal assembled on Mount Carmel. On their side are the people, the favour of the king, the confidence of the public. Elijah stands alone, and yet he feels he is not alone, for God is with him. The heaven, closed for long months against the fertilizing rain, in punishment of the perverseness of Israel, seems a vault of iron and brass. Will it ever melt again, and spread life in soft reviving showers over the land? In vain Ahab has sent his servants up and down throughout the country; the water springs have all failed. The one question in all hearts is, What intercession may avail to draw down the rain once more from heaven? Elijah offers a challenge full of bitter irony to the priests of Baal. May he not lawfully do so, as the messenger of Him of whom it is said that "He shall laugh at the mighty ones who exalt themselves against him"? (Psa. ii. 4.) In vain the priests cry, and leap, and cut themselves with stones, in their savage rites; there comes no answering voice from their deaf and dumb idol. But at the prayer of Elijah the heavens re-open, and his God reveals Himself in the glory of His power. Champions of the true God, the God of the gospel, defend it, as Elijah did, against the insolent idolatry of materialism, or of the pantheism which sets up an idol as monstrosous as the Baal of old. Be bold, like Elijah, in showing the idolaters how deeply they have fallen. Believe in the victory of your cause; use the invincible weapon of prayer; and to those who have vainly sought the living water in the broken cisterns of earth (Jer. ii. 13), show the heavens opened and the gracious rain descending upon all broken hearts, and bringing the blessings of a full redemption. Give to our generation this conclusive practical evidence. Meet the positivism of the infidel with the positivism of the Christian. This is the surest means of casting down the idol into the dust, without having recourse to that exterminating sword which the prophet of the old covenant was commanded to draw upon the idolatrous priests. We live under another dispensation, and ours is that sword of the Spirit which only wounds to heal.—E. de P.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER XIX. 1—21.

**ELIJAH'S FLIGHT. THE THEOPHANY OF HOREB AND THE CALLING OF ELISEA.**—We can readily understand with what a sense of humiliation and shame the weak and excited king, who must have been awed and impressed by the strange portent he had witnessed, would recount the day's proceedings to his imperious and headstrong consort, and with what intense mortification and rage she must have heard of the triumph of the proscribed religion and of the defeat and death of the priests of Baal. One might almost have expected that the testimony of an eye-witness, and that her husband, to the greatness and completeness of Elijah's victory; that his unprejudiced, and indeed

unwilling, account of the sacrifices, of the descent of the heavenly fire, of the cries it wrung from the people, &c., would have brought conviction to her mind and taught her how useless it was to kick against the pricks. But there are eyes so blinded (2 Cor. iv. 4) and hearts so steeled against the truth that no evidence can reach them, and this fierce persecutor of the prophets had long been given over to a reprobate mind. She listens to his story, but her one thought is of revenge.

Ver. 1.—And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain [Heb. *and all which he had slain*]. The construction, if it were not for the **ב** would be usual enough. As that word is omitted in some MSS. and versions, it is

possible it has been inserted by a transcriber, mechanically, from the אֱלֹהֵי כָּל-אֲשֵׁרָה [preceding] all the prophets, [sc., of Baal, all who were present] with the sword.

Ver. 2.—Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah [The prophet, wrapped in his abba, was seemingly about to spend the night in the open air, possibly at the gate, or in the plain. There, in the darkness, the messenger found him, Bähr assumes that this message had Ahab's sanction; i.e., that he must have known of it and was too weak to prevent it. But it is just as likely that it was sent without his privity. On the evening of that day he would be afraid to threaten one vested with such tremendous powers as Elijah had just proved himself to possess], saying [Here the LXX. inserts "If thou art Eliou and I Jezebel"], So let

the gods [As אֱלֹהֵי is here found with a plural verb, it is rightly assumed that the reference is to the divinities of Phoenicia or of paganism generally. Besides, Jezebel would hardly swear by the one God of Elijah and of Israel. The LXX., however, has *ὁ θεός*], do to me, and more also [Heb. *and so let them add*. See on ch. ii. 23. Stanley appositely recalls to our minds "the tremendous vows which mark the history of the Semitic race, both within and without the Jewish pale, the vow of Jephthah, the vow of Saul, the vow of Hannibal." Rawlinson remarks that this oath was "familiar in the mouths of kings about this time" (1 Kings xx. 10; 2 Kings vi. 31). But it was a standing formula in Israel at all times. See Ruth i. 17; 1 Sam. iii. 17; &c.], if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time. ["That queen consort, it seems, was, in effect, queen regent" (Henry). What induced the queen to send this message? For it is obvious that if she really meant to slay Elijah, she took the very means to defeat her purpose by thus forewarning him of her intentions. Some of the older expositors (see, e.g., Hall, vol. ii. p. 396) have seen in the act a proof of her blind infatuation, of that infatuation which God often employs to defeat the machinations of wicked men, and this view is not to be lightly rejected. That she fully meant what she said is hardly to be doubted. But later writers, including Keil, Bähr, and Wordsworth, see in the threat nothing more than a scheme for ridding herself of the presence of Elijah. They argue that, finding herself unable to put him to death, partly because of the impression he had made upon the people, and partly, too, because of the ascendancy he had just gained over the king, she resolved, by threatening him with

instant death, to give him an opportunity for flight. But this view hardly takes sufficiently into account the exasperation, the blind unreasoning hate, or the reckless and desperate character of the queen. It must be remembered that this message was despatched, not after she had had time for thought and calculation, but on the spur of the moment, as soon as she had heard of the massacre of the priests of Baal. That night she could do nothing, nor perhaps could she see her way clearly to compass his death on the morrow. But she will have him know that he is not going to escape her, and that, whatever the effect on her husband, she is unconquered and unrelenting. She does not stop to argue that he may take the alarm and flee. But she must gratify her impotent rage forthwith by threatening him with death the next day.]

Ver. 3.—And when he saw that [Heb. *and he saw and arose*, &c. But the LXX. has *καὶ ἐφοβήθη*, and the Vulgate *timuit*, and it is to be observed that this meaning, "*and he feared*," can be extracted from this word נִרְיָ) without any change of radicals, for the full form נִרְיָ is occasionally abbreviated into נִרְיָ; see 1 Sam. xviii. 12; xxi. 13; 2 Kings xvii. 28. A few MSS. have here נִרְיָ) and it certainly suits the context better. Bähr, who interprets, "he saw how matters stood," i.e., that she meant him to flee, is not justified in asserting that this expression would require an accusative of the person feared. (See, e.g., Gen. iii. 10; xv. 1; xviii. 15.) Both he and Keil furthermore object to this interpretation that it is contrary to actual fact, neither of them being willing to allow that Elijah was afraid. Bähr says it is inconceivable that the man who had that day faced alone king and priests and the entire people should have become all at once afraid of a bad woman, and he explains Elijah's flight as caused by the discovery that he could not carry on his work of reformation, and by the absence of any intimation (like that of ch. xviii. 1) that he was to stay and hazard his life. But apart from the fact that we are distinctly told that he "went for his life" (cf. vers. 4, 10), and that his flight seems to have been instant and hurried, history tells of many great souls, hardly less brave than Elijah's, which have succumbed to a sudden panic. Anyhow, it is evident that for the moment Elijah had lost faith in God, otherwise he would certainly have waited for the "word of the Lord," which had hitherto invariably guided his movements (ch. xvii. 2, 8; xviii. 1). No doubt other emotions besides that of fear were struggling

in his breast, and prominent among these was the feeling of profound disappointment and mortification. It is clear that he had hoped that the "day of Carmel" would turn the heart of the entire nation back again (ch. xviii. 37), and the great shout of ver. 39, and the subsequent execution, at his command, of the men who had deceived and depraved the people, might well justify the most sanguine expectations. We can readily imagine, consequently, how, especially after the excitement and fatigues of that day, the threatening and defiant message of the queen would seem the death-blow of his hopes, and how, utterly dispirited and broken down, he lost all trust, all faith, and, while fleeing for his life, "requested for himself that he might die" (ver. 4)], he arose, and went for his life [Keil is compelled, by his refusal to allow that Elijah was actuated by fear, to render these words, "went to commit his soul to God in the solitude of the desert." But the meaning is settled for us by the like expression in 2 Kings vii. 7; nor does Jer. xlv. 7 lend any support to Keil's view. Gesenius compares *πίπτειν περι ψυχῆς*. Od. ix. 423. The A. V. exactly represents the meaning], and came to Beer-sheba [Gen. xxi. 31; xvi. 33. The southern boundary of Palestine (Josh. xv. 28; 2 Sam. xxiv. 7; Judg. xx. 1; 1 Chron. xxi. 2, &c.), allotted to the tribe of Simeon (Josh. xix. 2), which tribe, we gather from this passage (see also 2 Chron. xix. 4), was now absorbed in the southern kingdom. (See note on ch. xi. 31.) Wordsworth suggests that "perhaps he resorted to Beer-sheba in order to strengthen his faith with the recollection of the patriarchs who had dwelt there," &c. But if that had been his object, a journey to the place was hardly necessary, and it is clear that he only passed through it on his way to Mount Sinai. "Beer-sheba was about 95 miles from Jezreel"—Rawlinson, who adds that Elijah cannot have reached it till the close of the second day. But we must remember that his pace would be regulated by the powers of his servant, probably a mere lad (LXX. *παῖδάριον*), so that it is hardly likely he could travel day and night without stopping to rest], which belongeth to Judah [It is part of Keil's argument in proof that Elijah did not flee from fear of Jezebel, that, had such been the case, he would have remained in the kingdom of Judah, where he would have enjoyed the protection of Jehoshaphat. But it is by no means certain that this prince, considering his close alliance with Ahab (ch. xxii. 4; cf. xviii. 10; 2 Kings viii. 18; 2 Chron. xviii. 1), would have sheltered the prophet. Indeed, it is remarkable, as Blunt has well pointed out (Coincid.

pp. 183, 184), that the prophet never took refuge in the southern kingdom. At one time he found a sanctuary beyond the Jordan at another in the kingdom of Tyre, but never in the realm of Jehoshaphat. When he does come in haste to Beer-sheba, "it is after a manner which bespeaks his reluctance to set foot within that territory, even more than if he had evaded it altogether." The reason partly was, no doubt, as Wordsworth says, that his mission was to idolatrous Israel. Judah had both priests and prophets of its own, and left his servant [There is no warrant for the assertion (Stanley) that "one only of that vast assembly remained faithful to him, the Zidonian boy of Zarephath." The identity of this boy with the servant is by no means certain; nor is the defection of the people at all proven] there. [Probably because he wished to be alone with God; possibly because the boy was then too exhausted to go further, and there was no reason why he should be subjected to the uncertainties and privations of desert life; hardly for the security of both (Blunt). It is perhaps implied, however, that the kingdom of Judah, though not a safe abode for him, would be for his servant. When we remember that this servant never rejoined him, but that presently Elisha took his place, we can scarcely help wondering whether he was afraid to accompany Elijah any longer (cf. Acts xv. 38).]

Ver. 4.—But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness [Cf. Gen. xxi. 14, 21; Jer. ix. 2; Rev. xii. 6. Beer-sheba stands on the fringe of the desert of *Et-Tih*. It was not for the sake of security alone that the prophet plunged into the "great and terrible wilderness." It is probable that from the first, "Horeb, the mount of God," was in his thoughts. He may well have seen that he was destined to be a second Moses; that he was raised up to assert and enforce the covenant of which Moses was the mediator. We have seen already that he cites the words spoken to Moses at the bush (ch. xviii. 36); that to him as to Moses there was granted an apparition of fire; we now find him rejected as Moses had been before him (Acts vii. 25, 35). How natural that, like Moses, he should flee into the land of Midian, to the place where God had spoken with Moses face to face. Wordsworth reminds us that the Jewish Church, by its cycle of lessons, suggests a comparison between the Law Giver and the Law Restorer, and came and sat down under a [Heb. *one*; see note on ch. xiii. 11] juniper tree [The *דן*], here found with a feminine numeral (Keri.

maserline), in ver. 5 with a masculine, is not the *juniper*, but the plant now known to the Arabs as *retem*, i.e., the broom (*genista monosperma*, or *G. raetam*), "the most longed-for and most welcome bush of the desert, abundant in beds of streams and valleys, where spots for camping are selected, and men sit down and sleep in order to be protected against wind and sun" (Robinson, Pal. vol. i. p. 203). It does not, however, afford a complete protection (Thomson, L. and B. vol. ii. pp. 436, 437). Every traveller remarks on its abundance in the desert; it gave a name, *Rithmah*, to one of the stations of the Israelites (Num. xxxiii. 18. Cf. Stanley, S. and P. pp. 20, 79). Its roots are still used by the Bedouin, for the manufacture of charcoal (of. Psa. cxx. 4, "coals of rethem"), which they carry to Cairo; and he requested for himself [Heb. *asked as to his life*, accusative of reference] that he might die [Again like Moses, Num. xi. 15; Exod. xxxii. 32]; and said, *It is enough* [or, *Let it be enough*. LXX. *ικανούσθω*. See note on ch. xii. 28]; now, O Lord, take away my life ["Strange contradiction! Here the man who was destined not to taste of death, flees from death on the one hand and seeks it on the other." Kitto]; for I am not better than my fathers. [These words clearly reveal the great hopes Elijah had formed as to the result of his mission, and the terrible disappointment his banishment had occasioned him. Time was when he had thought himself a most special messenger of Heaven, raised up to effect the regeneration of his country. He now thinks his work is fruitless, and he has nothing to live for longer. Keil concludes from these words that Elijah was already of a great age, but this is extremely doubtful.]

Ver. 5.—And as he lay and slept ["While death was called for, the cousin of death comes unbidden" (Hall)] under a [Heb. *one*] juniper tree, behold, then [Heb. *וַיִּבֹּא*] this; "behold here." *siehe da*, Gesen.], an angel [Heb. *messenger*]; the same word as in ver. 2, but explained in ver. 7 to be a messenger of God. Cf. Gen. xvi. 9; xxi. 17] touched [Heb. *touching*] him, and said unto him, *Arise and eat*. [Probably he had eaten little or nothing since leaving Jezreel. Food was now what he most needed. This circumstance suggests that the profound depression betrayed in his prayer (ver. 4) was largely the result of physical weakness.]

Ver. 6.—And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake [same word as in ch. xvii. 13] baked on the coals [Heb. *a cake of stones*, or *coals*. LXX. *ἐκστρωθῆς*. The thin, flat bread of the East, especially among the nomadic desert tribes, is constantly baked in a rude

oven, constructed in the sand or soil. A little hollow is made; sometimes it is lined with stones to retain the heat; fuel, often the root of the *genista*, is placed upon it and kindled, and when the sand or stones are sufficiently hot, the embers are raked to one side, and the dough is placed in the oven, where it is sometimes covered with the ashes. Hence the Vulgate calls it *subcinericius panis*, and a cruse of water at his head [i.e., the place of his head. Marg. *bolster*. The word is almost used as a preposition. Cf. 1 Sam. xix. 13; xxvi. 7]. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again. [Heb. *returned and laid down*]

Ver. 7.—And the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him [i.e., to awaken him. It was the food was to strengthen him], and said, *Arise and eat* [Probably he had eaten but little the first time, for sorrow and weariness]; because the journey is too great for thee. [The LXX. *ὄτι πολλή ἀπό σου ἡ ὁδός* and the Vulgate *grandis enim tibi restat via*, which Bähr follows, seem hardly so true to the Hebrew idiom as the A. V. rendering. Keil cites Vatablus, *iter est majus quam pro viribus tuis*. It is very improbable that (Rawlinson *al.*) the journey to Horeb was now suggested to him for the first time by the angel.]

Ver. 8.—And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights [Cf. Exod. xxiv. 18; xxxiv. 28; Deut. ix. 9, 25; Jonah iii. 4; Matt. iv. 2; Acts i. 3. But the primary reference is perhaps to the "forty days and forty nights" which Moses spent in Horeb, during which he "neither did eat bread nor drink water" (Deut. ix. 9), or to the forty years during which Israel was sustained in this same desert with "angels' food" (Psa. lxxviii. 25). It is noteworthy how both Moses and Elias were precursors of our Lord in a forty days' fast. "The three great fasters met gloriously on Tabor" (Hall). It is not implied that it took the prophet the whole of this time to reach Horeb, which is only distant from Beersheba some 130 miles. "There are eleven days' journey from Horeb, by the way of Mount Seir to Kadesh Barnea" (Deut. i. 2). It is of course possible that he wandered aimlessly hither and thither during this period, but it seems better to understand the words of the whole of his desert sojourn] unto Horeb the mount of God. [See note on ch. viii. 9. It is just possible that Horeb was already known as "the mount of God" at the time God appeared to Moses there—the whole of the Sinaitic peninsula was sacred in the eyes of the Egyptians; but it is more probable that this designation is used in Exod. iii. 1

proleptically, and that it was bestowed on the Mount of the Law because of the special revelation of the Godhead there (Exod. iii. 6; xix. 3, 11, 18; Deut. i. 6; iv. 10; v. 2, &c.)]

Ver. 9.—**And he came thither unto a cave** [Heb. *the cave*. LXX. *τὸ σπήλαιον*. Many commentators identify this with “the cliff of the rock” where Moses was concealed while the Lord “passed by” (Exod. xxxiii. 22), and the use of the same word, עַרְר, in ver. 11 certainly favours this view. But it is clear that the cliff (עַרְר) *fissure* was a *cave*? Ewald understands “the cave in which at that time travellers to Sinai commonly rested.” It is perhaps worth remembering that a part of the desert, though at some distance from Horeb, bears at this day the name of *Maghârah*, or *cave*. But there is a “narrow grot” pointed out by tradition as the abode of Elijah, on the side of Jebel Musa. “There is nothing to confirm, but there is nothing to contradict, the belief that it may have been in that secluded basin, which has long been pointed out as the spot. . . . No scene could be more suitable for the vision which follows” (Stanley). There is, however, one formidable difficulty in the way of this identification, viz., that the cave is only just large enough for a man’s body, which does not agree with ver. 18], and lodged [לָיַל means strictly to *pass the night*. It is possibly connected radically with לָיַל there; and, behold, the word of the Lord came to him [Not “in vision as he slept” (Rawlinson). He could not “go forth” in his sleep. That he was to go forth “on the morrow” is equally unlikely see ver. 11, note], and he said unto him, **What doest thou here, Elijah?** [Many writers, Bähr and Keil among them, will not allow that there is aught of reproof in this question, or that Elijah had in any way erred in his hasty flight. The former asks how it comes to pass that the angel, instead of reproving him, succoured and strengthened him (vers. 6, 7), if he was acting in faithlessness or disobedience. But surely it does not follow that God denies all grace and sustenance to His elect servants even if they do, in a moment of despair, forget or distrust Him. Elijah may have been strengthened for this very journey, because God would meet with him and teach him the lessons of patience and trust he needed to learn, at the “mount of God” itself. And his answer, especially when contrasted with that of ver. 14 (where see note), certainly betrays, not only irritation and despair, but a “carnal zeal which would gladly have called down the ven-

geance of the Almighty upon all idolaters” (Keil). The question in itself, it is true, does not necessarily impart censure—it might merely mean, “What wouldst thou learn of me?” But when it is remembered that the prophet had been sent to every other destination by the “word of the Lord,” and that he had left Jezreel without any such word—left it in terror and bitter disappointment and sheer distrust of God—it does look as if the words conveyed a gentle reminder that he had deserted the post of duty, and had no right to be there. So Clericus, “*Quasi Deus diceret nihil esse Eliæ negotiî in solitudine, sed potius in locis habitatis, ut illic homines ad veri Dei cultum adduceret.*”]

Ver. 10.—**And he said, I have been very jealous** [Cf. Num. xxv. 11, which the prophet may have had in his mind. But the jealousy of Phinehas was in harmony with that of God (ver. 13)] for the Lord God of hosts [“The title of *Lord God of hosts* is first heard in the mouth of Elijah the prophet, who had been very jealous for Jehovah in opposition to Baal and Ashtaroth [Ash-toreth?] the Phœnician deities; cf. 2 Kings xxiii. 5, ‘Baal, the sun, and moon, and planets, and all the host of heaven’” (Wordsworth)]; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant [he had memories of the covenant all around him], **thrown down thine altars** [cf. ch. xviii. 30, note. It is clear that many altars, similar to that on Carmel, had been built, and had been overturned], and slain thy prophets with the sword [If the “hundred prophets” of ch. xviii. 13 escaped, of which we cannot be certain, others did not]; and I, even I only, am left [See note on ch. xviii. 22. It must be confessed that the *prima facie* view is that the prophets had been well-nigh exterminated. But we must take into account the deep despondency with which Elijah spoke, and remember the correction which his words received (ver. 18)]; and **they seek my life, to take it away.** [The commentators are hopelessly divided as to the spirit and temper with which these words were spoken. Bähr, as before, is very positive that there is no complaint or murmuring against God on Elijah’s part. He contends that the prophet has been led to Sinai simply by the earnest longing for a disclosure concerning the dealings of God, and for instructions as to his future conduct; and this view has the support of other weighty authorities. But it is extremely difficult to resist the conclusion that we have here at the least a “tacit reproof that God had looked on so quietly for such a length of time, and had suffered things to come to such an extremity” (Keil). St.

Paul speaks of him as pleading with God against Israel (*ἐντυγχάνει τῷ θεῷ κατὰ τοῦ Ἰσραήλ*. Rom. xi. 2), and certainly represents the *χορημισμός* he received as a correction. And the idea which this verse, taken in connexion with the prophet's flight (ver. 3) and his prayer (ver. 4), leaves on the unbiassed mind certainly is that in his zeal for God he resented not only the growing corruption of the age, but above all the frustration of his efforts to stay it. What burdened and vexed his righteous soul was that in the very hour of victory, when the people had confessed that Jehovah alone was God, he, the one solitary witness for the truth, should be driven from his post to escape as best he might, and to leave the covenant people to the baneful influence of Jezebel and her army of false prophets. It is the cry which we hear over and over again in the Old Testament, the complaint of the silence and apparent indifference of God, of the persecution of the righteous, and the impunity of evil-doers.]

Ver. 11.—And he said, Go forth [The LXX. inserts *αἰῶνον*, which, however, is destitute of authority, and was probably inserted from Exod. xxxiv. 2, to explain the difficulty which the prophet's apparent disregard of this command creates], and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by [Heb. *passeth by*. Only used here and in Exod. xxxiii. 22; xxxiv. 6 of the Divine Being. The beatific vision must be transient. An abiding presence, a *קָדוֹשׁ*, was more than man could bear. So Bähr. As Elijah does not seem to have gone forth from the cave until he heard the still small voice (ver. 13), some would take the participle *קָדוֹשׁ* which is probably employed as more graphic, as a future, i.e., "the Lord will pass by," and this is the interpretation of the LXX.; *ἰδὸν παρελεύσεταί κύριος; καὶ ἰδὸν πνεῦμα μέγα*. κ.τ.λ. The effect of this re-arrangement of the text would be that the words, "And behold the Lord passing by," must be taken as a part of the message, "Go forth," &c., and not as a statement of what happened. That statement would then begin with the next words, "And a great and strong wind," &c. But in that case we might have expected "For behold," &c., or the "And behold" would have come before "a great and strong wind," &c. It is also to be considered—and this seems to me decisive—that the words "rent," "break," &c., are also participles, which it would be unnatural to divorce from the participle preceding], and a great and strong wind [Such as was not uncommon in that region. The approach to Sinai from the west is known as *Nukb-Hawy*, "the

pass of the winds." Elsewhere we find the *Wady-el-Burk*, or "valley of lightning." These phenomena—the tempest, fire, &c.—would be all the more awful and impressive because of the surrounding desolation and the utter solitude] rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind [Heb. *not in the wind Jehovah*]: and after the wind an earthquake [Once before (Exod. xix. 18) an earthquake accompanied the descent of God upon the same mountain. The desert of Sinai, with the exception of the *Hammam Pharoun* and other hot springs, affords no traces of volcanic action. "Everywhere there are signs of the action of water, nowhere of fire" (Stanley). But *שׁוּשׁוּ* properly means (compare *rauschen*, *rush*) a crashing noise (Job xxxix. 24; Isa. ix. 4), and the mysterious sounds of *Jebel Musa* have often been remarked (see Stanley, S. and P. pp. 13, 14)]; but the Lord was not in the earthquake:

Ver. 12.—And after the earthquake a fire [For the association of tempest, earthquake, fire, &c., as punishments of God, see Isa. xxix. 6, and Psa. xviii. 7, 8. "Fire" may well signify lightning (Job i. 16; Exod. ix. 23). For a vivid description of a thunderstorm at Sinai, see Stewart's "Tent and Khan," pp. 139, 140; *ap.* Stanley, "Jew. Ch.," vol. i. p. 149]: but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. [Heb. *a voice of gentle silence*. *הַשִּׁשִּׁי* an onomatopoeic word, is allied to our word *dumb*. Very similar expression Job iv. 16. What was the object and meaning of this succession of signs? First, let us remember that Elijah was the prophet of deeds. He taught his contemporaries not by word but by act. He is here taught in turn by signs. There passes before him in the mountain hollow, in the black and dark night, a procession of natural terrors—of storm, and earthquake, and fire. But none of these things move him; none speak to his soul and tell of a present God. It is the hushed voice, the awful stillness, overpowers and enchains him. He is to learn hence, first, that the Lord is a God "merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Exod. xxxiv. 6); and secondly, that as it has been with himself, so it will be with others; the name of the Lord will be proclaimed in a voice of gentle silence (*ib.*, ver. 5). The weapons of His warfare, the instruments of religious progress, must be spiritual, not carnal. Not in fire and sword and slaughter, but by a secret voice speaking to the conscience, will God regain His sway over the hearts of Israel. (See Homiletics.) The striking simi-

larity between this theophany and that which Moses saw in the same place, or at no great distance from it, must not be overlooked, for this constitutes another link between law-giver and law-restorer. The proclamation of Exod. xxiv. 3, 7 is the best exponent of the parable of vers. 11, 12. To each was the vision of God granted after a faithful witness against idolatry, and after a slaughter of idolaters; each was in a cliff of the rock; in either case the Lord *passed by*; the one was taught by words, the other rather by signs, but the message in each case was the same—that judgment is God's strange work, but that He will by no means clear the guilty (cf. ver. 17).]

Ver. 13.—And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle [Like Moses, Exod. iii. 6; cf. xxxiii. 20; xxxiv. 33; 2 Cor. iii. 13; Isa. vi. 1, 2. This mantle (see note on ch. xviii. 46) was probably a sheepskin. The LXX. calls it *μηλωτή* (cf. Heb. xi. 37). In Zech. xiii. 4 we find that the prophets wore a mantle of *hair*], and went out, and stood [Same words as in ver. 11. It was the still small voice, apparently, that first brought him to obey the command there given. He would perhaps be afraid to issue from the shelter of his cave during the tempest and the earthquake, which may have followed directly after the instruction to go forth was given. Possibly there was a lesson for him here also, viz., that amid the din and excitement and torture of drought and famine and fire and blood the commands of God are less likely to be heard in the soul and obeyed, than in the hour of peace and stillness. The drought and famine and sword have their work to do, even as the tempest and the earthquake have theirs; but it is by the voice of mercy and love that the hearts of men are turned back again. "Not in the strong east wind that parted the Red Sea, or the fire that swept the top of Sinai, or the earthquake that shook down the walls of Jericho would God be brought so near to man as in the still small voice of the child of Bethlehem" (Stanley)] in the entering in of the cave. [He hardly obeyed the letter of the command of ver. 11 even then. Does not this point to a rebellious and unsubdued heart? Is it not a confirmation of the view taken above, that he fled to Horeb, full of bitter disappointment and murmuring against God; and that the purpose of this revelation was not only to teach him as to God's dealings with men, but also to school and subdue his own rebellious heart? And, behold, there came a voice unto him [The expression is different from that of ver. 9. There we read of the "word of the Lord," here of a "voice." But this is

not to be identified with the "still small voice" of ver. 12], and said, What doest thou here, Elijah? [As in ver. 9.]

Ver. 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. [Verbatim as in ver. 10. What are we to understand from this repetition of the former answer? Has the lesson of this theophany been lost upon him? Has he failed to grasp its significance? It is probable that he only partially understood its meaning, and it certainly looks as if he still felt himself an injured and disappointed man; as if the recollection of the way in which his work had been frustrated still rankled in his soul. But though the words are the same, it is possible, and indeed probable, that the *tone* was entirely different; that instead of speaking, as he had spoken before, querulously and almost defiantly, he now, catching his inspiration from the still small voice, speaks with bated breath and profound self-humiliation. The facts are the same. He repeats them, because they and they alone explain why he is there, and because he cannot see as yet how they are to be remedied. But he is now conscious of a misgiving as to the wisdom and piety of his course. He feels he has acted hastily and faithlessly, and has wanted to do God's work in his own rough way. He will go back, if it be God's will; he will be content to wait God's time, and to follow His leading. The commission which is straightway given him almost proves that he had experienced a change. It implies that he is now fitted for his high ministry.]

Ver. 15.—And the Lord said unto him, Go, return on thy way [Heb. *to thy way*, as in Gen. xix. 2; xxxii. 2; Num. xxiv. 25, &c.] to the wilderness of Damascus [The construct case with 7 local. Keil refers to Deut. iv. 41; Josh. xii. 1; and Ewald 216 b. This cannot mean "through the desert to Damascus," for he could not possibly go any other way, nor yet "to the desert (through which he had just come) to Damascus," for he was then in the heart of the desert. He was to find a hiding-place—we find the king of Damascus at war with Ahab, oh. xx.—or possibly a sphere for work,—he would be near Hazeael—in the rugged desert which stretches south and east of the Syrian capital. (See Stanley, "Sinai and Palestine," p. 410; Porter's "Five Years in Damascus," vol. ii. p. 254sqq.) Here, too, the prophet would be at no great distance from his own country. See on ch. xvii. 3; and

when thou comest, anoint [Heb. *and thou shalt come and anoint*. LXX. *kai iñēig kai xpīstus*. The A. V. increases the difficulty. In the Hebrew the *time* of the anointing is indefinite. This commission has long been a *crux interpretum*. For neither Hazael, nor Jehu, nor Elisha, so far as we have any record, was ever anointed by Elijah. Elisha was called by him to the prophetic office. Hazael, it is barely possible, may have been anointed secretly, like David (1 Sam. xvi. 2, 13), but all that we gather from Scripture is, that he was called in an indirect way, and certainly not anointed, by Elisha (2 Kings viii. 12—15). Jehu was certainly anointed, but it was neither by Elisha nor Elijah (2 Kings ix. 1, 6), but by one of the sons of the prophets. All we can say, consequently, is that the command was obeyed *in the spirit*, and no doubt in the best possible time and way. There may have been good reasons, of which we know nothing, why Elijah should devolve the appointment of the two kings upon his successor, and we can readily understand that the word “anoint” was, as in Judg. ix. 8, Isa. lxi. 1, never meant to be construed literally. For in the first place, we have no record elsewhere of the anointing of any prophet; and secondly, it is remarkable that when Elijah might so easily have anointed Elisha, he did nothing of the kind. It is clear, therefore, that he understood the word to mean “appoint.” And the root idea of anointing, it must be remembered, was the *setting apart* for the service of God (Exod. xxix. 6). Hence it was (Bähr) that vessels (Exod. xxx. 26 sqq.), and even stones (Gen. xxviii. 18), were anointed. And when we find that these three persons were set apart sooner or later, and in different ways, to fulfil the high purposes of God, that ought to suffice us. The author of this history clearly found no difficulty in reconciling this account and that of 2 Kings viii., ix. It has also been objected to this charge (Rawlinson) that it is no “explanation or application of the preceding parable.” But this is precisely what it appears to have been intended to be. The prophet is here taught by word much the same lesson that had been conveyed by signs, in the preceding vision. No doubt there are additional particulars—the vision dealt only with principles, the charge descends to details and prescribes duties—but still the great lesson that souls are to be won, that God’s kingdom is to be advanced, not by wrath and vengeance, by fire and sword, but by meekness and gentleness, through the reason and the conscience, is proclaimed. Hazael and Jehu, each was God’s instrument to punish; each was like the sweeping storm or the devour-

ing fire, each was an engine of destruction; but by neither of these were the hearts of men turned to the Lord. It was the sword of Elisha, the sword of his mouth (cf. Isa. xi. 4; xlix. 2; Rev. i. 16; ii. 16), should constrain men to hide their faces and humble themselves before God] Hazael [the *seer of God*. This name, viewed in connection with Elijah’s vision of God, is noticeable] to be king over Syria:

Ver. 16.—And Jehu [*Jehovah is he*. The name was as appropriate as Elijah’s] the son [*i.e.*, descendant, probably grandson (2 Kings ix. 2, 14). Nimshi may have been a person of more importance than Jehoshaphat] of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel [The prophet thus learns that the house of Omri is to share the fate of the dynasties which had preceded it. Jezebel’s triumph is not to endure]: and Elisha [*My God is salvation*. This name, borne by the successor of Elijah, “My God is the Lord,” looks like a fresh revelation of God’s nature and purpose of grace] the son of Shaphat [*Judge*] of Abel-meholah [The mention of his abode, Abel-meholah, “the meadow of the dance” (cf. ch. iv. 12; Judg. vii. 22), a town in the Jordan valley, at no great distance from Beth-shean, almost implies that he was hitherto unknown to Elijah. It is to be observed that no such addition follows the mention of Hazael or Jehu] shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room. [So far from Elijah’s work being fruitless, or from the prophetic order being extinguished, provision is now made for his successor.]

Ver. 17.—And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth the sword of Hazael [See 2 Kings viii. 12, 28; x. 32; xiii. 3, 22] shall Jehu slay [2 Kings ix. 24—33: x. *passim*. Cf. Isa. lxvi. 16]: and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay. [Elijah might reasonably interpret the commission to “anoint” Hazael, &c., as a figure, seeing there is an undoubted figure of speech here. Elisha was a man of peace. His sword was the “sword of the Spirit, the word of God.” It was by “the breath of his lips he slew the wicked” (Isa. ii. 4; 2 Thess. ii. 8; Hosea vi. 5). Not only are vers. 16, 17 an interpretation, in some sort, of the vision, but they are an answer to Elijah’s complaint (vers. 10, 14). The “children of Israel” who had forsaken the covenant should be punished by Hazael (cf. 2 Kings viii. 12, “I know what thou wilt do unto the *children of Israel*,” and cf. ch. x. 32); the king and queen who had thrown down the altars and slain the prophets should be slain, one by the sword of Syria, the other at the command of Jehu; while to his allegation that the prophets

were extinct and he was left alone is opposed the ordination of a successor, and the mention of the "seven thousand" in ver. 18.]

Ver. 18.—Yet I have left me [So St. Paul, Rom. xi. 4, *κατέλιπον*; but the LXX. (*καταλείψεις*) and all the versions translate the word as future, as in the margin, *I will leave*, and so the ἰ conversive seems to require. See Gesen., Gram. § 124—26] seven thousand [not so much a round as a symbolical number—"the ἐκλογὴ of the godly" (Keil). "The remnant according to the election of grace" (Rom. xi. 5). It is like the 144,000 and the 12,000 of Rev. vii. 4—8. The prominent idea is perhaps this: Though the children of Israel have forsaken My covenant, yet I have kept and will keep it. It also suggests how the still small voice had been speaking in the silence] in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him. [We gather from Job xxxi. 26, 27 that it was customary to kiss the hand to the idol, or object of worship, and from Hosea xiii. 2 to kiss the image itself. Most of the commentators adduce Cicero in *Verrem* iv. 43, where he speaks of the statue of Hercules at Agrigentum, the lips and chin of which were a little worn by the kisses of devotees.]

Ver. 19.—So he departed thence, and found [Nothing can be concluded from this word as to previous acquaintance] Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was ploughing [It was in the winter, consequently (Prov. xx. 4. See Conder, p. 328). "Elisha is found not in his study, but in the field; not with a book in his hand, but the plough" (Hall)] with twelve yoke of oxen [Heb. *ploughing twelve yoke*, from which Ewald gathers that he was ploughing twelve yoke of land—*יִצְּקָ* like *jugum*, is used as a measure of land in 1 Sam. xiv. 14, Isa. v. 10—and was then at work on the twelfth and last. But the meaning of the "twelve yoke" here is surely settled by the "yoke of oxen;" cf. ver. 21 and see below] before him [This word also points to animals, not land. The twelve pair of oxen, it is generally thought, are mentioned to show that Elisha was a man of substance. It is not certain, however, that all the twelve belonged to him. See next note], and he with the twelfth ["I have seen more than a dozen ploughs thus at work. To understand the reason of this, several things must be taken into account. First, that the arable land of nearly all villages is cultivated in common; then that Arab farmers delight to work together, partly for mutual protection, and partly from their love of gossip," &c. Thomson, L. and B. i. 208]: and Elijah passed by

him [Heb. *to him*. The idea that he may have "crossed the stream of the Jordan" (Rawlinson) is extremely improbable. The current is strong, and it is not everywhere fordable, especially in winter], and cast his

mantle upon him. [Heb. *to him* יָצַק. But LXX. *ἐπ' αὐτόν*. Already, it would seem, the rough hairy mantle had come to be recognized as the garb of a prophet (cf. Zech. xiii. 4). "The prophet's cloak was a sign of the prophet's vocation" (Keil). To cast the cloak to or upon Elisha was therefore an appropriate and significant way of designating him to the prophetic office. "When Elijah went to heaven Elisha had the mantle entire" 2 Kings ii. 13 (Henry). The Germans use the word *mantel-kind* of an adopted child.]

Ver. 20.—And he left the oxen [As, being the last in the line, he could do, without stopping the others. It is probable too that, Elisha being the last, Elijah's action would not have been observed by the rest], and ran after Elijah [It is clear that Elisha both understood the act, and made up his mind at once. No doubt he too had long sighed and prayed over the demoralization of his country and the dishonour done to his God. Elijah, after casting the mantle, strode on, leaving it for Elisha to take or reject it. The latter soon showed his choice by *running* after him], 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 [Heb. *go, return*]: for what have I done to thee? [There is not a word of reproof here, as Wordsworth and Rawlinson imagine. Indeed, it would have been strange if there had been. A greater readiness to obey the prophetic summons, Elisha could not well have showed. Forthwith, as soon as he realized his call, "he left the oxen and ran after" his newmaster. True, he asks permission—and why should he not? for "grace is no enemy to good nature"—to give a parting embrace to the father and mother to whom he owed his life, and whom he had been required by God to honour. But there is no proof of "a divided heart" here. If he had begged to be allowed to stay and bury his mother and father (St. Luke ix. 59—61) it might have been otherwise. But he suggests nothing of the kind. He says: "One kiss, one farewell, and then I will follow thee." It is a complete mistake, consequently, to interpret Elijah's words to mean, "Go, return to thy ploughing, for why shouldst thou quit it? . . . Thou canst remain as thou art" (Rawlinson). Their true meaning, as evidenced by the sequel (ver. 21), clearly was, "Go back and kiss them; why shouldst thou not? For

what have I done to thee? I have summoned thee to follow me. But I have not required thee to repudiate thine own flesh and blood.”]

Ver. 21.—And he returned back from him [Wordsworth is not warranted in affirming that Elisha “did not go back and kiss,” &c. The text rather implies that he did], and took a yoke [Heb. *the yoke*. Cf. ver. 19] of oxen, and slew them [Heb. *sacrificed*; LXX. *θυσσε*. But the word, though generally restricted to sacrificial acts, primarily means “to slay” simply, as here, and in Gen. xxxi. 54; 1 Sam. xxviii. 24; 2 Chron. xviii. 2; Ezek. xxxix. 17. There was no altar there, and the flesh of a sacrifice was never boiled], and boiled their flesh [Heb. *boiled them, the flesh*] with the instruments of the oxen [the plough, yoke, &c. The plough of the East is extremely rude and slender, but the yoke, shaft, &c., would afford a fair supply of wood. The scarcity

of timber may have had something to do with this application of the “instruments of the oxen;” but it is much more important to see it in a symbolical act, expressive of Elisha’s entire renunciation of his secular calling. He would henceforth need them no longer. Cf. 1 Sam. vi. 14; 2 Sam. xxiv. 22], and gave unto the people [Not only the servants or peasants who had been ploughing with him, but possibly his neighbours and friends. This was a farewell, not a religious feast. Cf. Luke v. 29, where Levi makes a “great feast” on the occasion of his call], and they did eat. Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him. [*i.e.*, became his attendant, as Joshua, had been the minister of Moses (Exod. xxiv. 13; Josh. i. 1), and as Gehazi subsequently became servant to him. See 2 Kings iii. 11: “Elisha . . . which poured water on the hands of Elijah;” and cf. Acts xiii. 5.]

### HOMILETICS.

*God and the Man of God.* This chapter lends itself more readily to textual than to topical treatment.

Ver. 1.—“*And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done.*” Was there no word, then, of what *God* had done? Did he think that Elijah, by his own power or holiness, had brought down fire from heaven? Or if Elijah brought it, was there no thought of Him who sent it? But it is an every-day experience that men will think of anything, talk of anything but their Maker. They do not “like to retain God in their thoughts” (Rom. i. 28). Perhaps Ahab was afraid in the presence of Jezebel to connect the awful portent with the name of the Lord. That would be tantamount to confessing before her that the Lord He was God (ch. xviii. 24). Jezebel, therefore, may think it was magic if she will. Men are not unseldom cowards in religion, even before their own wives and children. How blessed it is when husband and wife rehearse to each other the righteous acts of the Lord; how doubly blessed when the believing husband wins and saves the unbelieving wife (1 Cor. vii. 14, 16). Then marriage is a sacrament indeed.

“*And . . . how he had slain all the prophets,*” &c. There was no need to tell her that, at least that night. This communication shows that Ahab’s heart was unchanged, otherwise he would have practised a discreet reserve. He must have known full well what the effect of those dark tidings would be. Had he wished for her conversion, he would surely have waited till the morning light. That would have given the other tidings he had brought a chance to work repentance. To speak of the death of the prophets would be to fill her with ungovernable rage. It was charity to hold his peace. That was “a time to keep silence.”

Ver. 2.—“*Then Jezebel sent a messenger.*” Not, as we might have expected, to sue for forgiveness, but to threaten reprisals. “She swears and stamps at that wherewith she should have trembled” (Hall). There is no hate like a woman’s, no wickedness like hers. They never do things by halves.

“Men differ at most as heaven and earth,  
But women, best and worst, as heaven and hell.”

This woman will not be persuaded though one rose from the dead (Luke xvi. 1). The fiery sign was lost upon her (“Faith cometh by hearing, not by apparitions”). Ahab witnessed the execution of the priests and was too much awed to prevent it. Jezebel only hears of it, and straightway vows vengeance against its author. “Adam

was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression" (1 Tim. ii. 14).

"*The gods do so,*" &c. This is like much of the profane swearing that we hear, "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." It costs very little to invoke factitious deities. "The gods she swore by could do her no harm." They had not been able to save their own prophets. Cf. Judg. vi. 31.

"*If I make not thy life,*" &c. The enemies of God's Church and prophets are always chained, and sometimes are infatuate too. They cannot "go beyond the word of the Lord to do less or more" (Num. xxii. 18). "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord . . . he turneth it whithersoever he will" (Prov. xxi. 1). "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness" (1 Cor. iii. 19), and turns the counsel of an Ahithophel into foolishness (2 Sam. xv. 31). The *wrath* of man is made to praise Him (Psa. lxxvi. 10). "Her threat preserved him whom she meant to kill." "It were no living for godly men if the hands of tyrants were allowed to be as bloody as their hearts" (Hall).

Ver. 3.—"*He arose and went for his life.*" Elijah, the intrepid apostle of Carmel, who had met the king without fear and faced the four hundred Baal prophets, and stood alone *contra mundum*, is seized with panic fear. The champion of the morning becomes the coward of the evening. We may well exclaim here, *Quantum mutatus ab illo!* well ask, "Lord, what is man?" Some have called man a demi-god; have seen in him "the peer of the angels." "What a piece of work," says Hamlet, "is man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god!" In Elijah we see man at his best. He was one of the "first three." He is distinguished even from his brother prophets by the work he was called to do, by the powers with which he was entrusted, by the grace given to him, the care taken of him, the triumphant end granted to him. But how weak and unworthy does this elect messenger of God now appear. "Should such a man as I am flee?" (Neh. vi. 11.) "How are the mighty fallen!" How completely he is the sport of circumstances; how full of contradictions his conduct. At one moment he flees for his *life*; at the next he requests for himself that he may *die*. "Doth he wish to be rid of his life because he feared to lose it?" (Hall.) Yesterday strong in faith, fearing neither man nor devil; to-day trembling before a woman, wretched and despairing. But more than that, we find him impatient, petulant, proud, arraigning the providence and wisdom of God. "Take away my life," this is the cry of a mortified ambition; of one who cannot trust himself in God's hands any longer. "I am not better than my fathers." What do these words reveal, but that he *had* thought himself better than they; that he had been "exalted above measure through the abundance of revelations"? (2 Cor. xii. 7.) And this is Elijah, the restorer of the law, the express ambassador of heaven. It is well said that he was "a man subject to like passions as we are" (James v. 18). "I have seen an end of all perfection;" Here is humanity at its best, and how poor and weak it is. If man is "the glory" he is also "the scandal of the universe."

"Chaos of passions, passions all confused,  
Still by himself abused or disabused,  
Created half to rise and half to fall,  
Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all;  
Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurled,  
The glory, jest, and riddle of the world."

Ver. 5.—"*Behold, an angel touched him.*" So that he was watched and guarded, even while he slept. His impatience and faithlessness have not diminished the loving care and tenderness of God. "He knoweth our frame." His very sleep was ordained in mercy. Observe the contrast between the pity and love of God and the childish repining and discontent of the man of God! Observe, too, how God uses the ministry of angels! Compare Matt. iv. 11; Luke xxii. 48; Acts xxvii. 23; v. 19; xii. 8. "Are they not all ministering spirits?" (Heb. i. 14.) "No wilderness is too solitary for the attendance of those blessed spirits." "While he slept, his breakfast is made ready for him by those spiritual hands."

"How oft do they their silver bowers leave  
 To come to succour us that succour want!  
 How oft do they with golden pinions cleave  
 The fitting skyes, like flying pursuivant,  
 Against fowle fiendes to ayd us militant!  
 They for us fight, they watch, and dewly ward,  
 And their bright squadrons round about us plant;  
 And all for love and nothing for reward.  
 O why should heavenly God to men have such regard?"

**Ver. 6.**—"A cake baken on the coals," &c. Not only was the prophet protected, he was provided for by the angel. What a commentary on that verse, "He giveth it to his beloved while they sleep" (Psa. cxxvii. 2, Heb.) And does not God give us all food in like manner? While the farmer sleeps, the seed springs and grows up, he knoweth not how (Mark iv. 27). Our Keeper neither slumbers nor sleeps (Psa. cxxi. 4). Observe also how God prepares a table in the wilderness. It is not the first time He has given angels' food in the desert (Psa. lxxviii. 25; Neh. ix. 21; Deut. viii. 16).

**Ver. 7.**—"Arise and eat." Though this was supernatural food, so far as we can see miraculously provided, and in any case of preternatural efficacy, yet it must be taken and eaten in the ordinary way. Elijah might have been endued with strength for his desert journey without the aid of any material elements. The angel's touch or even the word of the Lord would surely have sufficed (Judg. vi. 21; Ezek. ii. 2; iii. 24; Luke vii. 7). Instead of which a cake is baken on the coals, and he must rise and eat thereof, eat thereof *twice*. God works by means, and it is for man to use them. It is presumption to expect God to dispense with them because He can do so.

**Ver. 8.**—"Went in the strength of that meat," &c. It is very noticeable how many miraculous feedings we have in Holy Scripture. Not only does the New Testament record a feeding, now of five thousand with five loaves, now of four thousand with seven loaves (Matt. xv. 9, 10); not only is one or other of these mentioned by all four evangelists (Matt. xiv. 17; Mark vi. 38; Luke ix. 13; John vi. 9; Matt. xv. 36; Mark viii. 6); but the Old Testament, in addition to such narratives as those of 1 Kings xvii. 14 sqq.; 2 Kings iv. 1—6, 42 sqq., tells of a miraculous supply of food which extended over forty years (Exod. xvi. 14—35; Deut. viii. 3, 4, 16). Is not all this to teach us that man doth not live by bread alone? (Deut. viii. 3.) Are they not rehearsals, adumbrations of the great mystery of our religion, of the true "bread from heaven which giveth life unto the world"? (John vi. 32 sqq.) We too are journeying to Horeb, the mount of God. The home of our souls is the "mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense" (Cant. iv. 6). And the journey is too great for us. Without Divine aid, without soul food, we shall "faint by the way." But God has provided for us a gracious *viaticum*, a meat which the world knows not of, flesh which is meat indeed, blood which is drink indeed (John vi. 55).

**Ver. 9.**—"The word of the Lord came to him." Though he had not merited such a favour, for he had acted without that word when he fled. True, he fled to the desert, so far as we can see, that he might hear what God would say concerning him, but he had no right to presume that He who had not spoken at Jezreel would speak at Sinai. But God never deals with us as we deserve, or as we deal with one another. "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" (Psa. cxxx. 3.) "If they break my statues . . . then will I visit their transgression with the rod . . . nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him," &c. (Psa. lxxxix. 31—33). "Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord" (Jer. iii. 1). If the word did not come to us when we stray, how could we be reclaimed? God must take the first step (John vi. 44).

"What doest thou here, Elijah?" It is more than doubtful whether there was any audible voice (see ver. 12). God spoke through the *conscience*. And this is still the organ used by the Holy Ghost. Have we never heard this question in our secret souls? perhaps when we stood in the way of sinners, or sat in the seat of the

scornful. We should do well to put it repeatedly to our own hearts. "*Bernarde, ad quid venisti?*"—it was thus that the greatest saint of the Middle Ages often tried his motives and conduct.

Ver. 10.—"*I have been very jealous.*" We often confound zeal for our own ends and purposes with zeal for God; often misread our own motives. Jehu cried, "Come and see my zeal for the Lord" (2 Kings x. 16); "but Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel," &c. (vers. 29, 31). Saul's "zeal for the children of Israel and Judah" (2 Sam. xxi. 2) procured the impalement of seven of his sons. St. Paul bears witness of the Jews, that "they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge," and testifies of himself, "concerning zeal, persecuting the Church" (Phil. iii. 6; cf. Acts xxvi. 9, 11). We can understand the cynical warning. *Surtout, point de zèle*, when we remember what crimes have been committed in its name. The spirit of Elias, the spirit of fire and sword (2 Kings i. 10; 1 Kings xix. 1), is not the spirit of our Lord or His Church (Luke ix. 55, 56). There was not improbably in this complaint something of the resentment which James and John felt when the Samaritans did not receive them. Was it not in part pique at his rejection by Israel led to Elijah's intercession against them? (Rom. xi. 2.) It is true, he begins, "They have rejected thee," but he ends, "They have rejected me" (1 Sam. viii. 7). And our lamentations over the non-success of our ministry, are they inspired by the dishonour done to God, or the indifference manifested towards ourselves? There may be both pride and temper in the complaint, "He followeth not us" (Mark ix. 38).

Ver. 11.—"*Stand . . . before the Lord.*" Only thus can we know ourselves, and self-knowledge must be our first aim. "*E caelo descendit, γῆθη σαυρόν.*" "In thy light shall we see light." We compare ourselves with pigmies when we compare ourselves with others (2 Cor. x. 12). It is only in the presence of our Maker that we learn our nothingness and sinfulness. "Now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job xlii. 5, 6). "Beholding the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image" (2 Cor. iii. 18).

Ver. 12.—"*A still small voice.*" The terrors of the Lord awe the soul; His love melts and wins it. What the law could not do, the gospel has done (Rom. viii. 3). Christ draws men unto Him by the sweet attraction of His cross (John xii. 32). The lightnings and thunders, the trumpet and the voices of Sinai, do not move the world as do the seven last words of the Crucified. "Not in the wind that parted the Red Sea, or the fire that swept the top of Sinai," was God brought so near to man, "as in the ministrations of Him whose cry was not heard in the streets, as in the still small voice of the child at Bethlehem" (Stanley). This parable may be compared with the familiar fable which tells how storm and sun strove together for the mastery. The former made the traveller wrap his garments more closely about him; the latter made him cast them aside. Love is more powerful than fear, and that because "love is of God." Judgment is His strange work. "God loves to make a way for Himself by terror, but He conveys Himself to us in sweetness" (Bp. Hall)—a truth well brought out in Theodore Monod's exquisite hymn—

- " Yet He found me: I beheld Him  
 Bleeding on the cursèd tree;  
 Heard Him pray, 'Forgive them, Father;'  
 And my wistful heart said faintly,  
 'Some of Thee, and some of Thee.'
- " Day by day His tender mercy  
 Healing, helping, full and free;  
 Sweet and strong, and, ah! so patient,  
 Brought me lower, whilst I whispered,  
 'Less of self, and more of Thee.'
- " Higher than the highest heavens,  
 Deeper than the deepest sea,  
 Lord, Thy love at last hath conquered;  
 Grant me now my spirit's longing,  
 'None of self, and all of Thee.'

Ver. 13.—“*Wrapped his face in his mantle.*” He was afraid to look upon God (Exod. iii. 6; cf. Gen. iii. 10, “I hid myself”). “Conscience makes cowards of us all.” Besides, no man can see His face and live (Exod. xxxiii. 20). The beatific vision is too much for our poor mortality, too much for the angelic powers (Isa. vi. 2). It is in mercy that God is veiled from our view. The seeing God as He is belongs to the times of restitution (Matt. v. 8; Heb. xii. 14; Rev. i. 7; xxii. 4; 1 Cor. xiii. 12).

Ver. 14.—“*I have been very jealous,*” &c. The same question, and precisely the same words in reply. But everything was not the same. The man and the manner were alike changed (cf. 1 Sam. x. 6). He has heard the “still small voice,” and it has hushed his own. How true it is, “It is not the words we say, but the manner and spirit in which we say them, gives them their force and significance.”

Ver. 15.—“*Go, return.*” This is God’s answer to the question, “What doest thou here?” “Thou hast now no business here. Thou hast a work to do elsewhere. Thou art not left alone, nor has God ceased to watch over and care for His Church. His ministers of wrath are already nominated; it is for thee to call them to their work.” Which of God’s servants has not desponded like Elijah? Who has not been tempted to think his work a failure? Who has not had to complain of a gain-saying and disobedient people? How many have been induced to desert their posts? But no man’s work *can* be a failure unless he is a failure himself. Our work is to witness, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear. If they forbear, who shall say that that work is not successful? And it may be suggested here that work is often the very best remedy for despondency and doubt. The diligent soul has no time for self-torture. Its eye is fixed on others. There is a quaint legend which tells how, some years after the event, St. Thomas was again troubled with agonizing doubts as to our Lord’s resurrection. He sought the apostles, and began to pour his soul’s troubles into their ears. But first one, then the other, looked at him in astonishment, and told the unhappy doubter that he was sorry for him, but really he had so much to do he had no time to listen to his tale. Then he was fain to impart his woes to some devout women. But they, as busy as Dorcas and in like employment, soon made him understand that they had no leisure for such thoughts as these. At last it dawned upon him that perhaps it was because they *were* so busy that they were free from the doubts by which he was tortured. He took the hint; he went to Parthia; occupied himself in preaching Christ’s gospel, and was never troubled with doubts any more.

Ver. 18.—“*Yet have I left me seven thousand.*” There is always a remnant (Rom. xi. 4, 5). The gates of hell cannot prevail against the Church. God has His secret ones, unknown to men. The number of the elect must be accomplished. (Rev. vii. 4). The prophets have been too much given to pessimist views. “God’s faithful ones are often his hidden ones” (Psa. lxxxiii. 8).

“Yet in fall’n Israel are there hearts and eyes,  
That day by day in prayer like thine arise,  
Thou know’st them not, but their Creator know’st.”

Archbishop Ussher used to say to say that in the great Assize, if the King should set him on His right hand, three things would surprise him. First, to find himself there; secondly, to find that numbers of whose salvation he had always been confident were not there; thirdly, to find that thousands of whose salvation he had always despaired were there after all.

Ver. 19.—“*Found Elisha . . . ploughing.*” God never calls an idle man. “If ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?” (Luke xvi. 11.) The man who will not plough by reason of the cold (Prov. xx. 4), if he put his hand to the gospel plough, will presently look back (Luke ix. 62), and go not to the work (Acts xv. 38). The apostles were called from their ships, their nets, the receipt of custom, &c., none from the market-place or the street corners. They only exchanged one department of God’s work for another, for “the man who makes two blades of grass grow where only one grew before is

a fellow-worker with God." *Laborare est orare.* "An honest calling in the world does not at all put us out of the way of our heavenly calling." "In all labour is profit."

Ver. 20.—"*He left the oxen.*" No service without sacrifice. Sometimes it is only ships and nets (Mark i. 20), sometimes it is houses and lands, father and mother, wife and child (Matt. xix. 29).

"*Go back again.*" Why should he not kiss his father and mother? "For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother," and it is not for the greatest of the prophets to make the commandment of God of none effect (Matt. xv. 4—6). Religion develops and intensifies the domestic affections. Ties of flesh become stronger and closer when cemented and consecrated by grace. It would be strange if the religion of love made husband or wife, parent or child, love each other less.

Ver. 21.—"*Took a yoke of oxen and slew them.*" He has done with earthly pursuits. He burns his ships behind him. It would be well for the Church of Christ if her ministers acted in like manner. The temptation to eke out a scanty income by trade, especially among missionaries, must be great; but a man cannot be half a clergyman, and must not be entangled with the affairs of this life. Some of the Swiss pastors have become hotel-keepers, but if they have been the gainers, religion has not. Of all masters, religion and business are the two which can least be served together.

#### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—8.—*Elijah's Prayer for Death.* How erratic have been the movements of this prophet! Our first introduction to him is at the court of Ahab, whence, as soon as he utters his prophecy, he is away to Cherith in the east, among the wilds of Gilead. Next we find him in the north, at Zarephath of Zidon. Then he meets Obadiah, probably in the plain of Esdraelon, whence he passes over to Carmel in the west. From Carmel he runs before Ahab's horses to the entrance of Jezreel. The next day finds him on his way to Beersheba in the extreme south of Judah. The day following he is pushing his way into the wilderness of Sinai, where we now find him under a shrub, requesting for himself that he may die. Let us consider—

I. THE OCCASION OF THIS PRAYER. 1. *Jezebel had threatened his life.* (1) Ahab had reported to his queen what Elijah had done at Carmel, and in particular recounted how he had slain all the prophets. In this statement we notice two capital faults. He did not recount what *Jehovah* had done; he did not properly distinguish the "prophets" slain as idolatrous and false. The gospel may be variously preached. (2) Instead of reflecting and repenting, Jezebel was filled with resentment, and resolved upon the destruction of Elijah. Miracles will not do more than reason with a corrupt and prejudiced heart. (See Luke xvi. 31; John xii. 10, 11.) (3) She accordingly sent messengers to Elijah with an oath, declaring that within twenty-four hours she would revenge upon his life the slaughter of her priests. Wickedness is not always politic: by giving him this notice she gave him an opportunity to escape. 2. *To save his life he fled.* (1) Was this wrong? Some have blamed him for it because he did not first ascertain the will of God. Had he no voice of God in the instinct of self-preservation? Had he no voice of God in the providence which apprised him of his peril? Would he not have tempted the Lord his God to have waited for another voice? Had he remained and forfeited his life, would he not have been to blame? God gives us our reason, and if we follow its light, together with that of an upright conscience, we shall do well. (2) But who can say that Elijah had no direction from the word of the Lord? Certainly there was a plan for his journey recognized by the angel with which he was familiar (see ver. 7). The distance from Beersheba to Horeb was about 150 miles. (3) In his flight he came first to Beersheba, where he was under the protection of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, who feared the Lord. There he left his

servant in safety, and might have abode himself in safety had he not acted under the promptings of inspiration to proceed alone into the wilderness. (3) *Alone with God he asks to die.* (1) The Hebrew phrase is, "He requested for his life that he might die." There is life in death to the righteous. (2) "It is enough." This is the language of disappointment. He looked for better fruit of his ministry than he found. He thought, Surely this demonstration on Carmel will extinguish idolatry; but he finds Jezebel swearing against his life, and apparently in a position to carry out her purpose. "Now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers." I am no more useful here than they have been who are gone hence. Let me join them.

II. THE ANSWERS GIVEN TO IT. 1. *They come in the form of physical refreshment.* (1) Elijah's prayer was evidently uttered under the influence of physical exhaustion and discomfort. His sitting under the "juniper" is mentioned, not to suggest that he derived comfort from an ample shade, but rather to show how little shelter he could find. The word (רִתֵּם) is construed as in the text by the Hebrews, by Jerome, and the Vulgate; yet it is rather the *genista* (broom), a shrub with yellow flowers which grows in the desert, and which has its name (from רתם to bind) from the toughness or tenacity of its twigs, which were used for withes. Not only was he wayworn with his journey and exposure to the sun, but faint also for want of food and drink. (2) The answer came to his prayer, therefore, in the blessing of refreshing sleep. Out of this also he was seasonably aroused by an Angel to find a cake on the coals (as bread is sometimes baked in the East) and a cruse of water at his bolster. God knows our frame, pities us, and makes due allowance for our frailties. When we find our spirits in a morbid state let us look to our health. Hygiene may come, even to the soul, as an angel of God. 2. *They came to him in spiritual blessing.* (1) The refreshment which Elijah received was supernatural in its source. The bread and water came to him with the word and touch of the Angel-Jehovah (מַלְאֲכַי יְהוָה). This was no common angel, but one of the Persons of the Godhead. (2) It was supernatural also in its effects (ver. 8). In these he is brought intimately into association with Moses and Jesus. (Compare Exod. xxxiv. 28; Deut. ix. 9, 18; Matt. iv. 2.) It is also noteworthy how these three appear in glory together on the holy mount. (See Luke ix. 30, 31.) The spiritual life we derive from God's word is set forth in the mystery of the manna which for forty years nourished the people of God in this wilderness. It is also set forth in that new life of Jesus in which after His resurrection He appeared to His disciples during forty days. (See Rom. vi. 11; Gal. ii. 20.)—J. A. M.

Vers. 9—18.—*Elijah at Horeb.* Elijah went in the strength of the refreshment he had received from the Angel-Jehovah a forty days' journey to Horeb. He was now on holy ground. It was the "mount of God" on which Moses had seen the Angel-Jehovah in the bush, and was within sight of Sinai, memorable for the giving of the law. On Horeb he lodges in a cave, perhaps the very recess from which Moses witnessed the Shechinah (see Exod. xxxii. 22), and here becomes the subject of Divine communications and revelations. Consider now—

I. HIS INTERCESSION AGAINST ISRAEL. 1. *Observe the occasion.* (1) The question came to him by the word of the Lord, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" In answer to this he urged what Paul calls his "intercession against Israel" (Rom. xi. 2, 8). Wherever we are it behoves us to ask ourselves what business we have here. Everywhere our first business is to glorify God. (2) This question is thought to suggest that Elijah might have been more profitably employed elsewhere. But did he not come here after receiving supernatural strength from God Himself expressly for this journey? (See vers. 7, 8.) (3) Rather must we not look upon his journey in the light of a parable, showing how God abandons those who refuse to be reformed? (Compare Jer. ix. 2.) In this view we can see how Elijah acted in "faith" in this journey; for Paul seems to allude to him in Hebrews xi. 38. 2. *The matter of the accusation.* (1) The view now given harmonizes with this, the substance of which is the prophet's great jealousy for the Lord God of hosts, whose honour had been outraged by the apostasy of the children of Israel. Here

is no confession of that unworthy timidity with which Elijah has been, we think, too hastily charged. Nor had he any rebuke from God for such supposed dastardliness, which doubtless he would have received had he deserved it. He is here because he cannot abide in the land of Israel, where Jehovah was commonly insulted. (2) He recounts the particulars of his grief. "For the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant"—have substituted false Elohim for Thee; "thrown down thine altars"—attempted to abolish Thy worship; "slain thy prophets with the sword"—to provide against any revival of the pure religion of their fathers; "and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life to take it away." Of what use, then, could he be to such a people? (See Hosea iv. 17.) (3) The motive of this intercession to God against Israel is not personal revenge, but zeal for Jehovah. And though we are bound, as Christians, to love our enemies, that does not say that we are to love the enemies of God. There is a spurious charity in high favour which the Scriptures do not sanction. (See 2 Chron. xix. 2; Psa. cxix. 19; cxxxix. 21; Luke xiv. 26.) Beware of that charity which has complicity with sin. (4) The repetition of the answer when a second time the question was put evinces the deep sincerity of the prophet's soul.

II. THE ANSWER OF GOD UNTO HIM. 1. *This was first given in symbol.* (1) To witness the vision he was caused to stand on the mount before the Lord. Probably this was the place where Moses stood on a similar occasion (see Exod. xix. 9, 16). We should have the Rock of Ages for our foundation when we witness visions of God. All shall witness them in the judgment of the great day. (2) Terrible signs immediately followed upon the passing by of Jehovah. (a) First, "a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord." Here was a sign of wrath upon the rulers and people, through *invasion*. (Compare Jer. iv. 11—18; Ezek. vi. 2; Amos iv. 1.) (b) "And after the wind an earthquake." This is a sign of *revolution*, whether in things civil, ecclesiastical, or both. (Compare Psa. lxxviii. 8; Rev. vi. 12; xvi. 18.) (c) "And after the earthquake a fire." This is the symbol of *judgments* more immediately from God (see Deut. iv. 24; Psa. xviii. 12—14; lxvi. 12; Jer. xlvi. 45). (3) But the Lord was in none of these. Judgments are a strange work to Him. They are necessary to the order of His government, but not congenial to His nature. "He *delighteth* in mercy." So the Lord was in the "still small voice" which followed. The gentle voice of the gospel follows the law which came with the uproar of the elements, and *God is in it*. So Elijah wrapped his face in his mantle. (Compare Exod. iii. 6; Isa. vi. 2.) 2. *It was afterwards expounded in words.* (1) Elijah, the intercessor against Israel, and therefore the impersonation of anger against sin, was to return to Israel by way of Damascus, where he was to "anoint Hazael to be king over Syria." In Hazael now we must look for the "strong wind" that was to come up and make havoc upon the mountains and rocks of Israel. (Compare 2 Kings viii. 12, 13; x. 32, 33; xiii. 8.) (2) "Jehu the son of Nimshi" was Elijah to "anoint to be king over Israel." Here was the instrument of the "earthquake" of revolution. (See 2 Kings ix. 1—8.) Not only did Jehu bring a signal destruction upon the whole house of Ahab; he brought down judgment also upon the worshippers of Baal (2 Kings x. 28). (3) "Elisha the son of Shaphat" was this impersonation of righteous anger to "anoint to be prophet" in his room. Here is God's instrument of "fire." His words are to be swords of flame. So "it shall come to pass that him that escapeth from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay; and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay." No sinner can escape the fire of God's word. (4) But the "still small voice" of the gospel of mercy has its triumphs. "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel," &c. God has His faithful "hidden ones" (Psa. lxxxiii. 8). No wonder Elijah should cover his face with reverent gratitude at the discovery of that sealed company in whose midst was JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH! (Ezek. xlvi. 35; Rev. vii. 13—17.)—J. A. M.

Vers. 19—21.—*The Call of Elisha.* After the visions of Horeb, and in pursuance of the commission there received, Elijah returned from the wilderness and re-entered the land of Israel. Whether he went round by Damascus, and in his

course anointed Hazael to be king over Syria, as Samuel had anointed David long before he ascended the throne of Israel, we are not informed. It is not necessary for the fulfilment of his instructions (ver. 15) to suppose that he did so; for prophets are said to *do* things which they *predict*. (See Jer. i. 10; Ezek. xliii. 3; Rom. iv. 17.) The reason is that their predictions are sure to be accomplished; and upon the same principle a true faith in the promises of God is said to be the "substance" or subsistence of "things hoped for" (Heb. xi. 1). It is certain that *Elisha* made provision for the anointing of Jehu; *Elisha* also informed Hazael that he should be king over Syria (see 2 Kings viii. 13; ix. 1—3). The call of *Elisha* was by the hand of *Elijah*.

I. THE CALL OF ELISHA WAS FROM GOD. 1. *Elijah threw his mantle over Elisha.*

(1) The prophet's mantle was the symbol of his office. It seems to have been the skin of an animal, or composed of some hairy material (see 2 Kings i. 8; Zech. xiii. 5; Isa. xx. 2; Matt. iii. 4). In allusion to this, perhaps, the popes invest their cardinals with the *pallium*—a cloak or *pall* made of wool. (2) The mantle of *Elijah* thrown upon *Elisha* was the sign that he was to "follow him," to be his servant first, and eventually to be his successor. The mantle, accordingly, came fully into the possession of *Elisha* when his "master" was "taken from his head" (2 Kings ii. 3, 13). (3) The "spirit of *Elijah*" then "came upon *Elisha*." So essential to a prophet is the Spirit of God that prophets themselves are called "spirits." False prophets also are called "spirits," but for an opposite reason (see ch. xxii. 22, 23; 1 Cor. xiv. 32; 1 John iv. 1, 2). 2. *Elijah acted under Divine direction.* (1) After he had asked for himself that he might die, God expressly commissioned him to anoint "*Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-Meholah*" to be "prophet in his room" (ver. 16). The true minister is God's gift. (2) God knew the qualities of *Elisha*. The manner in which he received the call proved him to be a true man. God's order is, first "grace," then "apostleship" (see Rom. i. 5). Those persons deceive themselves who, being destitute of godliness, affect apostleship (see Psa. l. 16). Nor can apostleship abide where grace is forfeited (Acts i. 25). (3) *Elijah* found *Elisha*, not in the schools of the prophets, but ploughing in the field. The spirit of prophecy will not be tied down to human institutions, however venerable and respectable.

II. THE RESPONSE OF ELISHA WAS TO GOD. 1. *He accordingly renounced the world.*

(1) He had something to sacrifice. The "twelve yoke of oxen" indicate prosperity. The glimpse we get of his home is sufficient to discover comfort and happiness. Everybody has something to give up for God. (2) At the call of God he gave up all. Instantly he "left the oxen and ran after *Elijah*." There should be no hesitation in entering upon the service of God. *Elisha* did not go home to *ask* but to *take* leave of his parents. For the authority of God is above that of parents. His proposal to return to his home was not a pretext for delay, else he would have merited the censure of our Lord (see Luke v. 29; ix. 61, 62). The completeness of his renunciation of the world was expressed in his sacrificing the oxen together with the gear. Ministers, in particular, should be free from the entanglements of this life (see Matt. x. 9, 10; 1 Cor. ix. 14; 2 Tim. ii. 4). 2. *He followed Elijah.* (1) He had something to encounter. The life of a prophet was not without its privations and discomforts. And in following *Elijah*, whose life was threatened with an oath by Jezebel, he would expose himself to her malignity. The offence of the cross has not ceased. (2) He encountered all cheerfully. *Elijah* responded to his request to let him kiss his father and mother before following him, saying, "Go, return; for what have I done to thee?" This answer was intended to throw upon *Elisha* the consideration of all that was involved in his call, so that his choice might be intelligent and free. He was not long in counting the cost. God had predisposed his heart (see Psa. cx. 3). Soon we find him pouring water upon the hands of *Elijah*—lovingly serving the servant of his Lord (2 Kings iii. 11).

Observe: 1. *Elisha*, though evidently a great man at *Abel-Meholah*, could handle the plough. There is no disgrace in honest labour. It is even honourable. 2. While in pursuit of his business he was called of God. Business will not be honest if it prevent us from hearing God's voice. 3. He returned to kiss his father

and mother and make a farewell feast with his household before following Elijah. Natural affection and social endearments, within proper limits, are respected by religion. 4. Elisha's parents do not seem to have hindered him. Those parents incur fearful responsibilities who, under worldly influences, hinder their sons from responding to a call of God to enter His ministry.—J. A. M.

Vers. 1—18.—*The Desponding Prophet.* A marvellous change has come over Elijah. It is difficult to imagine a more complete contrast than is presented by his moral attitude in this and the previous chapters. He who just before has so boldly confronted the proud king, and defied the priests of Baal, standing without fear before his flaming altar, and sternly carrying out the judgment of God on the corrupters of His people, is now filled with dismay, and flies from the post of duty and of danger. So unstable are the grandest forms of human virtue, and so weak are the noblest of men when God is pleased for a while to leave them to themselves. Consider (1) The prophet's state of mind. (2) The way in which God deals with him.

I. THE PROPHET'S STATE OF MIND. It is one of deep despondency. Fear of the queen's revenge is not enough of itself to explain it. There is disappointment at the apparent result of the events of the previous day, weariness of life, disgust at the condition of the land, a sense of powerlessness before the difficulties of his position, perhaps doubt as to the wisdom of what he has done. He speaks and acts as a dispirited, broken-hearted man. Note some of the manifest causes of this despondency. We can never thoroughly understand the feelings of a man unless we take into account the sources and occasions of them, and try to put ourselves in his place. 1. *Physical exhaustion.* His bodily frame was worn and weary. His animal spirits had had a great strain upon them, and now suffered a corresponding relapse. Unwonted exertion of strength was followed by unwonted weakness. The relation that exists between the state of the body and the state of the mind is very mysterious, but very real. The elation or depression of our religious feeling depends far more on mere physical conditions than we often imagine. A diseased body will often cause a dark cloud to come over the spirit's firmament; much that is morbid in the religious thoughts and emotions of good men needs to be dealt with by the physician of the body rather than of the soul. 2. *Loneliness.* He was without the companionship and sympathy of those who would share his labours and perils. "I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life to destroy it." It is a single-handed conflict in which he is involved. There are none to stand by him, none whom he can trust. Such isolation is the severest possible test of fidelity. As the rock never appears more majestic than when seen standing alone, with the ocean billows rolling round it, so with one who is "faithful found among the faithless," cut off from all natural and human supports, isolated in a surrounding sea of indifference or iniquity. (Think of *Paul*: "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all forsook me," 2 Tim. iv. 16; above all *the Christ*. "I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with me," Isaiah lxiii. 3.) Supernatural help will often come for special emergencies, and will make the soul sublimely independent of external aid; but it is hard to carry on a long, patient conflict with difficulties alone. 3. *Want of success.* His ministry seems all in vain. His words are but as the dreams of the false prophets. The solemn testimony given on Carmel has passed away without effecting any real change in the condition of things. The fire that consumed his sacrifice has gone out. Righteous vengeance has been inflicted on the idolatrous prophets, and the Kishon has swept away their blood. The drought has done its work, and the rain has returned upon the land. And now all seems to be going on just as it was before. Ahab and Jezebel are as hostile and treacherous and full of cruel hate as ever; and as for the people, there is no kind of security for their constancy to their recent vows. Surely he is living his sad life in vain! That dreariest of all thoughts to a man of high and holy purpose—that his labour is utterly fruitless—sweeps like a withering wind through his soul, and he wishes he were dead. "O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers." 4. *The sense of having forsaken the post of responsibility.* It may have been a natural impulse that moved him to "fly for his life," but no wonder

his despondency deepened as he lost himself in the solitudes of the wilderness. His was the inward disquietude which will always be the penalty of a man's having weakly or wilfully deserted the path of duty. When good men place themselves in a false position, they must expect the shadow of some morbid condition of feeling to fall upon their spirits. When the hands of those who ought to be busy about some work for God are idle, their hearts are left a prey to all sorts of evil influences. Religious activity is one of the main secrets of religious health. What is our grand business in this world but just to battle against the weaknesses of our own nature, and the force of adverse circumstances? And when the difficulties of our position gather thickest about us, then is the time to cast ourselves most fearlessly on the Divine power that will enable us to overcome them and listen to the voice that says, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life."

II. GOD'S WAY OF DEALING WITH HIM. Taking a general view of the Divine method, we see that each successive step is wisely adapted to the prophet's need. 1. *Physical refreshment.* An angel is sent with food for the nourishment of his exhausted frame; not to talk with him, not by remonstrance or persuasion to chase away his morbid feelings, but to feed him. The disease of the mind is to be cured by first removing the weakness of the body, which was one of its causes. It is a suggestive incident. Our physical nature is as truly an object of Divine thought and care as the spiritual. God will not fail to supply the meaner wants of His children. The beneficent ministries of His providence are ever auxiliary to the higher purposes of His grace. 2. *A significant revelation of the Divine presence and power.* The remarkable phenomena described in the eleventh and twelfth verses on doubt had a symbolic meaning. The wind, the earthquake, and the fire were emblems of the conspicuous and extraordinary manner in which Elijah probably expected the work of God to be carried on. The "still small voice" that followed taught him that God's chosen way of working was rather one that is calm and noiseless. The stirring events that had recently taken place were only preparatory to the silent but mightier energy of His spirit working through the voice of the prophet. We are apt to over-estimate the power of that which "cometh with observation." Why should the wind, and the fire, and the earthquake be God's only instruments? Is He not equally in the gently-dawning light, the soft-whispering breeze, the silent, secret forces of nature? Your path of usefulness may be obscure, your influence unobserved, its issues slowly developed. But be not disheartened. Remember the "still small voice" breathing in the ear of the prophet at the mouth of the cave when the tumult was over, and learn that it is by a feeble instrument and a quiet, patient process that God will accomplish His grandest work in the moral sphere. This is the method of the world's Redeemer. "He shall not cry nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets, &c. (Isa. xlii. 2, 3, 4). 3. *Words of rebuke and encouragement.* "What doest thou here, Elijah?" "Go, return on thy way." "Yet have I left me seven thousand in Israel," &c. Thus does God reprove him for the faithlessness that lay at the root of his despondency. If the veil that hid the secret life of Israel could at that hour have been uplifted, he would have seen how little real reason there was for it. Seven thousand living witnesses might have come forth from their obscurity to show that his work was not in vain. We little know what God is doing beneath the surface, at the secret heart of society, when appearances seem most unfavourable. Let us be true to ourselves and to Him, doing faithfully the work He has given us to do in storm or in calm, and leave it to Him to bring about the glorious issue. "Be ye therefore steadfast, immovable," &c. (1 Cor. xv. 58).—W.

Ver. 19—21.—*The Call of Elisha.* It was by an express Divine command that Elijah summoned Elisha to the prophetic office (ver. 16). And yet we may discern a purely human element in this. He did it by the impulse of natural feeling. Stern, rugged, self-reliant as he was, he needed sympathy and companionship. He yearned for the society of a kindred spirit. He could not bear to live alone. Whether he had any previous personal knowledge of Elisha we know not; but it is certain that, totally different as the two men were, he found in him a faithful friend and

servant. And scanty as the materials of the narrative may be, there is enough to show how deep and tender an affection existed between them. Note in reference to this call—

I. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE DIVINE CHOICE. No indication is given as to why Elisha particularly should have been called to this office. So it has generally been in the case of those who, in the olden times, were raised up to occupy distinguished positions in the development of the Divine plan. (Abraham, Moses, Saul, David, &c.) So was it in Christ's choice of the inner circle of His disciples; as when to the sons of Zebedee mending their nets, and to Matthew at the receipt of custom, He said, "Follow me." But the elections of God are never arbitrary and capricious. He chooses whom He will to be the instruments of His purpose, "taking one of a city and two of a family" as it pleases Him (Jer. iii. 14). But there is always some deep and sufficient reason for this, though we may not be able to trace it. Every man who has done any great work for God in the world has been more or less deeply impressed with this sense of a special Divine call and commission. And it has given a dignity to his bearing and strength and courage to his spirit that nothing else could give. Every true Christian finds highest inspiration in the thought that God has singled him out from the crowd and summoned him to the service of a consecrated life. "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you," &c. (John xv. 16).

II. THE SACRED PERSONAL RELATION IT ESTABLISHED BETWEEN THE PROPHET AND HIS SERVANT. Elijah's throwing his "mantle" upon him as he passed by was a symbolic act indicative of this. It was the sign of their common prophetic vocation, the seal and bond of the new relation existing between them. It betokened—(1) some kind of adoption to sonship. "My Father, my Father" (2 Kings ii. 12). (2) A transference of the responsibility of the prophetic work. (3) The impartation of the same spirit, even the "double portion" of the first-born (2 Kings iii. 9, 10). We see here something dimly typical of the relation Christ sustained towards His chosen apostles. "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so also have I sent them," &c. (John xvii. 18, 19). Some such relation subsisted between Paul and his "dearly beloved son" Timothy. "As a son with the father he hath served with me in the gospel" (Phil. ii. 22). "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance," &c. "Hold fast the form of sound words," &c. (2 Tim. i. 6, 13). The thought becomes proverbial when we speak of the "mantle" of a great leader falling upon his successors. One of the chief ends of a noble life is answered when others take up the work that it left unfinished, and catch the spirit of its example; nothing more sacred than the spiritual bond thus established.

III. THE COMPLETENESS OF ELISHA'S SELF-SURRENDER. Natural feeling for a moment throws an obstacle in the way. "Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother." It was a hard task for him at once to loosen himself from family ties, and relinquish the comforts of what was probably a prosperous pastoral life, and cast in his lot with the wandering prophet. Elijah's answer seems to disown the exercise of any undue constraint upon him, and simply leaves him free to choose. But the loyalty of his spirit to the Divine authority soon settles the alternative, and after an act expressive of his entire abandonment of the associations of his former life, "he arose and went after Elijah and ministered unto him." We are reminded of the way in which Christ called on men to surrender their all and follow Him (Luke ix. 57—62). Fidelity to Him demands complete self-sacrifice. The strongest fascinations, and even the dearest ties of earth, will give way to the realized sovereignty of His claims. "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me" (Matt. x. 37).—W.

Ver. 4.—*The Causes of Despondency.* Human character is more complex than many imagine. Its elements are so diverse, and sometimes so contradictory, that only God can fairly judge it. The biographies of Scripture and the subtleties of our own hearts combine to enforce the lesson, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." We should have placed in the foremost rank the disciple who first acknowledged the divinity of our Lord, and we should have cast him out of the Church who denied

his Lord with oaths and curses; yet both the one and the other were the outcome of the same character. Never was contradiction more complete than in Elijah. One day he leads a whole nation in penitence, the next he flees to save his life, as one who has thrown up all hope of Jehovah's cause. None but the pitiful and patient Father-God would have judged him aright; nor was Elijah the last to say, "Thy gentleness hath made me great." We are reminded that it is difficult to judge ourselves as well as others. On Carmel, Elijah might have thought himself invincible, and in Horeb an unmitigated coward, but he was neither. Varieties of mood must not be too much considered. They do not afford a fair index to character. We are not infidels because we pass through a phase of doubt, we are not reprobates because we are deeply conscious of sin, nor are we Christians because we enjoy a religious service. A sad and frequent experience of religious life, that of *despondency*, is set before us here, and we will seek to discover its causes.

I. REACTION AFTER EXCITEMENT. Great natures are peculiarly subject to this. The impulse which impels to a noble act has a rebound proportioned to its intensity. Peter and John the Baptist stand beside Elijah as exemplars of this fact. From it arises the special peril of revivalistic services. Excitement has its place and power in the advance of Christ's kingdom, but we must not substitute spasmodic feeling for steady growth.

II. EXHAUSTION OF PHYSICAL AND NERVOUS ENERGY. Even the gigantic strength of Elijah underwent a terrible strain on Carmel. Anxiety, enthusiasm, burning zeal, exultation combined to agitate him, and these were doubtless preceded by many days and nights of passionate, agonizing prayer. God's provision for the prophet—the sleep that came over him, as over a tired child, the food prepared by angel hands—prove that this was recognized.

Show the mutual dependence of body and mind. Neither the equable temperament of some Christians nor the excitability of others is due always to the presence or absence of Divine grace. Good food, fresh air, and change of scene would do more than religious exercises to restore tone to some who are despondent. The neglect of sanitary laws is a sin. There was far-reaching wisdom in Paul's declaration, "I keep the body under."

III. ABSENCE OF SYMPATHY. "I am left alone." "I only am left." Such was the burden of Elijah's cry. This is a special source of despondency to missionaries surrounded by the heathen. It affects also multitudes who are not so literally alone. They may have many Christians around them, but in their special work, in their peculiar difficulty, they can find none to help, or even to understand them. "Alone in a crowd" is a true description of many a disciple of Christ, who is thinking his own thoughts and fighting his own foes. Show from this the wisdom of the provision God has made in Church fellowship. Point out the causes which tend to make such communion unreal or unhelpful. Urge the cultivation of sympathy with young disciples, with obscure workers, &c.

IV. INFLUENCE OF DOUBT. The confidence of the prophet on Carmel had broken down. Jezebel had not been cowed by the sudden revulsion of popular feeling. She doubted its permanence, and at all events resolved that she would not lose heart, so Ahab and his courtiers were reassured when she swore to have revenge on Elijah. The prophet thought now that he had been too sanguine—that the one chance had come and gone without effect. Doubt paralyzed him. Doubt of God's willingness to forgive plunges the penitent into despondency. He would scarcely venture secretly into a crowd to touch the hem of Christ's garment. Doubt of God's readiness to hear and answer prayer keeps the Christian from the light of His countenance, &c.

V. INVISIBILITY OF ANTAGONISTS. Elijah could face his visible foes on Carmel without quailing—indeed, he dared to taunt them at the risk of being torn to pieces—but against this vague feeling of despair he could not hold his own. Moral battles are the hardest to fight. He who can grapple with what is tangible sometimes fails when called on to "wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with principalities, and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world." Some would rather run the risk of being condemned hereafter, as wicked and slothful servants, than have the certainty of being sneered at now as those who are "righteous overmuch."

**VI. ENFORCED INACTIVITY.** Elijah's opportunity for vigorous action seemed over. He was cast in upon his own thoughts. Few could bear it less patiently than he. The man who can dare and do anything finds it specially hard to wait and to suffer. Similar temptation to despondency comes to those who are laid aside by illness, or removed from a happy sphere of service. But that is the time to wait on the Lord, and so "renew our strength."

**CONCLUSION.** *In all hours of despondency remember that He who knew the agony of Gethsemane and Calvary pities us, and feels for us.* "We have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities," &c.—A. R.

**Ver. 9.—A Question from God for the consideration of Man.** Elijah was fleeing from peril and from work, but he could not flee from God. The Father seeth in secret. No man is out of His sight, no feeling eludes His vigilance (Psalm cxxxix.) Christ knew the plans of His foes (Matt. xii. 25). He understood the unexpressed wants of the sinful (Matt. ix. 2). He heard the secret conversations of His followers (Mark ix. 33), and lovingly answered their unspoken questions (John xvi. 19). In this story God's pity is as conspicuous as His knowledge. Refreshed by the provision given by unseen hands, Elijah went to Horeb, a place sacred in its associations and lonely in its grandeur. There, hidden in a cave from the wrath of Jezebel, the voice of Jehovah reached him, saying, "What doest thou here, Elijah?"

**I. THE QUESTION CAME TO A PROPHET IN HIS HOUR OF DESPAIR.** This Divine interposition on his behalf teaches us the means God uses to bring us out from our despondency. The prophet was delivered from his depression by learning the following lessons: 1. *That God was near.* Whatever the sin that needs pardon, the weakness that wants conquering, the doubt that wants unravelling, there is no fear of the issue if we can consciously bring it to God. Elijah was saved because he dared tell Jehovah all that was in his heart. Moses sometimes was compelled to leave his work to the elders, that he might speak to God face to face. The disciples "went and told Jesus" their grief and their triumph. Aye, and the Master Himself nerved Himself for work and for suffering by prayer—on the mountain or in the garden. Satan says, Give up prayer till your difficulties are removed. Christ says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." 2. *That success was assured.* Elijah thought he stood alone. but the Lord said, "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel," &c. Success was not where the prophet had looked for it. The crowds on Carmel had not been radically changed, but the secret worshippers of God had been strengthened by his heroism. So in the Lord's ministry, the nucleus of the Church was not found in the applauding multitudes on Olivet, but in the few faithful ones in the garden of Gethsemane. Our work may be greater than we think. No word or work for Christ fails of its reward. "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." 3. *That work was waiting* (ver. 15). Elijah was not to remain in the cave, any more than the disciples were to dwell on the mount of transfiguration. For his own sake and for the good of others he was to be up and doing. If you would be saved from brooding, despondency, and doubt, throw yourselves into the work of God. Do with all your might what your hands find to do: and your service will restore tone to your mind, and bring hope to your heart, and prepare you to hear the "Well done, good and faithful servant."

**II. THIS QUESTION CAME TO A MAN IN A FALSE POSITION.** "What doest thou here, Elijah?" The inquiry should pursue others who have fled to caves in which they would fain hide themselves from responsibility. 1. *It comes to the impenitent, in the cave of concealment.* They say, "Doth God know?" He sees the secret sin. He knows the iniquity of that which society applauds, and the day is coming when excuses shall be stripped off, and wickedness discovered. Before that terrible day,

when "the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed," come to the feet of a pardoning God. 2. *It comes to the penitent in the cave of despondency.* To all such God says, "Come now, and let us reason together." 3. *It comes to the indolent in the cave of sloth.* Years of profession unrelieved by a single act of service or sacrifice call for repentance. 4. *It comes to the sorrowful in the cave of murmuring* "Lift up the hands which hang down," &c. Suffer your Redeemer to bring you out of the horrible pit, and "put a new song into your mouth, even praise unto our God."

CONCLUSION. The Lord speaks to all. "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."—A. R.

Vers. 12.—*The still small Voice.* Describe the stupendous scenes amidst which Elijah stood. A wind came shrieking up the mountain ravines, unseen yet instinct with secret force; an earthquake made the solid ground heave and reel; fire glared from heaven, like that which had fallen on the sacrifice at Carmel, or on a subsequent occasion consumed the captains and soldiers of Ahaziah. Amidst this war of the elements the prophet was unmoved by fear; indeed, probably a wild exultation filled his heart as he saw this stormy reflection in nature of the conflict within him. (Compare Shakespeare's splendid description of King Lear in the storm.) The uproar in nature was succeeded by a solemn calm; and as Elijah waited for the next marvellous display of Divine power, "a still small voice" broke the silence, and the prophet knew that it was the voice of God. He who till now had been undaunted and unmoved, now reverently covered his face with his mantle, and bowed in humble worship in the felt presence of Him before whom angels veil their faces. This strange and weird experience evidently had reference to the work which Elijah had attempted, and over which he was now so despondent. When he learnt that the Lord was not in the wind, the earthquake, or the fire, he reflected that permanent religious reformation might not result from the material signs of Divine power, displayed in the withholding of the rain, the raising of the dead, or the fall of fire on Carmel, but from the more quiet testimony of his own devout life, and from the fidelity of the "seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal." In effect, the message to him and to us was this: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." We are taught, in the first place—

I. THE SPIRITUAL WEAKNESS OF WHAT SEEMS MIGHTY. "The Lord was not in the wind, . . . in the earthquake, . . . in the fire." Let us exemplify this truth—1. *By the experience of Elijah.* He had done many mighty works, but the people were startled rather than reformed. No radical and abiding change had been effected. "The wind" may represent the drought, both in its coming and in its ceasing; "the earthquake," the raising of the child from the dead; and "the fire," the answer to prayer on Carmel. It was not these wonders which could change the heart of the people, but "the still small voice" speaking within for God. 2. *By the miracles of judgment.* Take the plagues of Egypt as specimens. Marvellous enough they were, but in the result "Pharaoh's heart was hardened." 3. *By the penalties of the law.* Show from the history of Israel, and from the comments made on it in the Epistles, the powerlessness of the law to put away sin. The fear of punishment may check the outward manifestation of sin, but in itself does not conquer innate sinfulness. If a child does not love his father, no orders, however stringently enforced, will make him happy. It was not John the Baptist, but Jesus Christ, who was the world's Redeemer. 4. *By the events of Providence.* Illness, the dread of death, a startling bereavement, a national calamity, &c., do not convert men, unless through them or after them "the still small voice" is heard. Men may be driven to alarm, to murmuring, to despair, perhaps to suicide; but their hearts are still rebellious under the influence of trouble. It is not the storm, but the voice of Jesus in the storm, saying, "It is I," that brings rest to those who welcome Him.

II. THE SPIRITUAL STRENGTH OF WHAT SEEMS FEEBLE. The still small voice, which only a listening man could hear, was more Divine and more mighty than all Elijah had witnessed before. There was all the difference between God's *power* and God's

presence. "The Lord was not in the fire," but His was the still small voice; concerning which we observe—1. *It follows on preparation.* Elijah had heard so much, had been so startled into keen listening for the wonderful, that he did not fail to hear this. So the miracles which had not converted the people had made them ready for Elisha and the school of the prophets. Similarly John preceded Jesus. It is thus in personal experience. The earthquake did not convert the jailer at Philippi, but it aroused him to ask, "What must I do to be saved?" Trouble does not save a man, but it may make him ready to listen to the words of life. Some must lose all before they find all in God. 2. *It reminds of secret forces.* The most mighty are silent in nature and in grace; e.g., gravitation is far more tremendous than volcanic agency. 3. *It typifies the influence of the Holy Spirit.* "He shall convince the world of righteousness," &c. How secretly He melts the heart to repentance, faith, and obedience, and changes the whole current of affection and thought. 4. *It whispers of the love of Christ.* He forced none into His kingdom, but won all His subjects man by man. Not His reproaches, but His look of love, broke the heart of Peter into penitence, after the denial. Paul's inspiration was found not in applause or success, but in this—that he could ever say, "The love of Christ constraineth me."

CONCLUSION. *Wait for no resistless influences,* for no startling events; but listen to the "still small voice" which speaks within, testifying of your deep necessity and Christ's glorious redemption.—A. R.

VERS. 1—8.—*The Prophet's Despair.* I. ELIJAH'S WEAKNESS. 1. *His disappointment.* With the hand of the Lord upon him he had come to Jezreel (ch. xviii. 46). Was it not because a further success for God awaited him there? Could Carmel's wonders and the mercy of God in the rain now flooding the earth be resisted? Jezebel's message, displaying only determined and increased hostility, rudely dispels the dream. The blighting of the long-expected fruit of prayer and waiting and mightiest effort is worse to bear than all the hardships which went before. Other trials may depress, but under this the spirit is utterly broken. 2. *His flight.* He shows no trust in Him who was mightier than Jezebel. He flees to the south of Judah. Even there it does not seem to him that he is in safety, and he goes a day's journey into the wilderness; but neither at Jezreel nor at Beersheba does he seek direction from the Lord. The overthrow of hope is also the overthrow of faith. Ceasing to hope in God we cease to wait on God. 3. *His prayer.* (1) Its inconsistency. He had fled for his life, and now he prays God that he may die. We are not fittest for heaven when we are most tired of earth. We must "enter his gates"—the gates of the city that hath foundations—"with praise," not with complaints and accusations. (2) Its unbelief. God's work is abandoned as impossible; nothing remains for Him but to take back the life of His defeated servant! Many a noble heart besides has lifted up the same cry of despair. The noblest of mankind are nothing when once the fire of trust is quenched in the soul. "The just shall live by faith;" when faith dies, every good and noble thing dies with it.

II. HOW GOD BINDS UP THE BROKEN-HEARTED. 1. *He gives rest.* "He lay and slept." Even in the desert to which we flee unbidden, God gives shelter and rest. "For so he giveth his beloved sleep." 2. *He imparts strength for the onward way to where light will break upon the darkness and a new mission will be given.* Elijah is fed once and again with angel food, and in the strength of it goes "forty days and forty nights unto Horeb, the mount of God." We are revived with tender heavenly ministrations: we see His goodness in the land of the living, and pass onward to the place where we shall meet with Him and hear His voice.—J. U

VERS. 9—18.—*Elijah at Horeb.* I. HOW GOD DEALS WITH THE DESPAIRING. 1. *Elijah's mistake.* Because Jezebel's enmity remained unsubdued the struggle was at once given over as hopeless; "and he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there." The same mistake is made by those who labour on with unexpected toil, whose wrestling with God is given up, whose feeble thought and listless tones proclaim their hopelessness: by those who have laid down the work to which

God called them—preachers in retirement or in other spheres, teachers, &c.—and those who have ceased to strive against their own sin. 2. *God's remedy.* (1) The heart is searched. "What doest thou here, Elijah?" A prophet in the desert? A living man illumined with the light of the knowledge of God, a companion of rocks and stones and solitude; and death and sin crying to be visited with the rebuke of God, and hearts fainting for lack of His light and consolations? Was it for this God endowed and called thee? A word for those who have left the vineyard; for those who have not yet entered; for the worldly and the sinful. To hear this voice is preparation for entering the path of life and of service. Till it be heard there is no possibility of either. (2) Unbelief is unveiled. When God's voice is heard, and the reasons for the wilderness flight are named, it is seen that He has been shut out of sight. He mentions his own zeal, and Israel's sin, but of God there is nothing said. It is unbelief alone which can kill prayer and earnest, hopeful toil. It was only when Peter ceased to gaze on Jesus that the stormy waves engulfed him. If we are in the wilderness, forgetfulness of God has set us there.

II. THE PATH OF DELIVERANCE FOR THE HOPELESS. 1. *The vision of God.* Elijah's thoughts of God's way were corrected. (1) God was not in the whirlwind, or the earthquake, or the fire. What had failed to turn Israel and subdue Jezebel was not what was really God's power unto salvation, but what Elijah erroneously conceived to be this. We despair because certain methods, influences, arguments fail; but they can only fail because God is not in them. (2) God was in the still small voice that awoke within the heart. The power which now held and searched the prophet's own soul was the manifestation of what was power for the souls of others. 2. *The recognition of ourselves as only part of the manifold agency of God.* Other hands as well as his were to carry on the work of judgment and of mercy (vers. 15—17). To feel our brotherhood with the servants of God fills us with joy and power. 3. *The assurance that God never works in vain* (ver. 18). The results may be hid from us, but they are known to Him.—J. U.

Vers. 19—21.—*The Prophet's Call.* I. THE CALL TO SERVICE. 1. *Where it found him*—in the field engaged in laborious, careful toil. The Master chooses servants for higher trusts who have been faithful in lower. 2. *How it came.* The mantle cast upon him was a sign of adoption. It was a call to share the prophet's home and love. Elijah was to find a son in the newly-called servant of God, and Elisha a father in the great prophet of Israel. We pass into God's service through union with His people.

II. INDECISION REBUKED (ver. 20). 1. *The request.* He "ran after Elijah," yet with entreaty for permission to go back and kiss father and mother. The new ties and the old were both binding him, and the vain attempt was made to comply with both. God's call must from the first have the mastery. The seeming severity which we are called upon to exercise will yield fruits of joy. God, fully chosen, will be fully known; and the breaking of lower ties may preach the claims of God to those we love best. 2. *The answer.* "Go back again, for what have I done to thee?" The gift neglected is taken away. As we value it and sacrifice for it, in that measure is it given to us. Treat God's grace as nothing, and to you it becomes nothing.

III. THE CHOICE MADE. 1. *The past was broken with.* His own yoke of oxen were slain, the instruments of his toil consumed. 2. *It was done with gladness.* He made a feast for the people. 3. *He took the place which God meanwhile assigned him.* "Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him." Humble, loving companionship with God's people is preparation for taking up their work.—J. U.

Vers. 4—21. *Return of Elijah to the Desert.* It is well for us to recognize that the great servants of God are men like ourselves, that they were formed of the same clay, and that they share our infirmities. Elijah had no time to magnify himself after his triumph on Mount Carmel. It was at this very moment God allowed him

to pass through the most terrible mental conflict. Led into the bare and arid solitudes of Horeb, he fell into a state of depression bordering on despair, and, throwing himself down under a juniper tree in the wilderness, he cried, "O Lord, now take away my life!" (Ver. 4.) A spiritual crisis like this comes in the life of most men of God, and may be explained by two reasons. 1. There is a spiritual necessity for it. The man of God who has gained the first great victory is apt to think that it is decisive and final, and that he may now cease to fight. And behold, the evil that was vanquished yesterday lifts up its head again, and the conflict has to be begun anew. "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant" (ver. 10). 2. This painful crisis is permitted by God, who will not have His servants uplifted in their own eyes, even by the most splendid triumphs of the cause which it is their honour to maintain. This is the explanation of the mysterious thorn in the flesh with which St. Paul was buffeted. (2 Cor. xii. 7). This is the cause of the momentary despondency of John the Baptist, which prompted that utterance of a faltering faith, "Art thou he that should come?" (Matt. xi. 3.) To the same source we may trace the anguish of Luther in the Wartburg. He who is pleased thus to exercise the soul of His children is Himself their only efficient Comforter. God raises His downcast servant Elijah by means of a glorious vision. The Lord is not in the wind, not in the earthquake; these are but the symbols of His awful majesty. He is in the still small voice, which whispers the name afterwards to be proclaimed to the whole world by the beloved disciple, and written in letters of blood upon the cross: "*God is love*" (1 John iv. 16). Let us not forget, however, that if God is not in the stormy wind and earthquake, these manifestations of His severity necessarily preceded the manifestation of that love which is His true essence. It was needful that the reed which had presumed to lift up itself against God should be bent, that the hard heart, like the stone, should be broken in order that the still small voice might gain an entrance to it. Repentance must come before the deliverance and joy of pardon. It is by this path through the desert that God leads every soul of man; it was thus that He led His servant Elijah. His overwhelming anguish of soul was like the whirlwind which prepared the way for the soft whisper of heavenly peace. This desert of spiritual desolation is to be made to blossom like the rose under the reviving breath of the Lord (Isa. xxxv. 1). Elijah comes forth from it with renewed strength and courage, after the wholesome discipline of humiliation, a witness to us of the truth of the Divine assurance uttered by the lips of Christ Himself: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matt. v. 4).—E. de P.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER XX. 1—43.

**THE INVASIONS OF ISRAEL BY THE SYRIANS AND THEIR RESULTS.**—The insertion of this chapter, which contains an account of two invasions of Israel by the hosts of Syria, and of the utter defeat of the latter, and which therefore constitutes a break in the history of Elijah, which has occupied the historian up to the end of ch. xix., and which is resumed with ch. xxi.—the insertion of this twentieth chapter in this place is apparently due to the compiler of these records, who seems to have adopted this arrangement as the more chronological. It is not absolutely certain, however, that we owe this disposition of his materials to the

original compiler, as the Vatican LXX., which sometimes appears to represent an older and purer text, places ch. xx. after ch. xxi., thereby concluding the history of Elijah—so far as it was comprehended in the reign of Ahab—before entering on the subject of the Syrian wars. It is not improbable, consequently, that this latter was the original order; and it is quite certain that the account of Elijah's ministry, of which ch. xxi. forms a part, is of a piece with ch. xix., and by the same hand, and is by a different hand from the author, or authors, of chaps. xx. and xxii. Ch. xxii. I also supplies a reason why that chapter should follow ch. xx. There seems, moreover, to be a close connexion between ch. xxii. and

the denunciation of ch. xx. 42. But the present arrangement evidently dates from very early times.

Ver. 1.—And Ben-hadad [See on chs. xi. 14 and xv. 18. The LXX. uniformly spells the name *Ader* (ἄδερ *Adēp*). The form 𐤁𐤃𐤁 is found in ch. xi. 17, and 𐤁 and 𐤃 are frequently interchanged; cf. Gen. xxv. 15, xxxvi. 39 with 1 Chron. i. 30, 46. We learn from ver. 34 that this prince was the son of a Syrian king who had conquered some of the cities of Israel, but we cannot nevertheless be certain that he was the son of that Ben-hadad (ch. xv. 18) who invaded Israel in the reign of Baasha (Ewald). See on ver. 34.] the king of Syria gathered all his host [See note on ch. x. 2, where we have same word] together: and there were thirty and two kings with him [Evidently these were vassals, not allied powers. The number alone proves that they must have been petty princes or chieftains of Hittite tribes, ruling over very limited districts and all acknowledging the suzerainty of the king of Damascus, all paying tributs (ch. x. 25), and furnishing a contingent in time of war. "The Assyrian inscriptions show that this country was, about the period in question, parcelled out into a number of petty kingdoms," &c. (Rawlinson. See "Records of the Past," vol. xii. p. 20)], and horses, and chariots [Heb. *horse and chariot*; cf. ver. 21 and chs. i. 5; x. 26; xvi. 9, &c. Both are collective nouns. We see here the fruit and retribution of Solomon's irreligious policy (ch. x. 29 and Homiletics, p. 216). "A king who has been probably identified with this Ben-hadad brought into the field against Assyria nearly 4000 chariots" (Rawlinson)]; and he went up and besieged Samaria, and warred against it. [The object of this expedition was clearly to humble and to plunder the kingdom of Samaria. It would almost appear, from the *animus* of the Syrian king and the studied offensiveness of his messages, as if Ahab or Israel must have given him dire offence. But Ben-hadad was clearly a vain and overbearing and tyrannical prince, and the only crime of Israel may have been that it was independent of him, or had refused to do him homage.]

Ver. 2.—And he sent messengers to Ahab king of Israel into [Heb. *to*. It is not clear that they entered the city. They may have delivered their message to the king, or to his representatives at the gates or to the people on the walls (2 Kings xviii. 18, 27)] the city, and said unto him, Thus saith Ben-hadad,

Ver. 3.—Thy silver and thy gold is mine [Heb. *mine it is*]; thy wives also and thy children [Nothing reveals Ben-hadad's object

more clearly than the mention of Ahab's wives. When we consider how jealously the seraglio of an Eastern prince is guarded, and how the surrender of the harem is a virtual surrender of the throne (2 Sam. xvi. 21, 22; note on ch. ii. 22), and certainly a surrender of all manhood and self-respect, we see that his aim was to wound Ahab in his tenderest point, to humble him to the lowest depths of degradation, and possibly to force a quarrel upon him], even the goodliest [The LXX. omits this. Bähr says the word can only apply to the sons, and that it must mean the most eminent young men of the city—not Ahab's children—whom Ben-hadad demanded as hostages. But against this is (1) Ahab's answer, "All that I have," &c.; (2) the fact that Ben-hadad obviously meant insult and plunder; and (3) the language of ver. 7, where see note], are mine. [Heb. *mine are they*. Rawlinson would explain this excessive demand of the Syrian king by the assumption that when it was made the siege had already lasted a long time, and that the people were now reduced to the greatest straits, circumstances which the historian, with the characteristic brevity of the sacred writers, omits to mention. But really no such supposition is needed. The overwhelming force which Ben-hadad had at his back would, in his eyes, justify any demands. And the *prima facie* view of ver. 2 is that the messengers were sent on the first approach of the army, or rather at the beginning of the siege.]

Ver. 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. [Much has been written about Ahab's pusillanimous acquiescence in these disgraceful terms, &c. But it is not absolutely clear that he ever meant to surrender either wives or children to the invader. All that is certain is that he judged it wise, in the presence of the enormous force arrayed against him, to make every possible concession, to adopt the most subservient tone, and to oringe at the feet of Ben-hadad. But all the time he may have hoped that his soft answer would turn away wrath. It is very far from certain that had Ben-hadad sent to demand the wives and children which Ahab here seems willing to yield to him they would have been sent. When Ben-hadad threatens (ver. 6) a measure which involved much less indignity than the surrender of the entire seraglio to his lusts, Ahab stands at bay. Allowance must be made for the exaggerations of Eastern courtesy. The writer was entertained in 1861 by Jacob esh Shellabi, then sheykh of the Samaritans, who repeatedly used words very similar to these. "This

house is yours," he would say; never meaning, however, that he should be taken at his word.]

Ver. 5.—And the messengers came again, and said, Thus speaketh Ben-hadad, saying, Although [Heb. 'פ. According to some of the grammarians, this is merely the Hebrew equivalent of the *ὄρι recitantis*. But the *דן* 'פ of the next verse suggests that there must be a connexion between the two, and that the second emphasizes the first, much as in the A. V.] I have sent unto thee, saying, Thou shalt deliver me thy silver, and thy gold, and thy wives, and thy children. [Our translators have often sacrificed force to elegance by disregarding the order of the Hebrew, which here, e.g., is "Thy silver and thy gold . . . to me thou shalt give them."]

Ver. 6.—Yet I will send my servants unto thee to-morrow about this time [This proposal was definite and immediate, the first demand was vague and general. "In the first Ahab was to send what he thought fit to give; in the second, Ben-hadad's servants were to take into their own hands whatsoever they thought fit to sieze" (Wordsworth)], and they shall search thine house, and the houses of thy servants; and it shall be, that whatsoever is pleasant in [Heb. *the desire of*] thine eyes [The LXX. and some other versions have a plural suffix—their eyes. But the Hebrew text is to be preferred. The object of Ben-hadad was to couch his message in the most offensive and humiliating terms, and "the desire of thine eyes" would be likely to cut deeper and wound more than "the desire of their eyes"], they shall put it in their hand, and take it away. [If Ahab ever hoped by his abject submission to conciliate the Syrian king, he now finds that his words have had just the opposite effect. For all that the latter concluded from it was that Ahab was one upon whom he might trample at pleasure, and this servility encouraged Ben-hadad to renew his demands in a still more galling and vexatious form. This second message discloses to us still more plainly the royal bully and braggart, and shows us what the "comity of nations" in the old world was often like.]

Ver. 7.—Then the king of Israel called all the elders of the land [Bähr remarks that this expression, compared with "the elders of the city" (ch. xxi. 8, &c.), suggests either that these nobles, as the highest officials, had their residences at the court, or upon the approach of Ben-hadad had betaken themselves thither with their treasures. Bawlinson builds on this slender basis the conclusion that the council of elders which, he says, belonged to the undivided kingdom,

had been continued among the ten tribes, had an important place in the government, and held regular sittings at the capital] and said, Mark, I pray you, and see how this man [or fellow. The *ו*] expresses either hatred or contempt. Cf. ch. xxii. 27; Luke xxiii. 2, 18, &c.] seeketh mischief [the purport of Ahab's address is not, "Ben-hadad is not satisfied with my treasures; he wants yours also" (Bähr), for there is no reference whatsoever to their property, but, "See how he is determined on our ruin. Nothing short of our destruction will suffice him. He is bent on provoking an encounter, that he may plunder the city at pleasure." The salient word is the *ו*]: for he sent unto me for my wives, and for my children [LXX. *περὶ τῶν υἱῶν μου*. This shows clearly that "the most eminent young men" cannot be meant in ver. 3], and for my silver, and for my gold: and I denied him not. [What these words mean depends on what ver. 4 (where see note) means. It is difficult to conceive that any monarch could gravely proclaim his own shame to his counsellors; could confess, that is, that he had consented to surrender his children and concubines without a struggle.]

Ver. 8.—And all the elders and all the people [not only, i.e., the inhabitants of Samaria (Keil), but also those who had fled thither for refuge. It is not implied that they were formally consulted, but at such a crisis, when nothing could be done, humanly speaking, without their support, it was natural that they should express their opinion] said unto him, Harken not unto him, nor consent. [Lit., *thou shalt not consent*. *לֹא* is the equivalent of *μη, ne*, and *לֹא* of *ob, non*. Cf. Amos v. 5, and Ewald 350 a.]

Ver. 9.—Wherefore [Heb. *and*] he said unto the messengers of Ben-hadad, Tell my lord the king [He still employs the same obsequious language as in ver. 4], All that thou didst send for to thy servant at the first I will do: but this thing I may [Heb. *can*] not do [At first sight it appears as if Ahab objected to the search (ver. 6), i.e., plunder, of his house and capital much more than to the surrender of his wives to shame and of his children to slavery. But we must remember that a man is ready to promise almost anything in his extremity, and that we do not know what construction he put, or would have claimed to put, upon Ben-hadad's first demand, had that monarch consented to revert to these conditions, or by what means he hoped to evade it]. And the messengers departed, and brought him [Ben-hadad, not Ahab, as Bawlinson

imagines] word again. (Not the "word related in the next verse" [Rawlinson], but the message just recorded.)

Ver. 10.—And Ben-hadad sent unto him, and said [These words would be quite superfluous, if the oaths of which we now hear were the "word" of ver. 9]. The gods do so unto me, and more also [see notes on ch. ii. 23; xix. 2], if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls [The meaning of *דַּבְּלֵי פִּגְלִילִי* *pugilli*, is fixed by Isa. xl. 12, and Ezek. xiii. 19] for all the people that follow me. [Heb. *that are in my feet*. Same expression Judg. iv. 10; v. 15; 1 Sam. xxv. 27; 2 Sam. xv. 17, &c. This thoroughly Oriental piece of bluster and boasting, which was intended, no doubt, to strike terror into the hearts of king and people, has been variously interpreted, but the meaning appears to be sufficiently clear. Ben-hadad vows that he will make Samaria a heap of dust, and at the same time affirms that so overwhelming is his host, that this dust will be insufficient to fill the hands of his soldiers. Rawlinson compares with it the well-known saying of the Trachinian to Dienece, that the Median arrows would obscure the sun [Herod. vii. 226], but 2 Sam. xvii. 13 is still more opposite.]

Ver. 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. [This proverb consists of four words in the Hebrew. The commentators cite the Latin, *Ne triumphum canas ante victoriam*, but proverbs to the same effect are found in most languages.]

Ver. 12.—And it came to pass, when Ben-hadad [Heb. *he*] heard this message [Heb. *word*], as he was drinking, he and the kings in the pavilions [Heb. *booths*]. The word shows that, in lieu of tents, kings and generals on an expedition sometimes used leafy huts, like those of Israel [Levit. xxiii. 34, 42]. Such booths, it is said, are still erected on military expeditions in the East], that he said unto his servants, Set yourselves in array [Heb. *אָרְבָּב* *one short, decisive word*. His indignation and astonishment were too great for more. We might perhaps render "Form." Cf. 1 Sam. xi. 11; Josh. viii. 2, 13; Job i. 17; Ezek. xxiii. 24. It cannot mean *οικονομησατε χαρακα* (LXX.)] And they set themselves in array [or *formed*. Again one word, which is more spirited and graphic, and conveys that the command was instantly obeyed] against the city.

Ver. 13.—And, behold, there came a prophet [Heb. *one prophet*. Cf. ch. xiii. 11. According to Jewish writers, this was Miceian, son of Imlah, but ch. xxii. 8 negatives this supposition. This is another

proof that *all* the prophets had not been exterminated. Where Elijah was at this time, or why he was not employed, we have no means of determining. Bähr says that he was "least of all suited for such a message," but not if he had learned the lesson of ch. xix. 12. At the same time, it is to be remembered that he invariably appears as the minister of wrath. It may also be reasonably asked why this gracious interposition was granted to the kingdom of Samaria at all. Was not this invasion, and would not the sack of the city have been, a just recompense for the gross corruption of the age, for the persecution of the prophets, &c.? But to this it may be replied that Ben-hadad was not then the instrument which God had designed for the correction of Israel (see ch. xix. 17; xxii. 31; 2 Kings x. 32), and furthermore that by his brutal tyranny and despotic demands, he had himself merited a chastisement. The city, too, may have been delivered for the sake of the seven thousand (ch. xix. 18; 2 Kings xix. 34. Cf. Gen. xviii. 26 sqq.) But this gracious help in the time of extremity was primarily designed as a proof of Jehovah's power over the gods of Syria (cf. vers. 13, 28; ch. xviii. 39; 2 Kings xix. 22 sqq.), and so as an instrument for the conversion of Israel. His supremacy over the idols of Phœnicia had already been established] unto Ahab king of Israel, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Hast thou seen all this great multitude? [cf. ver. 10. "In Ben-hadad's wars with the Assyrians, we sometimes find him at the head of nearly 100,000 men" (Rawlinson).] Behold, I will deliver it into thine hand this day; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord. [This explains to us the *motif* of this great deliverance.]

Ver. 14.—And Ahab said, By whom? And he said, Thus saith the Lord [Observe the repetition. He is careful to give special prominence to the sacred name, as the only help in trouble (Psa. xx. 1, 5, 7, &c.)]. Even by the young men [or *servants*—*עָבָדִים*] has both meanings, corresponding with *παῖς* (cf. Gen. xxxvii. 2; 2 Kings v. 20; viii. 4) of the princes of the provinces. [The local governors (cf. chs. iv. 7; x. 15), on the approach of Ben hadad, had apparently fled to the capital. Whether these "young men" were their "pages" (Thenius), or even were "young lads" (Ewald) at all, or, on the contrary, a "select body of strong young men" (Bähr), the body-guard of the various governors (2 Sam. xviii. 15) (Von Gerlach), may be doubtful; but when Bähr says that Ahab would not have consented to appoint weak boys to lead the van, at least without remonstrance, he must have forgotten that *all* the ordinary means at

Ahab's disposal were equally insufficient, and that in themselves 200 or 2000 tried veterans would have been just as inadequate a force as 200 pages. The agency by which the victory was won was purposely weak and feeble (*per turbam imbellem*), in order that the work might be seen to be of God (cf. Judg. vii. 2; 1 Cor. i. 27, 29). And this consideration makes against the supposition that the attacking body was composed of tried and skilful warriors.] Then he said, Who shall order [Heb. *bind*; we speak of "joining battle"] the battle? [The meaning is—not, "who shall command this force," but, "which side shall begin the fray?"] And he answered, Thou [*i.e.*, thy band of young men shall make the attack.]

Ver. 15.—Then he numbered [or reviewed (cf. Num. i. 44 sqq.; iii. 39—43)] the young men of the princes of the provinces, and they were two hundred and thirty-two [cf. 2 Chron. xiv. 11; Psa. xxxiii. 16; Deut. xxxii. 30, &c. LXX. *διακόσια τριάκοντα*. Theodoret remarks that by this band—230, as he understood it—Almighty God would destroy the hosts of thirty and two kings. The numbers may have been recorded because of the correspondency]: and after them he numbered all the people, even all the children of Israel, being seven thousand. [This number is of course to be understood, unlike that of ch. xix. 18, literally. And the context (cf. ver. 19) shows that this was the number of fighting men. But this small army can hardly fail to create surprise, especially if we compare it with the statistics of the soldiery of an earlier age (2 Sam. xxiv. 9; 1 Chron. xxi. 5; 2 Chron. xiii. 3; xiv. 8). It is true this was not strictly an army, but a garrison for the defence of the capital. But it looks very much as if, under the feeble rule of Ahab, the kingdom of Israel had become thoroughly disorganized. "The position of Jarchi is that of a true Rabbi, viz., that the 7000 were those who had not bowed the knee unto Baal (ch. xix. 18)," Bähr.]

Ver. 16.—And they went out at noon. ["At the time when Ben-hadad, haughty and confident, had given himself up with his vassals, to the table, news of which had probably been received in the city" (Bähr). But it seems at least equally probable that the noon hour was selected either in obedience to the unrecorded directions of the prophet, or as being a time for rest and sleep, as it still is in the East.] But Ben-hadad was drinking himself drunk in the pavilions, he and the kings, the thirty and two kings that helped him. [Strong drink would seem to have been a besetment of the monarchs of that age (cf. oh. xvi. 9; Prov. xxxi. 4; Dan. v. 1 sqq.; Esther i. 10;

vii. 2; Hab. ii. 5). It can hardly have been to "mark his utter contempt of the foe," Rawlinson, who compares Belshazzar's feast (Dan. v. 1—4) when besieged by Cyrus. But Ben-hadad was the besieger. We are rather reminded of Alexander's carouse at Babylon.]

Ver. 17.—And the young men of the princes of the provinces went out first; and Ben-hadad sent out [Or *had sent out*. Possibly, the unusual stir in the city, the mustering of the troops, &c., had led to his sending out scouts before the young men issued from the gates. The LXX., however, has "And they send and tell the king of Syria," which Rawlinson thinks represents a purer text. But it looks like an emendation to avoid the difficulty, which is removed by translating  $\eta\lambda\theta\upsilon\sigma\iota$  as pluperfect], and they told him, saying, There are men come out of Samaria. [Heb. *men went forth*, &c.]

Ver. 18.—And he said, Whether they be come out for peace [*i.e.*, to negociate or to submit], take them alive; or whether they be come out for war, take them alive. [We may trace in these words, possibly the influence of wine, but certainly the exasperation which Ahab's last message had occasioned the king. So incensed is he that he will not respect the rights of ambassadors, and he is afraid lest belligerents should be slain before he can arraign them before him. Possibly he meant that they should be tortured or slain before his face.]

Ver. 19.—So these young men of the princes of the provinces came out of the city, and the army which followed them. [*i.e.*, the 7000. They "came out" after the young men.]

Ver. 20.—And they slew every one his man [The LXX., which differs here considerably from the Hebrew, inserts at this point *και ιδενθρωπον εκαστος τον παρ' αβρου*. Ewald thinks the Hebrew text ought to be made to correspond, and would read  $\text{וישחטו איש איש}$  *i.e.*, each repeatedly killed his man, as in 1 Sam. xiv. 16]: and the Syrians fled [When a few had fallen, utter panic seized the rest. The separate kings, with their divided interests, thought only of their own safety. It was a *saave qui peut*. "The hasty and disordered flight of a vast Oriental army before an enemy contemptible in numbers is no uncommon occurrence. Above 1,000,000 of Persians fled before 47,000 Greeks at Arbela" (Rawlinson). The very size of such hosts, especially where the command is divided and where the generals are drunk or incapable, contributes to their defeat]; and Israel pursued them: and Ben-hadad the

king of Syria escaped on an horse [Thenius suggests that this was a chariot horse, the first that presented] with the horsemen. [Heb. *and horsemen*; *sc.*, escaped with him (Keil). He had an escort in some of his fugitive cavalry.]

Ver. 21.—And the king of Israel went out [It looks as if Ahab had remained within the city until the defeat of the Syrians was assured], and smote [LXX. *καὶ ἔλαβε, and captured*] the horses and chariots [*i.e.*, the cavalry and chariotry; cf. ver. 1], and slew the Syrians with a great slaughter. [Heb. *in Syria a great, &c.*]

Ver. 22.—And the prophet [obviously the same prophet] came to the king of Israel, and said unto him, Go, strengthen thyself [both as to army and to city], and mark, and see what thou doest ["Take every precaution. Don't think that the danger is past"]; for at the return of the year [in the following spring. There was a favourite time for campaigns (2 Sam. xi. 1), viz., when the rainy season was past. Several late wars, notably those of our own armies in Africa and Afghanistan, have been considerably influenced by the seasons. And the wars of ancient times were almost universally summer raids. "Sustained invasions, lasting over the winter, are not found until the time of Shalmaneser" (2 Kings xvii. 5; xviii. 9, 10, Rawlinson)] the king of Syria will come [Heb. *cometh*] up against thee.

Ver. 23.—And the servants of the king of Syria said unto him [naturally anxious to retrieve their character and obliterate their disgrace], Their gods are gods of the hills [All pagan nations have believed in local deities, *Dii montium, dii nemorum, &c.* (see 2 Kings xviii. 33—35; xix. 12, 13). Keil accounts for this belief—that the gods of Israel were mountain divinities, by the consideration that the temple was built on Mount Moriah, and that worship was always offered on "high places." Kito reminds us that the law was given from Mount Sinai, and that fire had recently descended on Mount Carmel. "In Syrophoenicia, even mountains themselves had Divine honours paid to them" (Movers, Phoen. i. 667 sqq.) But it is enough to remember that Samaria was a hilly district, and that the courtiers must find some excuse for the defeat]; therefore they were stronger than we; but [Heb.

(*עַל הַהַר*) often well rendered but not in this instance) by the LXX. *ὁ μὴν δὲ ἀλλὰ*] let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they. [This counsel, which apparently rests on religious grounds alone, was, it is probable, really dictated by the practical consideration

that in the plain the Syrians would be able to deploy their chariots—a most important arm of their service—in a way which they could not do in the valleys round Samaria. See ch. xvi. 24, note. Moreover, the Israelites would lose the advantage of a strong position and the cover of their fortifications if they could be induced to meet them in the "great plain," or on any similar battle-field.]

Ver. 24.—And do this thing. Take the kings away, every man out of his place, and put captains [Same word as in ch. x. 15, where see note] in their rooms. [Not so much because (Bähr) the kings only fought through compulsion, for they appear to have been in complete accord with Ben-hadad (vers. 1, 12, 16), as because of their incapacity and divided interests and plans. The captains would presumably be selected because of their valour, military skill, &c.; the kings would owe their command to the accident of birth, &c. Moreover, an army with thirty-three leaders could not have the necessary solidarity. Bähr assumes that the removal of the kings would involve the withdrawal of the auxiliaries which they contributed. But this does not appear to have occurred to Ben-hadad's advisers when they said, "put captains in their rooms." If the auxiliaries were withdrawn, what were the thirty-two captains to command?]

Ver. 25.—And number thee an army, like the army that thou hast lost [Heb. *that is fallen from thee, not as marg., that was fallen.* For the form *הָאָרְמִי* see Ewald, 264 b)], horse for [Heb. *as*] 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.

Ver. 26.—And it came to pass at the return of the year, that Ben-hadad numbered the Syrians [Heb. *Syria*], and went up to Aphek [As the word signifies "fortress," it is only natural that several different places should bear this name, and the commentators are not agreed as to which of them is here intended. Keil and Bähr identify it with the Aphek hard by Shunem (1 Sam. xxix. 1; cf. xxviii. 4), and therefore in the plain of Esdraelon, while Gesenius and Grove—the latter because of its connection with *הַבְּרָשָׁה* the plain, a word applied, *κατ' ἔξοχον*, to the plain in the tribe of Reuben (Deut. iii. 10; iv. 43; Josh. xiii. 9, 16, 17, 21, &c.)—would see in it the Aphek east of the Jordan, the *Apheca* of Eusebius, and perhaps the place mentioned 2 Kings xiii. 17 (where, however, see note). This trans-Jordanic Aphek is now represented by the village of *Fik*, six miles east

of the sea of Galilee, and standing, as Aphek must have then stood, on the high road between Damascus and Jerusalem. On the whole, the balance of probability inclines to the latter. It would follow hence that the Israelites, emboldened by their victory of the preceding year, had crossed the river to meet the enemy, to fight against Israel. [Heb. *to the war with Israel.*]

Ver. 27.—And the children of Israel were numbered [lit., *numbered themselves*. Hith-pael], and were all present [Rather, and were provided with food, לָחֵם = to nourish. The Alex. LXX. inserts *καὶ διοικήθησαν*. Vulgate *acceptis cibariis*. Marg. *were victualled*. This word of itself suggests that they were at a distance from their capital or other city], and went against them [Heb. *to meet them*]: and the children of Israel pitched before them like two little flocks

לְשֵׁנֵי strictly means *separated*. It is rightly translated “little flocks” (not “flocks,” Rawlinson), because the idea is that of two bands of stragglers separated from the main body of the flock. So the Vulgate, *duo parvi greges caprarum*; but LXX., *δύο ποίμνια αἰγῶν*. Ewald thinks the “two flocks” refer to an auxiliary force furnished by Jehoshaphat, fighting with Israel. He also thinks *goats* are mentioned to convey the exalted position of the camp upon the hills. Flocks of goats as a rule are smaller than those of sheep, the former being more given to straying] of kids [lit., *she-goats*. “These flocks pasture mostly on the cliffs, and are smaller than the flocks of sheep” (Bähr)]; but the Syrians filled the country. [The whole plain swarmed with their legions in striking contrast to the two insignificant bodies of Israelites.]

Ver. 28.—And there came a man of God [Whether this is the same person as the “prophet” of vers. 13, 22, is not quite clear. The difference in the designation (see on ch. xiii. 1 and p. 303) would lead us to suppose that a different messenger was meant. It is true the Hebrew has the article “the man of God” (LXX. ὁ ἄνθρωπος τοῦ θεοῦ), but לְאִישׁ הָאֵלֹהִים (see Judg. xiii. 6; Deut. xxxiii. 1) is often hardly distinguishable from the same words without the article], and spake [Heb. *said*, same word as below] unto the king of Israel, and said, Thus saith the Lord, Because the Syrians [Heb. *Syria*, but with a plural verb] have said, The Lord is God of the hills; but he is not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the Lord. [It was partly for the instruction of Israel, and to confirm their wavering faith

in Jehovah (see ver. 13), that this deliverance was wrought. But it was also that neighbouring nations might learn His power, and that His name might be magnified among the heathen.]

Ver. 29.—And they pitched one over against the other [Heb. *these opposite these*] seven days. [The Syrians, despite their overwhelming numbers, appear to have been afraid to attack, and the Israelites were naturally reluctant, despite the promise they had received, to join battle with so great a host]. And so it was, that in the seventh day the battle was joined [Heb. *the war drew near*. It may have been by the direction of the man of God that the Israelites attacked on the seventh day, or the precedent of Jericho (Josh. vi. 15) may have influenced their leaders; or the number seven, properly the mark and signature of the covenant, may have come to be regarded superstitiously—in fact, as a lucky number (cf. Isa. lxx. 11; Esther iii. 7): and the children of Israel slew of the Syrians an hundred thousand footmen in one day. [This prodigious slaughter may well create surprise. That two comparatively small companies should be able, physically, to slay, with the rude weapons of that age, 100,000 warriors, fighting for their lives, seems hardly credible. It is probable, therefore, that the numbers here, as elsewhere, have been exaggerated in the course of transcription. Another explanation of the difficulty has, indeed, been suggested by Bähr, viz., that לְאִישׁ may signify here, as it undoubtedly does elsewhere, “defeated,” “put to flight” (see Gen. xiv. 5; 1 Sam. xiii. 4, &c.) And the Hebrew at first sight seems to favour this idea, for it may be rendered literally, *they smote Syria, a hundred thousand, &c.* The 100,000 would then represent the entire strength of the Syrian infantry. But the mention of the “footmen” and of “one day” alike suggests that it is of slaughter, not dispersion, that the historian speaks.]

Ver. 30.—But the rest [Plainly those not slain. It cannot mean those not defeated] fled to Aphek [It is clear that this fortress was then in the possession of the Syrians, as they took refuge within its walls], into the city; and there a wall [Heb. *the wall*, i.e., the city wall] fell upon twenty and seven thousand of the men that were left. [The Hebrew implies that these were practically all who survived the battle. הַנּוֹתָרִים is the word translated above, “the rest.” We have here surely an exaggeration, even more obvious than that of ver. 39. For even if we suppose an earthquake, it is difficult to believe that the walls of a place like

Aphek could bury so large a number in their ruins. Rawlinson suggests that the Syrians at the time were "manning the defences in full force," and that the earthquake "threw down the wall where they were most thickly crowded upon it;" but the question arises whether it is possible to mass 27,000 men upon any part of a wall, or all the walls, especially of an ancient village fortress. Thenius hints that the fall of the wall may have been occasioned by the Israelites undermining it during the night, but it seems hardly likely that so small a force could undertake operations of that kind against so formidable a body of troops. Keil objects to this view on another ground, viz., that its object is to negative the idea of a Divine interposition. But the text does not ascribe the fall of the wall to any such interposition, and we know that the sacred writers are not slow to recognize the finger of God whenever it is exerted.] And Ben-hadad fled, and came into [Heb. to] the city [i.e., Aphek. Rawlinson interprets this statement to mean that he "fled from the wall, where he had been at the time of the disaster, into the inner parts of the city," but this is extremely doubtful. Observe the words, "fled and came to the city"—words almost identical with those used of the fugitives above], into an inner chamber. [Heb. into a chamber within a chamber, as in ch. xxii. 25. This cannot mean "from chamber to chamber," as marg. It is to be observed that חדר חדר alone signifies properly an inner chamber. See Gen. xliiii. 30; Judg. xvi. 9, 12. Rawlinson thinks that a secret chamber may be meant "a chamber in the wall, or one beneath the floor of another."]

Ver. 31.—And his servants [Possibly the very same men who (ver. 23) had counselled this second expedition] said unto him, Behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings [As no doubt they were when compared with contemporary pagan sovereigns]: let us, I pray thee, put sackcloth on our loins [in token of humiliation and contrition. קַיִשׁ is identical, radically, with σάκκος, saccus, and our sack], and ropes upon our heads [i.e., round our necks. To show how completely they were at Ahab's mercy. Bähr shows that this custom still exists in China, but the well-known story of the citizens of Calais, after its siege by Edward III., supplies a closer illustration], and go out [Heb. go] to the king of Israel [It would appear from the language of ver. 33 as if Ahab's army was now besieging the place. He himself may have kept at a safe distance

from it]: peradventure he will save thy life. [LXX. our lives, τὰς ψυχὰς ἡμῶν.]

Ver. 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. [Compare with this abject petition for life the arrogant insolence of vers. 6, 10. The tables are indeed turned.] And he said, Is he yet alive? he is my brother.

Ver. 33.—Now the men did diligently observe whether anything would come from him, and did hastily catch it [Heb. and the men augured—שָׁפְטוּ] *divinavit*. Cf. Gen. xlv. 15; Levit. xix. 26; 2 Kings xvii. 17. LXX. *οὐκ ἔβρανον*. Vulgate *accepterunt pro omine—and hasted and made him declare whether from him*, the meaning of which is sufficiently clear, viz., that the men took Ahab's words, "He is my brother," as a speech of good omen, and immediately laid hold of it, and contrived that the king should be held to it and made to confirm it. The only difficulty is in the word אֲנָאֵךְ לֵי. The Talmud, however, interprets it to mean, declare, confirm; in the Kal conjugation and the Hiphil would therefore mean, made him declare. The LXX. and Vulgate, however, have understood it otherwise,

taking אֲנָאֵךְ as the equivalent of הִלָּךְ *rapuit*. The former has ἀνελέξαντο τὸν λόγον ἐς τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ, and the latter *rapuerunt verbum ex ore ejus*. They would seem also to have read instead of הִלָּךְ מִן הַדָּבָר מִן הַדָּבָר (Ewald). The law of *dakheel* (see Layard, N. and B. pp. 317—319), by which Rawlinson would explain this incident, seems to be rather an usage of the Bedouin than of any civilized nations]: and they said, Thy brother Ben-hadad. Then said he, Go ye, bring him. Then Ben-hadad came forth to him [out of his hiding-place and out of the city]: and he caused him to come up into the chariot. [A mark of great favour (compare Gen. xli. 43), and of reconciliation and concord (cf. 2 Kings x. 15).]

Ver. 34.—And Ben-hadad said unto him, The cities, which my father took from thy father, I will restore [We can hardly see in these words "the terms of peace which he is willing to offer as the price of his freedom" (Rawlinson), because he was absolutely at Ahab's mercy, and was not in a position to make any stipulations; but they express Ben-hadad's idea of the results which must follow the conquest. His utter defeat would necessitate this reconstruction of their respective territories, &c. We cannot be quite certain that the cities here referred to are those enumerated in ch. xv.

20, as taken by Ben-hadad's armies from Baasha. For Baasha was not the father, nor even was he the "ancestor" (as Keil, later edition) of Ahab, but belonged to a different dynasty. At the same time it is quite conceivable that a prince in Ben-hadad's position, in his ignorance or forgetfulness of the history of Israel, might use the word "father" improperly, or even in the sense of "predecessor." We know that אָבִי had a very extended signification. Keil and Bähr, however, think that we have a reference to some war in the reign of Omri (cf. ch. xvi. 27), which is not recorded in Scripture. And the words which follow make this extremely probable, inasmuch as in Baasha's days Samaria had no existence; and thou shalt make streets [וְיָבִיטִי] lit., *whatever is without*; hence streets, spaces, quarters] for thee in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria. [The commentators are agreed that a permission to establish bazaars or quarters, in which the Hebrews might live and trade, is here conceded]. Then said Ahab [These words are rightly supplied by our translators. The meaning would have been quite clear had the Hebrews been familiar with the use of quotation marks. For lack of these, all the versions ascribe the words to Ben-hadad], I will send thee away with this covenant. So he made a covenant with him, and sent him away.

Ver. 35.—And a certain man [Heb. *one man*; cf. ch. xiii. 11, note] of the sons of the prophets [Here mentioned for the first time, though the prophetic schools probably owed their existence, certainly their development, to Samuel. The אֲנָשֵׁי הַנְּבִיאִים are of course not the children, but the pupils of the prophets. For this use of "son," cf. 1 Sam. xx. 31 ("a son of death"); 2 Sam. xii. 5; Deut. xxv. 2; Matt. xxiii. 15; 1 Kings iv. 30; Ezra ii. 1; John xvii. 12, and Amos vii. 14. Gesenius refers to the Greek *ιαρῶν υἱοί, ἡγρόρων υἱοί, &c.*, and says that among the Persians "the disciples of the Magi are called, "*Sons of Magi.*" The word, again, does not necessarily imply youth. That they were sometimes married men appears from 2 Kings vi. 1, though this was probably after their collegiate life was ended. As they were called "sons," so their instructor, or head, was called "father" (1 Sam. x. 12)] said unto his neighbour [or companion. Another prophet is implied. It was because this "neighbour" was a prophet that his disregard of the word of the Lord was so sinful, and received such severe punishment], in the word of the Lord [see on ch. xiii. 1], *Smite me, I pray thee.* [Why the prophet,

in order to the accomplishment of his mission—which was to obtain from Ahab's own lips a confession of his deserts—why he should have been smitten, *i.e.*, bruised and wounded, is not quite clear. For it is obvious that he might have sustained his part, told his story, and obtained a judgment from the king, without proceeding to such painful extremities. It is quite true that a person thus wounded would perhaps sustain the part of one who had been in battle *better*, but the wounds were in no way necessary to his disguise, and men do not court pain without imperious reasons. Besides, it was "in the word of the Lord" that these wounds were sought and received. It is quite clear, therefore, that it cannot have been merely to give him a claim to an audience with the king (Ewald)—he could easily have simulated wounds by means of bandages, which would at the same time have helped to disguise him—or that he might foreshadow in his own person the wounding which Ahab would receive (ch. xxii. 11), for of that he says nothing, or for any similar reason. The wounding, we may be quite sure, and the tragical circumstances connected therewith, are essential parts of the parable this prophet had to act, of the lesson he had to teach. Now the great lesson he had to convey, not to the king alone, but to the prophetic order and to the whole country, the lesson most necessary in that lawless age, was that of implicit unquestioning obedience to the Divine law. Ahab had just transgressed that law. He had "let go a man whom God had appointed to utter destruction;" he had heaped honours on the oppressor of his country, and in gratifying benevolent impulses had ignored the will and counsel of God (see on ver. 42). No doubt it seemed to him, as it has seemed to others since, that he had acted with rare magnanimity, and that his generosity in that age, an age which showed no mercy to the fallen, was unexampled. But he must be taught that he has no right to be generous at the expense of others; that God's will must be done even when it goes against the grain, when it contradicts impulses of kindness, and demands painful sacrifices. He is taught this by the prophetic word (ver. 42), but much more effectively by the actions which preceded it. A prophet required to smite a brother prophet, and that for no apparent reason, would no doubt find it repugnant to his feelings to do so; it would seem to him hard and cruel and shameful to smite a companion. But the prophet who refused to do this, who followed his benevolent impulses in preference to the word of the Lord, died for his sin—died

forthwith by the visitation of God. What a lesson was this to king and country—for no doubt the incident would be bruited abroad, and the very strangeness of the whole proceeding would heighten the impression it made. Indeed, it is hardly possible to conceive a way in which the duty of unquestioning obedience could be more emphatically taught. When this prophet appeared before the king, a man had smitten and wounded him, disagreeable and painful as the task must have been, because of the word of the Lord; whilst a brother prophet, who declined the office because it was painful, had been slain by a wild beast. It is easy to see that there was here a solemn lesson for the king, and that the wounding gave it its edge.] And the man refused to smite him.

Ver. 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 [Heb. *the lion*, perhaps the lion appointed already to this office, or one that had lately been seen in the neighbourhood] shall slay thee. And as soon as he was departed from him, a [Heb. *the*] lion found him [same word as in ch. xiii. 24, where see note], and slew him. [For the same sin as that of “the man of God (ch. xiii. 21, 26), viz., disobedience (Deut. xxxii. 24; Jer. v. 6), and disobedience, too, under circumstances remarkably similar to those. In fact, the two histories run on almost parallel lines. In each case it is a prophet who disobeys, and disobeys the “word of the Lord;” in each case the disobedience appears almost excusable; in each case the prophet appears to be hardly dealt with, and suffers instant punishment, whilst the king escapes; in each case the punishment is foretold by a prophet; in each case it is effected by the instrumentality of a lion. And in each case the lesson is the same—that God’s commands must be kept, whatever the cost, or that stern retribution will inevitably follow.]

Ver. 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. [Heb. *smiting and wounding*. This last particular is apparently recorded to show how promptly and thoroughly this “other man,” who is not said to have been a prophet, obeyed the charge. Probably he had the fate of the other before his eyes.]

Ver. 38.—So the prophet departed, and waited for the king by the way, and disguised himself with ashes upon his face. [Rather, a *bandage upon his eyes*. רַבָּן there can be no doubt, denotes some sort of covering (LXX. *τελαμὸν*), and is probably the

equivalent of רַבָּן. Ashes cannot be put on the eyes, and even on the head would be but a poor disguise. This bandage was at the same time in keeping with the prophet’s rôle as a wounded man, and an effective means of concealment. It would almost seem as if this prophet was personally known to the king.]

Ver. 39.—And as the king passed by, he cried unto the king [in his capacity of supreme judge; see on ch. iii. 9]: and he said, Thy servant went out into the midst of the battle [*i.e.*, the recent battle]; and, behold, a man turned aside [רַבָּן; cf. ch. xxii. 43; Exod. iii. 3; xxxii. 8. But Ewald, *al.* would read, רַבָּן *prince* or *captain* (properly רַבָּן), a change which certainly lends force to the apologue, and makes the analogy more complete. Only such an officer was entitled to give such an order. Moreover, just as a common soldier ought to obey his captain, so should Ahab have obeyed God. But as our present text yields a good and sufficient meaning, we are hardly warranted in making any change], 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 [Heb. *weigh*. There was then no coinage. Payments were made by means of bars of silver or gold] a talent of silver. [A considerable sum—about £400. “The prisoner is thus represented to be a very important personage” (Thenius). There is a hint at Ben-hadad. Ewald holds that the wounds represented the penalty inflicted instead of the talent which a common soldier naturally could not pay.]

Ver. 40.—And as thy servant was busy [Heb. *doing*. The LXX. *πριεβλήφατο ὁ δούλος σου*, and the Vulgate *dum ego turbatus huc illucque me verterem*, have led some critics to urge the substitution of תָּבַח *turning*, or תָּבַח *looking*, for תָּבַח *doing*, in the text. But no alteration is needed] here and there [or *hither and thither*—the תָּבַח is generally *local*—as in Josh. viii. 20. But sometimes it is merely *demonstrative*, “here and there,” as in Gen. xxi. 29, Dan. xii. 5. and so it may be understood here (Gesenius)], he was gone [Heb. *he is not*]. And the king of Israel said unto him, So shall thy judgment be; thyself has decided it. [Cf. 2 Sam. xii. 5—7, Ahab has himself pronounced that his judgment is just, and what it shall be.]

Ver. 41.—And he hasted, and took the ashes away from his face [Heb. *removed the covering from upon his eyes*]; and the king of Israel discerned him that he was of the prophets. [That is, he was one of the

prophets who were known to him. The face alone would hardly have proclaimed him a prophet. And the prophet's dress would of course have been laid aside when the disguise was assumed.]

Ver. 42.—And he said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Because thou hast let go [Heb. *sent away*; same word as in ver. 34. This is an indirect proof that those were the words of Ahab] out of thy hand [Heb. *out of hand*—same idiom in 1 Sam. xxvi. 23—*i. e.*, *power, possession*. Cf. Gen. xxxii. 12; Exod. xviii. 9; Num. xxxv. 25] a man whom I appointed to utter destruction [Heb. *a man of my devoting*. Cf. Isa. xxxiv. 5; Zech. xiv. 11. It is the word used of the Canaanites and their cities, Deut. ii. 34; vii. 2; Josh. viii. 26; x. 28; and it gave a name to the city *Hormah*, Num. xxi. 3; xiv. 45. Ben-hadad, therefore, was doomed of God], therefore thy life shall go for [Heb. *be instead of*] his life, and thy people for his people. [By the *lex talionis*. It was probably because of this denunciation (cf. ch. xxii. 8) that Josephus identifies this prophet with Micaiah, the son of Imlah, “whom Ahab appears to have imprisoned on account of some threatening prophecy” (Rawlinson). See ch. xxii. 9, 26. For the fulfilment of this prediction see ch. xxii. It has seemed to some writers as if Ahab were here very hardly dealt with for merely gratifying a generous impulse, and dealing magnanimously with a conquered foe. Indeed, there are commentators who see in his release of the cruel and insolent tyrant a “trait which does honour to the heart of Ahab.” But it is to be remembered, first, that Ahab was not free to do as he liked in this matter. His victories had been won, not by his prowess, by the skill of his generals, or the valour of his soldiers, but by the power of God alone. The war, that is to say, was God's war: it was begun and continued, and should therefore have been ended, in Him. When even the details of the attack had been ordered of God (ver. 14), surely He should have been consulted as to the disposal of the prisoners. The prophet

who promised Divine aid might at any rate have been asked—as prophets constantly were in that age (ch. xxii. 5, 8)—what was the “word of the Lord” concerning Israel's overbearing and inveterate enemy. But Ahab, who had himself played so craven a part (vers. 21, 31), and who had contributed nothing to these great and unhopèd-for victories, nevertheless arrogated to himself their fruits, and thereby ignored and dishonoured God. Secondly, if he had so little regard for his own private interests as to liberate such a man as Ben-hadad, he ought, as trustee for the peace and welfare of Israel, to have acted differently. The demand of ver. 6 should have revealed to him the character of the man he had to deal with. And lastly, he was acting in defiance of all the principles and precedents of the Old Testament dispensation. For one great principle of that dispensation was the *lex talionis*. The king was the authorized dispenser of rewards and punishments, not only to wicked subjects but to aggressive nations. It was his duty to mete out to them the measure they had served to Israel. And the precedents were all in favour of putting such wretches as this Ben-hadad to the sword (Josh. x. 26; Judg. vii. 25; 1 Sam. xv. 33). If he had been the first oppressor who fell into the hands of Israel, Ahab might have had some excuse. But with the fate of Agag, of Adoni-bezek, of Oreb and Zeeb, in his memory, he ought at any rate to have paused and asked counsel of God before taking Ben-hadad into his chariot and sending him away with a covenant of peace, to reappear at no distant period on the scene as the scourge of the Lord's people.]

Ver. 43.—And the king of Israel went to his house heavy and displeased [Heb. *sullen and angry*; same words ch. xxi. 4], and came to Samaria. [The order of this verse suggests that the house was one in or near Aphek, in which the king was lodged after the battle—on which this interview, therefore, followed closely—and that shortly afterwards he left it for his capital.]

### HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—43.—*The Purgatory of Nations and Kings.* The two invasions of Israel by the armies of Syria, and their defeat by the finger of God, may suggest some lessons as to God's dealings with *nations*, and with oppressive and tyrannical kings.

Two considerations must, however, be borne in mind here. First, that the present age, unlike the Mosaic, is not a dispensation of *temporal* rewards and punishments. It is true that even now men *do* receive a rough sort of retribution, according to their deserts, from the operation of natural laws; but that retribution is uncertain and indirect. Sometimes vengeance overtakes the wrong-doer, but as often as not he escapes scathless. The Jewish economy, however, had absolutely

none but temporal sanctions. A "judgment to come" formed no part of its system. It dealt with men as if there were no hereafter. It taught them to expect an exact and proportionate and immediate recompense; an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. It preached an ever-present Deity, the true King of the country, visiting every transgression and disobedience with its just recompense of reward (Heb. ii. 2). And so long as that economy was practised in its integrity, so long, either through the immediate dispensations of God, or the mediate action of the authorities who represented Him, did vice and crime, extortion and oppression, infidelity and apostasy, receive their just deserts. But with the advent of our Lord, and His apocalypse of life and immortality, all this was changed. We no longer look for temporal judgments because we are taught to wait for the judgment-seat of Christ. It is only within very narrow limits that we expect to see vice punished or virtue rewarded. It causes us no surprise, consequently, to find even the tyrant and oppressor escaping all the whips and stings of vengeance. We know that he will not always escape; that though "the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small," and that he and all such as he will surely satisfy the inexorable claims of Justice hereafter.

But there is apparently one exception—and this is the second consideration—to this general rule. If the individual is not judged here, the nation is. For nations, as such, have no existence apart from this life present. In the kingdom of the future, nationalities have no place (Col. iii. 11). "Mortals have many tongues, immortals have but one." If, then, men are ever to be dealt with in their corporate capacity, they must, and as a matter of fact they do, receive their reckoning here. It surely is not difficult to trace the finger of God in the history of Europe as well as of Israel, of modern as of ancient times. In our own generation have not both Austria and Prussia paid in blood for the spoliation of Denmark? Have not the United States suffered for their overweening pride and greed and reckless speculation? Has not France paid a heavy forfeit for the corruption, the profligacy, the secularity which marked the latter years of the Empire? Has not England, too, had to lament her intermeddling? have not her late reverses suggested to many minds the painful thought that the hand of the Lord is gone out against her? Is she not suffering at this moment for her past misgovernment of Ireland? Is not Turkey, by the agonies of dissolution, expiating the uncleanness and injustice of the last four centuries? Yes, it should be clear that whatever arraignment awaits the individual hereafter, the community, the nation, receives its requital and acquittance here.

And if this be so, it is obvious that the king, the representative of the country, or the sovereign power, who is responsible primarily for the action of the community, will have a share, and by far the largest share, in whatever good or evil befalls it. On him primarily does the disgrace and blow of a disaster fall. It is not always true that "the kings make war and their subjects have to pay for it," for the king, in case of defeat, pays the heaviest toll of all. And though there is no one to call him to an account for internal misgovernment, yet even that does not go uncompensated, as the history of Rome, of Russia, of Turkey, of England shows. We are warranted in looking, consequently, for the punishment of aggressive nations and tyrannical kings in this present age.

Now this chapter describes two invasions of the territory of Israel, and two successive defeats of the invaders. In the invasions we see the punishment of Israel and of Ahab; in the defeats the punishment of Syria and Ben-hadad. Let us inquire, in the first place, what each had done to provoke and deserve his respective chastisement.

1. THE INVASIONS. That these were punishments hardly needs proof. For can any land be overrun with a horde of barbarians, such as the Syrians and their confederates, the Hittite chieftains, were, without widespread and profound suffering? We know what invasion means in modern times, when warfare is conducted with some approach to humanity, but what it meant in the Old World and the Orient, we are quite unable to realize. It is idle to say that the Syrians were defeated in the end. Who shall picture to us what the thousands of Israel suffered during the

advance, possibly during the retreat, of that unwieldy and rapacious host, certainly during the occupation of the country? "Before them the garden of Eden, behind them a desolate wilderness" (Joel ii. 8). Fire, rapine, famine, these three fell sisters marched in their train. The invasions, then, though repelled, would entail prodigious loss and suffering on the people. It would not compensate the Jewish farmer for the loss of his corn and oil and wine, still less the Jewish father for the dishonour of his daughters, to know that the siege was raised, that the king had fled to an inner chamber, that thousands of their enemies lay buried under the walls of Aphek. No, each invasion was nothing short of a national calamity, and we do well to ask what it was had provoked this chastisement. It was—

1. *The sin of the people at large.* The sin of Israel at this epoch was idolatry. The sin of Jeroboam had already received, in part at least, its recompense. A Syrian invasion in a preceding generation (ch. xv. 20) had wasted the territory of Dan. But the calf-worship was continued, and vile idolatry was now associated with it. It is true this had been fostered, if not introduced, by Jezebel, but it is impossible to acquit the people of blame. The pleasant vices of the Phœnician ritual were sweet to their taste. They loved to have it so. Justice demanded, consequently, that they should share in the punishment. Idolatry had already procured the investment and spoliation of Jerusalem; it now accounts for the march of the Syrians and the siege of Samaria, the centre of the Baal-worship. This is the third time that a foreign army has appeared before a polluted shrine. "How can they expect peace from the earth who do wilfully fight against heaven?"

2. *The sin of its rulers.* We have just seen that Ahab and Jezebel were primarily responsible for this last great apostasy. It was Jezebel really who "reared up an altar 'or Baal," &c. (ch. xvi. 32), though Ahab was a facile instrument in her hands. We find, consequently, that king and queen were the first to suffer, and suffered most. It is easy to picture the abject wretchedness and despair to which Ahab was reduced by the insolent messages of the northern barbarian. Those were indeed days of trouble and rebuke and blasphemy. The iron must have entered into his soul as he found himself utterly without resources, at the mercy of one who showed no mercy, but absolutely gloated over his misery. Nor did Jezebel escape her share of torture. She had to face the prospect of being handed over, with the other ladies of the harem, to the will of the brutal, sensual, drunken despot who was thundering at their gates. Had her hair turned white, like that of another queen, in one night, we could not have wondered at it. Strong-willed, desperate woman that she was (2 Kings ix. 31), she must have known too well how cruel are the tender mercies of the wicked not to have trembled. It is clear, therefore, that that prince and princess reaped some fruit of their doings in this life.

But it may be said that this reign of terror did not last long, and that despair was speedily succeeded by the joy and triumph of victory. But the victory was not one which could afford unmixed satisfaction, either to king or people. It was not won by their prowess. It was of such a kind that all boasting was excluded. In the first place, they owed it to a prophet of the Lord—one of the order whom Jezebel had persecuted. It would therefore heap coals of fire upon Ahab's head. Secondly, it was achieved by a handful of boys. His trained veterans had to follow their lead and enter into their labours. It was therefore more of a humiliation than a glory for his arms. It left him, in the presence of his people, a helpless debtor to that God whose altars he had overthrown; to that prophet whose companions he had slain.

Such were the immediate causes of the invasion. Two others, which were more remote, must be briefly indicated.

3. *The un wisdom and unbelief of Asa.* He it was who first taught the Syrians that the way to Samaria lay open to them, and that the spoils of the country repaid the cost and trouble of invasion (ch. xv. 18, 19).

4. *The impiety of Solomon.* The horses and chariots furnished by that great prince to the "kings of the Hittites and the kings of Syria" (ch. x. 29) now overrun the great plain and stream into the valleys of Samaria. The Syrians owed the

most important arm of their service (vers. 1, 25) to the disobedience of the Lord's anointed. The two-and-thirty subject princes had once been the vassals of Solomon (ch. iv. 21). We now turn to—

II. THE DEFEATS. If this prodigious host was really called together to chastise the idolatries of Israel, it seems strange that it was not allowed to effect its purpose; that in the very hour of victory it was utterly and irretrievably defeated. But the explanation is not far to seek. Its advance was the punishment of Ahab's sin; its dispersion the punishment of Ben-hadad's. "Well may God plague each with other who means vengeance to them both." And Ben-hadad's sin consisted in—

1. *Defiance of God.* The battles of the Old World, as this chapter shows, were regarded as the contests of national deities. The defeat of Pharaoh was a judgment upon the gods of Egypt (Exod. xii. 12). It was to altars, hecatombs, incantations that Balak looked for help (Num. xxii., xxiii.) It was the mighty gods of Israel that the Philistines feared (1 Sam. iv. 7, 8). And we know how Goliath (*ib.*, ch. xvii. 45) and Sennacherib alike (Isa. xxxvii. 23) defied the living God. And when we see Ben-hadad swearing by his gods (ver. 10), when we find his courtiers accounting for their first defeat by the belief that the gods of their adversaries were gods of the hills only, we perceive at once that this war was regarded on Syria's and Israel's part alike (ver. 23) as a trial of strength between the deities whom they respectively worshipped. The defeat, consequently, was primarily the punishment of Ben-hadad's blasphemy (Isa. xxxvii. 29).

2. *Wanton insolence and cruelty.* We constantly find the instruments used of God for the punishment of Israel, punished in their turn for their oppression of Israel. We have instances in Judg. iii.; iv. 3, 22; vi. 1; cf. vii. 25; 2 Chron. xxxii. 21; Isa. x. 5—12, 24 sqq.; xiv. 4 sqq.; Obad. x. 23. When king or army exceeded their commission, when they trampled on the foe, they straightway provoked the vengeance which they were employed to minister. It would have been strange if such overbearing brutality as Ben-hadad's (vers. 3, 6, 10) had gone unrebuked.

3. *Overweening pride.* He was so intoxicated with the greatness of his army, with the praises of his courtiers and allies, that he thinks, Nebuchadnezzar-like, that neither God nor man can withstand him. His haughtiness comes out very clearly in his messages (vers. 3, 6), in his scorn of his adversaries (vers. 16—18), in the passionate outburst with which he receives Ahab's reply (ver. 10). "The proud Syrian would have taken it in foul scorn to be denied, though he had sent for all the heads of Israel." And pride provokes a fall (Prov. xvi. 18; xxix. 23; cf. 2 Chron. xxxii. 26; Isa. xvi. 6, 7; Obad. iv.) The highest mountain-tops draw down on themselves the artillery of the skies. Pride stands first on the list of the "seven deadly sins," because self-worship is the most hateful form of idolatry, the most obnoxious to the Majesty of Heaven.

4. *Drunkenness.* Like another invader, he transgressed by wine (Hab. ii. 5; cf. Dan v. 2, 23). His revels in the thick of the siege reveal to us the man. It would have been, in Jewish eyes especially, a glaring injustice if such a man, while employed to chastise the sins of others, had escaped all chastisement himself. And his two-and-thirty confederates were like him. They had aided and encouraged him; they drank with him (ver. 16), and they fell with him (ver. 24).

It only remains for us now to observe how exact and exemplary was the punishment which overtook king and princes and the entire army—for the army, no doubt, had shared the views and vices of its commanders. The defeat of the entire host was not occasioned by the sin of its leader alone, any more than the invasion was provoked by the sin of Ahab alone. In the day that God visited the sin of Ben-hadad, He visited also the sin of Syria. In the first place, the drunkenness of the leaders brought its own retribution. It involved the demoralization of the soldiery. With such besotted and incapable heads, they were unprepared for attack, and fell an easy prey to the vigorous onslaught of the 232 youths. The size of the host, again, contributed to make the disaster all the greater. And what but pride and cruelty had dictated the assembling of such an enormous array, merely to crush a neighbour kingdom? And their pride was further humbled by

the circumstances of their defeat. It was to their eternal disgrace that a handful of men, of boys rather, unused to war, foemen quite unworthy of their steel, had routed and dispersed them; that their innumerable army had melted away before "two little flocks of kids." What a contrast to the proud boasting of ver. 10! Even the manner of Ben-hadad's escape, his hurried, ignominious flight on the first horse that offered; his cowering abjectly in a corner of an inner chamber, this helped to sink him to a lower pitch of shame. The cavalry that was to accomplish such great things; he is thankful for one of its stray horses to bear him away from the field of slaughter. The walls of Aphek, again, avenged his threats against the walls of Samaria. And the kings who had flattered him and encouraged his cruel projects, they too received a meet recompense, not only in the defeat, but in their summary degradation from their commands; while the courtiers who suggested the second expedition expiated their folly by the miseries and indignities which they suffered. It was a pitiful end of a campaign begun with so much of bluster and fury, and threatening; that procession of wretched and terrified men, with "sackcloth on their loins, and ropes on their heads." Nor did the losses of Syria end with the battle or the earthquake; the king voluntarily cedes a part of the territory which his father had won by his valour from Israel, and returns to his capital with a decimated army, a tarnished fame, and a restricted realm. His gluttonous desire for pillage, his forcing a quarrel upon Israel, his defiance of the Almighty, have been punished by the forfeiture of all he holds most dear.

It has more than once been remarked that the history of Israel has its lessons for the individual soul. But it also speaks to nations and kings. This chapter proclaims that neither any people nor its rulers can forget God with impunity; that disregard of His laws is sure to bring down His judgments; that the purgatory of nations is in this life present; that, while the individual awaits a judgment to come, the community is judged now, by sword, and famine, and pestilence; by invasion and defeat; by loss of fame and territory; by bad harvests and crippled trade. Corporate bodies and communities may "have no conscience," but they will prove sooner or later, as Assyria and Babylon, as Medes and Persians, as Greeks and Romans, as Russia and Turkey, as France and Germany have proved, that "verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth" (Psa. lviii. 11).

But this history has other lessons than those which concern nations and kings. Some of these we may glean as we pass along.

Ver. 1.—"*All his host . . . thirty and two kings . . . horses and chariots.*" It has been remarked that it is not easy to account for this expedition. Was it that Ahab had refused to do fealty? or had he offered some personal affront to the Syrian king? Nay, may we not find explanation enough in the fact that Ben-hadad, having an enormous host at his command, must find something for it to do? Large standing armies are constantly the cause of war. Preparations for war in the *interest of peace* (*si vis pacem, &c.*) are so manifestly paradoxical that who can wonder if war, and not peace, is the result? Let Europe beware of its bloated armaments. It is natural for statesmen to wish to have something to show for the cost of their maintenance.

Ver. 3.—"*Thy silver . . . is mine.*" A conspicuous instance **this of that law of old time—**

"the simple plan  
That they should take who have the power,  
And they should keep who can."

**But is our modern warfare so very different in principle? Why may kings remove landmarks any more than peasants? Why may a Ben-hadad, an Alexander, a Napoleon cry, "Your lands or your life," without reproach, and yet the footpad who plays at the same game on the highway is hanged for it? Why should what is plain "stealing" in private life be called "conveying" or "annexing" when practised on a larger scale?**

Ver. 4.—"*I am thine.*" "Wisely doth Ahab, as a reed in a tempest, stoop to

this violent charge." "It is not for the overpowered to capitulate." Besides, who knew what the "soft answer" might effect? If smooth words could do no good, rough ones would certainly do much harm. The meek always have the best of it, and so inherit the earth.

Ver. 9.—"This thing I may not do." "Better die than live in disgrace," says the Greek proverb. The king of Samaria was in a similar strait to those four logical lepers who, a few years later, in another siege, lay at the gate of the city (2 Kings vii. 4). He could but die in any case, and he might perchance live if he stood on his defence. Even a worm will turn when trod upon. We should think scorn of Ahab, had he not made a stand for his life and wife and children.

Ver. 10.—"The gods do so to me," &c. How often has the swearer to eat his words. The hero *does*; he never talks of what he will do. "Victory is to be achieved, not to be sworn." This vulgar fashion of calling upon God to do *oneself* some hurt thus appears to be of great antiquity. But it always proceeds from those who have very little belief in God at all. The profane swearer is practically an infidel, so far as the gods he invokes are concerned. An Italian workman was once reproved in a Roman studio for the oaths which he swore by the sacred name of *Gesu*. "Oh," said he boldly, "I'm not afraid of Him at all." Then, lowering his voice to a whisper, he added, "I'll tell you what I'm afraid of: it is His blessed mother." He never swore by the Deity he believed in.

Ver. 12.—"Set yourselves in array" (Heb. אָרְבָּו). The command was prompt and decided enough. But observe, he himself went on drinking (ver. 16). This helps to explain his defeat. He was a man of words only. The successful generals—it is a trite saying—are those who say "Come," not "Go."

Ver. 13.—"There came a prophet." *O altitudo!* For years past the prophets have been proscribed, hunted, harried to death. Yet in his darkest hour, when other refuge fails him, Ahab finds a prophet at his side. God bears no grudges. It is sufficient to give us a claim upon His help that we are helpless (Psa. lxxviii. 5; Hosea xiv. 3). He "comforteth" (*i.e.*, strengtheneth, *con fortis*) "those that are cast down" (2 Cor. vii. 6). "Who can wonder enough at this unweariable mercy of God? After the fire and rain, fetched miraculously from heaven, Ahab had promised much, performed nothing, yet God will again bless and solicit him with victory; one of those prophets whom he persecuted shall comfort his dejection with the news of deliverance and triumph." This act of grace should have proved that the Lord was God, and that the prophet was His messenger. It is not in man to act thus.

"Thou shalt know that I am the Lord." "Not for thy righteousness or the uprightness of thine heart dost thou go in to possess their land, but for the wickedness of these nations," &c. (Deut. ix. 4, 5). The drought, the fire, the great rain, none of these had convinced the king and queen. Will deliverance from the jaws of death move them? Will they believe in a God of battles? Will they recognize His finger in a superhuman victory?

Ver. 15.—"The young men . . . were two hundred and thirty-two." "Not by might nor by power" (Zech. iv. 6). God's host is ever a little flock (cf. Judg. vii. 2—7; 2 Chron. xx. 12; 1 Cor. i. 27—29). The "weak things" were chosen then, as subsequently, "that no flesh should glory in his presence." God never departs from that rule. The "carpenter's son," the "fishermen," the "unlearned and ignorant men"—it is the same principle underlies His choice in every case.

Ver. 16.—"Drinking himself drunk . . . he and the kings." Of strong drink it may justly be said, "Many strong men have been slain by her" (Prov. vii. 20). "It is not for kings to drink wine" (*ib.*, xxxi. 4). Nor is it for warriors. Alexander, conqueror of the world, was conquered by wine. Our great generals of modern times have been abstainers. The march to Coomassie, to Candahar was effected without the aid of intoxicants. The Russian soldiers in the Crimea were drugged with *vodka*, but it did not prevent their defeat.

Ver. 18.—"Take them alive." "Security is the certain usher of destruction. We have never so much cause to fear as when we fear nothing" (cf. Dan. v. 1, 30; Luke xvii. 27; 1 Thess. v. 8).

Ver. 20.—“*They slew every one his man.*” It is thus the world must be won for Christ. Mohammed had two fixed ideas: first, to make converts; second, to make his converts *soldiers*. And every Christian is a soldier of the Cross, enlisted at his baptism into the Church *militant*. By personal, individual effort are Churches built up and believers added to the Lord. So it was in the first days. “Andrew findeth his own brother Simon.” “Philip findeth Nathanael” (John i. 41—45).

Ver. 23.—“*Their gods are gods of the hills.*” It is no uncommon thing to find men laying the blame of their misfortune on God. We smile at those poor pagans who beat their wooden gods with sticks, or those Italian villagers who, a few weeks ago (Sept., 1881), threw the image of their patron saint into a well, and set upon their parish priest, because their prayers for rain remained unanswered; but the same thing, slightly varied in shape, is often done amongst ourselves. “Bad luck” is held responsible for many of the failures for which we have only ourselves to thank. That “everybody is against him” is often the cry of the man who has no enemy but himself. The idle scoundrel who has wife and children generally accuses *them* of being the causes of his misfortunes; if he has no such scapegoats, he will lay the blame on God’s providence. He never remembers that he himself was “drinking himself drunk” at the hour for action.

Ver. 22.—“*Go strengthen thyself.*” Though God had delivered him once and would deliver him again (ver. 28), yet Ahab must consult for his own safety. While trusting in God, he must keep his powder dry. The same prophet who has announced deliverance by a band of youths, wholly inadequate to cope with the Syrians, now bids him look well to the defences of the country. *Aide-toi et Dieu t’aidera*; this is the purport of his message.

Ver. 29.—“*Seven days.*” Compare the “seven thousand” of ver. 15, and Josh. vi. 4, 15, 16. He hath commanded His covenant for ever (Psa. iii. 9; cf. 1 Chron. xvi. 16; Psa. lxxxix. 28, 34). By this act, Israel (1) showed that they remembered the works of the Lord, His wonders of old time; and (2) they reminded Him of His holy covenant (Luke i. 72—74).

Ver. 30.—“*A wall fell,*” &c. (Of. Acts xxviii. 4; Hab. ii. 11). “A dead wall in Aphek shall revenge God on the rest that remained.” Where they sought shelter and thought themselves secure, they found death (cf. Amos v. 19; ix. 3; Psa. cxxxix. 7—10; Luke xix. 40).

Ver. 31.—“*The kings of Israel are merciful kings.*” How true is that of the true King of Israel. He is the very fount of mercy (Exod. xxxiv. 7; Num. xiv. 18; Psa. xxv. 10; c. 5; ciii. 17; cxxx. 7). We often picture Him as “less merciful than His image in a man.” But let us do Him this dishonour no more. It is “His property always to have mercy.” Is He less clement than an Ahab? Is His heart less tender to penitent rebels? “Behold now, we know that the King of Heaven, the God of Israel, is a merciful God; let us put sackcloth upon our loins, and strew ashes upon our heads, and go meet the Lord God of Israel, that he may save our souls.”

Ver. 34.—“*I will send thee away,*” &c. On another occasion such conduct as this was commanded (2 Kings vi. 22, 23). Why, then, was it sinful now? Precisely because it was *not* commanded; because God intended the opposite (ver. 42). It was not clemency, it was culpable weakness to send this overbearing despot, who had already cost Israel so dear, to send him to his home, there to renew his plots against the people of God. As well might the magistrate compassionate the burglar, or the garotter, and instead of shutting him up in prison, send him into the streets, to be the plague of society. The king, like the magistrate, is trustee for the commonwealth. He has no right to gratify his benevolent instincts at the expense of the community. Still less right had the theocratic king, the representative of Heaven, to liberate, *ex mero arbitrio*, a tyrant whom God had manifestly given into his hands. “Charity cannot excuse disobedience.” He had proved Ben-hadad twice, yet he asks for no material guarantees. He neither consults nor remembers his deliverer.

Ver. 40.—“*Thyself hast decided it.*” So shall our judgment be. “Out of thine

own mouth," &c. (Luke xix. 22). How many will stand self-condemned, condemned by their own precepts, condemned by the sentences they have passed upon others, by the measure they have exacted from others, &c.

Ver. 43.—*“Heavy and displeased.”* Cf. Pss. xvi. 4; xxxii. 10. “Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.” Life out of God brings only disappointment. The most magnificent of kings found it vanity and vexation of spirit. The things of earth cannot satisfy the soul of man, the soul made for God. History has preserved for us a striking testimony to this truth in the confession of Abdalrahman, caliph of Spain. “I have now reigned,” he wrote, “fifty years in victory or peace; beloved by my subjects, dreaded by my enemies, and respected by my allies. Riches and honours, power and pleasures, have waited on my call, nor does any earthly blessing appear to have been wanting to my felicity. In this situation I have numbered the days of pure and genuine happiness which have fallen to my lot: they amount to fourteen! O man, place not thy confidence in this present world.”

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—11.—*The Spirit of War.* In human histories so much is made of brilliant uniforms, scientific discipline, skilful manœuvres, exploits, surprises, and successes, that readers are carried away with “the pomp and circumstance” of so-called “glorious war.” In the text we have the other side; and we are reminded of the appeal of James: “From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your own lusts that war in your members?” (James iv. 1.) Conspicuous amongst these is—

I. THE SPIRIT OF WAR. We see this—1. *In Ben-hadad's message* (ver. 3). (1) We do not understand this to be a demand from Ahab for the actual surrender to Ben-hadad of his “silver” and “gold,” “wives” and “children.” Else it would be difficult to see any material difference between this first message and that which followed (ver. 6). (2) The meaning seems to be that Ben-hadad would hold Ahab as his vassal, so that Ahab should retain his wealth, wives, and children only by the sufferance and generosity of his superior. He would have the king of Israel reduced to the condition of the “thirty and two kings” who, with their subjects and fortunes, appear to have been at his service (compare ver. 12 with ver. 24). 2. *In his confident boasting.* (1) He boasts of the vastness of his army. “All the people that follow me.” The Hebrew is given in the margin, “at my feet,” suggesting *subjection* and *submission*. (2) Of the certainty and ease with which such an army may carry victory. “The gods do so to me and more also if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls for all the people that follow me.” They need not be content with handfuls of dust when they can fill their hands with the most valuable things in Samaria. (3) This was the boasting which Ahab rebuked by the use of what had probably been a proverbial expression: “Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off.” This caution might be profitably considered by those who are engaged in spiritual conflicts: “Be not high-minded, but fear.”

II. THE SPIRIT OF INJUSTICE. This we see—1. *In Ben-hadad's requisitions.* (1) In those of his first message right is outraged. “*Thy silver and gold are mine.*” Taking this demand in the sense of Ahab's coming under *villanage* to Ben-hadad, the claim was iniquitous. Man has rights of property and freedom, which, unless they are forfeited to law by crime, should ever be held most sacred. The injustice of slavery is horrible. (2) The second message went even farther. It threatened open robbery. Robbery not only of the monarch, but of his subjects also. A starving wretch who steals a loaf of bread may be convicted as a felon; but a warrior who plunders kingdoms—a Napoleon—is glorified as a hero! But how will these weigh together in the balances of the sanctuary? 2. *In his principles of appeal.* (1) *Justice* is not named. How often *is* justice named in warfare where

It has no place! The Syrian king was more outspoken than many modern war-makers. (2) *Mercy* is quite out of the question. Yet in modern times wars against savages have been trumpeted as benignities, because of the civilization which, it is presumed, will follow in their wake! (3) Ben-hadad did not live in these favoured times, so the one principle to which he appeals is *might*. "He has the men," and he *will have* "the money too!" In this he has had too many successors in the kingdoms of *civilization*. (4) Not only must the covetousness of the king be gratified; so also must the host "at his feet;" and since the "dust of Samaria" will not satisfy them, Samaria must be *sacked* and *pillaged*. One injustice begets another.

III. THE SPIRIT OF CRUELTY. This appears—1. *In the provocations*. (1) Observe the "putting" of Ben-hadad's requisitions. No attempt is made to spare the feelings of Ahab, but, on the contrary, the language is studiously framed to lacerate. "Whatever is pleasant in *thine eyes*"—note, not what is pleasant in the eyes of the spoilers—"they shall put it in their hand and take it away." (2) Witness also the peremptoriness. "To-morrow about this time." 2. *In the struggles*. (1) *Men* are in conflict. This is not a strife of elements without feeling, which is terrible enough, but of flesh and blood and nerves with exquisite sensibilities, with susceptibilities of acute pain and suffering. (2) The combatants are *armed*. That they may put each other to torture they are provided with swords, spears, arrows; and in these days of civilization, with fire-arms of various kinds. Elephants, camels, horses, and other animals are pressed into the dreadful service. (3) Survey the battle-field after the strife. Men and animals dead and dying, mingled; gaping wounds; mangled limbs, sickening horrors! What pictures of cruelty are here! (4) Reflect upon the homes plunged into grief and poverty entailed through the loss of bread-winners; and add the sequel of pestilences and famines. Surely we should pray for the advent of that peaceful reign of righteousness which is promised in the Scriptures of prophecy.—J. A. M.

Vers. 12—21.—*The hand of God*. The notable answer of the king of Israel to the insolent king of Syria, "Let not him that girdeth on the harness boast himself as he that putteth it off," came to Ben-hadad when he was drinking wine with the thirty and two kings that followed him. He at once gave orders to his servants to set themselves in battle array. While the enormous host which "filled the country" (see vers. 25, 27) disposed itself to attack the city, the men of Israel, who were but a handful, naturally trembled for the issue. At this juncture God interposed in the manner related here, and thereby asserted the general truths, viz.—

I. THAT GOD RULES IN THE DESTINIES OF MEN. 1. *Here He showed His hand*. (1) He sent a prophet. Jarchi says it was Micaiah, the son of Imlah, while others think it was Elijah in disguise; but it is useless to speculate on this point. We are more concerned with the purport of His message, which was to promise victory to Israel, and to indicate how that victory should be organized, so that in the issue Jehovah might be acknowledged. (2) The hand of God was seen not only in the prophet's foreknowledge of events, but also in the *wisdom* of the adjustments by which they were to be brought about. For the victory was organized according to instructions of the prophet, purporting also to be from the Lord. Who but the Lord could have foreseen that at noon Ben-hadad and his kings would be so drunken as to be unfit and indisposed to take their posts of command? Who else could have foreseen that Ben-hadad would have been so foolish as to order the sortie to be *taken alive*? For thereby the Syrians were put to a disadvantage, which enabled the "young men of the princes of the provinces" and those who followed them to slay "every one his man," and throw the invading host into confusion. (3) The power of God also was evident when the disparity of numbers is considered. An army of seven thousand Israelites could never, without supernatural aid, have demoralized and routed the formidable hosts of Syria. (4) And that God was in this victory could not be reasonably doubted, since this was not an extraordinary

event by itself, but one of a series of such events; therefore it could not have been an accident. It was preceded by three years of drought which began and ended according to the "word" of Elijah, with the miracle on Carmel. 2. *By so showing His hand He evinced that He is ever working.* (1) When events are ordinary, men are disposed to see in them *natural* causes only; but extraordinary events force upon their consideration the fact of a superior agency behind these causes. (2) This truth is the more evident when the ordinary are recognized in the extraordinary. Thus God ordered the battle. He appointed the general, disposed the attack which was to assure the victory, and timed everything so to fit in with circumstances as to bring about the promised result. (3) With God there is no essential difference between things ordinary and extraordinary. It is simply a question of *proportions*. For natural causes are all *second* causes, and would have no existence but for the *First Cause*. A miracle is but the *unusual* action of the First Cause upon the second causes; but in the *usual* action, God is none the less present and necessary to the result.

II. THAT HE RULES IN RIGHTEOUSNESS AND MERCY. 1. *He humbles the proud in righteousness.* (1) Defeat in any case is humiliation. To Ben-hadad after his confident boasting it was eminently so. He would remember the lesson, "Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off." Let us observe it. (2) The manner was an aggravation of the defeat. It was accomplished by two hundred and thirty-two "young men of the princes of the provinces," who are by some thought to have been a militia raised by provincial magistrates, and by others, with perhaps better reason—for the number seems too small to answer the former description—the attendants of such of those princes as were then in Samaria. It was intensely humiliating that a company of such combatants should rout a formidable army. God makes the weak confound the mighty. (3) Ben-hadad would be mortified to think how his overweening confidence, together with his drunkenness, had directly contributed to his humiliation. He was too drunk to appear at the head of his army, but not too drunk to find his way to the cavalry to facilitate his flight. "There is but one step from the sublime to the ludicrous!" 2. *He shows long-suffering in mercy.* (1) The judgment upon Ben-hadad was mercy to Ahab. It delivered him from the hand of a cruel oppressor. It gave him another warning and space for repentance. (2) Did Ahab deserve this? Certainly not, while he submitted to be led by Jezebel, and that notwithstanding his experience of the drought and the miracle on Carmel. God is long-suffering in mercy. (3) But there were "seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which had not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him." Jarchi would identify these with the "seven thousand" mentioned in verse 15. Probably some of that seven thousand went to compose this, and for their sakes it may have been that God had so signally interposed. Let us never lose sight of God. Let us discern His hand in nature, providence, grace. Let us never provoke His justice by pride, by rebellion. Let us respect His long-suffering by repentance. Let us throw ourselves upon His mercy for salvation, for help.—J. A. M.

Vers. 22—30.—*Wisdom in Counsel.* No man is so wise that it may not be to his advantage to consider advice; but in listening to advice we may be led astray. There are two classes of advisers, viz., those who are influenced by the "wisdom of this world," and those who are influenced by the "wisdom from above." Of both we have examples in the text.

I. THE WISDOM OF THIS WORLD IS A WISDOM OF EXPEDIENCY. 1. *It is not destitute of sagacity.* (1) It has its maxims of *prudence*. (a) Ben-hadad's counsellors would not have him underrate his enemy. The army they advise him to raise for the invasion of Israel must not be inferior to that which had been lately vanquished (ver. 25). Let us not underrate our spiritual foes. (b) Neither would they have him underrate the quality of his soldiers. They do not admit that his army was fairly *beaten*, but speak of "the army that thou hast lost," or "that fell from thee." In this also they were right, for if God had not helped

Israel the Syrians would not have been routed. In all our spiritual conflicts let us fight under the banner of Jehovah. (2) It has its lessons of *experience*. (a) Ben-hadad's counsellors lay emphasis here—"And do this thing, Take the kings away, every man out of his place." Why remove the kings? Because in the last war they were "drinking themselves drunk" when they should have been at their posts, and the army, without officers, became confused and demoralized. Trust not the kings again (see Pss. cxviii. 9; cxlvi. 3). (b) "Put captains in their rooms." Let the army be commanded by men of ability and experience. Pageants are of no use in times of exigency. 2. *But its sagacity is mingled with folly.* (1) Because the *motives* of the wicked are vicious. (a) In his former war Ben-hadad's impulse was *pride*. The insolence of his demands evidenced this (vers. 8, 6). But what wisdom is there in pride? (b) Though mortified by defeat, that pride remained, and was now moved by the spirit of revenge: "Surely we shall be *stronger* than they." But what wisdom is there in resentment? (c) Beyond these base feelings the desire for plunder seems to have moved the Syrian. But where is the wisdom in a king becoming a common robber? (2) Because they put themselves into conflict with the Almighty. (a) The Syrians formed an unworthy idea of the Elohim of Israel when they localized and limited Him to the hills. Palestine is a hilly country, and its cities and high places were generally on hills; and probably in the hill country of Samaria the cavalry and chariots of Syria were of little service. (See Psa. xv. 1; xxiv. 3; lxxxvii. 1; cxxi. 1.) (b) In the proposal to give Israel battle in the plains the Syrians now set Jehovah at defiance.

II. THE WISDOM FROM ABOVE IS THE WISDOM OF TRUTH. 1. *It is far-reaching.* (1) God sees the end from the beginning. We should therefore seek His counsel and guidance. (2) He forewarns His people. He sent His prophet to the king of Israel to inform him that the king of Syria would come up against him at the return of the year. He forewarns us of the things of eternity. 2. *It is prudent.* (1) The prophet advised Ahab to prepare for the event. "Go, strengthen thyself, and mark, and see what thou doest." We should ever deport ourselves as in the presence of spiritual foes. (2) God helps those who help themselves. 3. *It is unerring.* (1) Events foreshown by God will surely come to pass. (2) According to the advice of the prophet, "at the return of the year," viz., "at the time when kings go forth to battle" (see 2 Sam. xi. 1; 1 Chron. xx. 1), probably answering to our *March*, which has its name from *Mars*, the god of war, Ben-hadad "went up to Aphek to fight against Israel." There were several cities of this name: one in the tribe of Asher (Josh. xix. 30); another in Judah (1 Sam. iv. 1); a third in Syria (2 Kings xiii. 17). The last is probably that referred to here. 4. *It is profitable.* (1) This follows from its other qualities. The guidance which is "prudent," "far-reaching," and "unerring" must be "profitable." (2) But further, those who follow that guidance so commend themselves to God that He directly interposes in their behalf. There was a faithful "seven thousand" in Israel (ch. xix. 18). (3) If in conflict with those who prefer a worldly policy, they not only have God on their side, but they have Him with them against their enemy. (4) God helped Ahab against Ben-hadad, not that Ahab deserved it, but that Ben-hadad had to be punished (ver. 28. See also Ezek. xxxvi. 22). The "two little flocks of kids" could not have slain in one day "one hundred thousand men" unless God had helped them. The hand of God also was in the falling of that wall by which "seven and twenty thousand" perished.

Let us faithfully pursue the policy of right. Let us never permit the expediency of a moment to swerve us from this. Truth abides.—J. A. M.

Vers. 30—43.—*False Mercy.* The first army with which Ben-hadad invaded Israel was defeated with "great slaughter," and the king saved himself by flight. The defeat of the second was even more complete, when 127,000 men were destroyed and the king had to surrender at discretion. But Ahab, for his false mercy in sparing the life of Ben-hadad, brought judgment upon himself and upon his people.

I. MERCY IS FALSE WHEN IT OPPOSES THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD. 1. *That*

*righteousness dooms the incorrigible to death.* (1) "The wages of sin." The incorrigible will certainly find this in the "damnation of hell" (Psa. ix. 17). (2) Their time also in this life is shortened either by the sword of the magistrate or by the judgment of God. They get sufficient space for repentance; but the space so given, if misimproved, aggravates the terror of their death. Protracted probationary existence under such conditions, therefore, becomes a doubtful mercy. (3) It is also the reverse of mercy to their contemporaries, because the influence of the wicked is mischievous. It is, therefore, a considerate judgment that they do "not live out half their days" (Psa. lv. 23). (4) The difference between good and evil cannot be too strongly marked. The good must have no fellowship with the wicked. In eternity their separation is complete (Matt. xxv. 46; Luke xvi. 26). The more perfect the separation here, the more of heaven upon earth will the good enjoy; and the more of hell upon earth, the wicked. 2. *Ben-hadad was obnoxious to that doom.* (1) He was guilty of the highest crimes against humanity. In his offensive wars he was not only a public robber, but also a wholesale murderer. But murder at least is held to be a capital crime (see Gen. ix. 5; Exod. xxi. 12, 14; Levit. xxiv. 17. See also Matt. xxvi. 52; Rev. xiii. 10). (2) He was guilty likewise of the highest crimes against God. He was not only a gross idolater, but also a blasphemer of Jehovah. He localized and limited Him as "Elohim of the hills" and defied Him in the plains. But such blasphemy also was punishable with death (Levit. xxiv. 11—16). (3) He committed all these offences in the land of Israel, where they were capital crimes, and the God of Israel delivered him into the hand of Ahab that he might suffer the penalty. 3. *But Ahab opposed his mercy to the righteousness of God.* (1) But is there no mercy for the penitent? Certainly there is. In repentance there is no encouragement to evil; on the contrary, in it evil is condemned. Faith in Christ is the perfection of repentance since therein only can we be effectually delivered from sin. Repentance must be genuine. (2) Ben-hadad's repentance was not genuine. His servants "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." (Sir John Froissart relates that the inhabitants of Calais acted in a similar manner when they surrendered their city to Edward III. in 1346). All this was intensely mortifying to Ben-hadad, whose tone was so different when he thought himself in the position of a dictator (see vers. 3—6). The haughtiest in prosperity are often the meanest in adversity. (3) But here is no show of repentance towards God. He confesses that he deserves to be hanged for invading the land, but not a word about his blasphemy against the Elohim of Israel. Yet Ahab granted him his life.

II. *THOSE WHO SHOW SUCH MERCY ENCOUNTER THE JUDGMENT OF GOD.* 1. *Because thereby they encourage evil.* (1) If sin be committed with impunity it will soon lose its character. Men are naturally inclined to sin, and are restrained chiefly by fear of its penalties. If these are remitted, offences against the law of God will come to be justified. (2) The estimate of goodness would consequently be lowered, for we judge of qualities by contrasts. Heaven is seen in its strongest light as the antithesis of hell. Remove from sin its sinfulness, and goodness will be distorted into weakness or folly. (3) Such confounding of right and wrong must be fatal to all law and order, and tend to inaugurate the wildest confusion and the deepest misery. All this flows from the principle of false or indiscriminate mercy. 2. *Hence Ahab was held to be an accomplice with Ben-hadad.* (1) He had an unworthy sympathy with this blaspheming monarch. "Is he yet alive? He is my brother." "Brother king, though not brother Israelite. Ahab valued himself more on his royalty than on his religion" (Henry). Would Ben-hadad have called Ahab his *brother* had he been victorious? (2) "He caused him to come up into the chariot." This was a sign of cordial friendship (see 2 Kings x. 15, 16). "The friendship of the world is enmity against God." So instead of imposing terms, he accepted those proposed by Ben-hadad (ver. 34). (3) "So he made a covenant with him and sent him away." The form of these covenants was to cut a sacrifice in twain, and the persons entering into the compact walked between the pieces and were sprinkled, together with the articles of agreement, with the blood, to express that if they

failed to fulfil their pledge God might treat them as the sacrifice had been treated. **8. Ahab in consequence was doomed to die.** (1) This was signified to him by another prophet. He is by the Jews supposed to have been Micaiah, and with some reason perhaps (compare ch. xxii. 8). (2) This prophet, after the example of Nathan (2 Sam. xii.), made Ahab pronounce his own sentence (vers. 37—42). In the doom of the prophet who, for disobedience to the word of the Lord in not smiting his fellow, was destroyed by the lion, Ahab could also read his doom for not obeying the word of the Lord when he should have smitten Ben-hadad to death (vers. 35, 36). (3) The prophecy came true. Ahab was slain fighting against the Syrians to recover Ramoth in Gilead (ch. xxii. 35). And by the hands of the Syrians, under Hazael, the children of Israel suffered severely (see 2 Kings viii. 12; x. 32, 33). (4) In anticipation of these things Ahab "went to his house heavy and displeased." *Heavy* at the tidings and *displeased* with the prophet. It would have been more to his advantage had he gone to the house of God in contrition for the sins of his wicked life.—J. A. M.

**Vers. 1—21.—Veiled Mercies. I. AHAB'S EXTREMITY (VERS. 1—11).** God's goodness to the froward is shown by His bringing them into circumstances where they may prove and know Him. The clouds they "so much dread are big with mercy." **1. The land is overrun and the capital besieged.** The fruit of sin is difficulty and disaster. The land and the life which will not acknowledge God will know at last what it is to be bereft of His protecting care and the ministrations of His goodness. These are the *eternal* portion only of those whom they raise and bless. **2. His degradation** (vers. 2—4). In his own city he has to listen and assent to the terms that rob him at one stroke of all that is dearest and best. The foe has no mercy, and Ahab neither strength nor dignity. Those who forsake God, and shut themselves out from the experience of His truth and mercy, will prove the vanity of every other trust. **3. His helplessness** (vers. 5—11). (1) Compliance with Ben-hadad's first demands does not save him from further degradation. Those who rely only on the world's compassion lean on a reed which will break and pierce them. (2) Ahab's defiance (ver. 11) was an appeal to chance. He had no clear confidence that Ben-hadad's threatenings would come to nothing. Forgetfulness of God is weakness for the battle of life, and darkness amid its dangers. Are we remembering Him? Are we stirring ourselves up to lay hold on God?

**II. GOD'S HELP (VERS. 12—21).** **1. Its compassionateness.** The help came unsought, and when, indeed, there was no thought of seeking it. How often has He thus prevented us with the blessings of His goodness! **2. Its timeliness.** The final attack was about to be made (ver. 12). The progress of the siege had no doubt alarmed Ahab, and led to negotiation. Now it needed but one more effort and the Syrian hosts would be surging through the streets of Samaria. Within the city there was only a terrible fear, or dull, defiant despair. But now, as the blow is about to fall, the shield of God sweeps in between. The Lord knows His time to help, and, by helping, to reveal Himself and bind us to Him. **3. Its fulness.** (1) Israel is glorified. The weakest part of the army achieves the victory. (2) Ahab is honoured (ver. 14). The victory is gained under the leadership of the man whom God might have righteously destroyed. (3) The triumph is complete (vers. 20, 21), Ben-hadad a fugitive, and his army a prey. The glory of God is manifested most of all in His mercy. We cannot contemplate our deliverance from danger and the fulness of our triumph in Christ without feeling upon our soul the recreative touch of the hand of God.—J. U.

**Vers. 22—48.—Resisted Mercy. I. GOD MULTIPLIES HIS BENEFITS TO THE SINFUL (VERS. 22—30).** Ahab makes no public acknowledgment of God's mercy, nor, so far as appears, has it been suffered to change in any way his attitude towards Jehovah; yet God crowns him with loving-kindnesses. **1. Delivered from one danger, he is warned of another.** "Go, strengthen thyself, and see what thou dost," &c. The enemy, baffled for the time, will return again. The intimation was a call not only to prepare his hosts and strengthen his cities, but, beyond all else, to seek His face who

had delivered him already, and was able to deliver him again. We are warned of dangers that we may strengthen ourselves in God. There is love in the warning, and vaster love in the offered strength. 2. *When the danger comes he is assured of success* (ver. 28). The most needful preparation had been neglected; Ahab had not sought God. But God again seeks *him*. Mark the unwearied, all-forgiving love of God. 3. *The Lord fights for him*. In vain did the Syrians change their ground and remodel their army. In vain did they surround with their myriads the two small bands of Israel. They are given as stubble to the swords of Israel, and the very walls of the city into which they flee for safety become their destruction. God's hand is so marked in His deliverances, that the sinful cannot fail to see the wondrous love that is behind them. They bring us face to face with "the depths of the riches" of His mercy. 4. *The purpose of the mercy*. "Ye shall know that I am the Lord." It is the revelation of God, and is meant to be the birth-hour of the soul. The goodness of God may be mentioned with seeming gratitude, but it has been barren of result unless it has brought us into the presence of the King. The Divine Love has blessed us in vain unless it has become the light of the Lord's face.

II. HOW THE MERCY WAS MADE OF NO EFFECT. To Ahab the mercy brought only deeper condemnation. It will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for Chorazin and Bethsaida, which saw the goodness of God in Christ, and yet repented not. 1. *The mercy was frustrated by prayerlessness*. Though warned of the danger, he does not with lowly confession of sin and unworthiness implore God's direction and help. There is no breaking up of the fallow ground that it may receive the blessing as the seed of joy and life in God. 2. *By thanklessness*. When the blessing came it might still have saved him. The benefits with which God had loaded him might have bowed him in lowly acknowledgment of his multiplied iniquities and long impious rebellion. The goodness of God leads us to repentance only as we pass in before the Lord through the gates of praise. 3. *By blindness to the indications of God's will*. The multitude slain in the battle, the falling of the wall upon those who escaped, the overthrowing of every defence till the king, the head and centre of the whole evil, was reached, might have shown that God purposed to make an end for the time of the Syrian power, and give a full deliverance to Israel. The fruit of the victory was blighted by Ahab's blindness and folly. To co-operate with God in working out our own salvation, we must read and faithfully fulfil His purpose. 4. *By vanity and worldly policy*. He enjoys for a brief moment the power which God has given, becomes the benefactor and brother of the man whom the Lord had doomed, and makes a covenant with him. The trust which God had desired should wholly rest upon Himself he reposes in his foe. The hour of prosperity, which should be our covenant-time with God, is too often made the occasion for worldly alliances, which lead us to forget Him and all we owe to Him.

III. MERCY FRUSTRATED BEARS FRUIT IN JUDGMENT (vers. 35—43). 1. *The message came through swift and stern judgment*. Disobedience meant death (vers. 35, 36). The Divine threatenings come to us through terrible judgments. 2. *Ahab was self-condemned*. The voice of conscience is on God's side. "If our heart condemn us," &c. 3. *His own life should answer for the life he spared*. Letting go God's enemy, and keeping back his hand from God's righteous though terrible work, he destroyed himself. No cross, no crown. The awful price which a soul must pay for present ease and pleasure: "He that loveth his life shall lose it." 4. *The shadow of God's wrath swallows up the worldling's peace* (ver. 43); and it falls ever deeper till the end come.—U.

Ver. 40.—*The Neglected Opportunity*. Ben-hadad II. was seeking his revenge for a defeat inflicted on him the preceding year by the Israelitish army, led by a band of 232 young noblemen. He had disciplined his army, and re-officered it, no longer allowing money or family influence to supersede military skill. Everything that organization could accomplish or superstition dictate (ver. 23) had been done, but all proved in vain; for the contest was not simply between Ben-hadad and

Ahab, but between the heathen and the living God who had been blasphemously challenged. Describe Ben-hadad's successful appeal to Ahab after the defeat. Why was it not commendable (as it was, for example, after the siege of Calais) to spare the vanquished? Because the motive was not pity but policy; and the criminal allowed to escape had avowedly fought as Jehovah's foe. It is sometimes "expedient that one man should die for the people." Ben-hadad's death would have been the salvation of Ahab, who in the next war fell mortally wounded; it would have ensured a lasting peace, as this was the campaign of the Syrian king, rather than of the Syrian people; and it would have seriously shaken the confidence of the heathen in their gods. The king let his prisoner go to his own undoing. It was this sin which was now rebuked. Picture Ahab returning from the field flushed with victory. He is accosted by a man who has been sitting wounded and dusty beside the road. He is a disguised prophet, probably Micaiah, acting a parable. Says he, in effect: "I have come from the battle. In the hour of victory, the captain, whom I acknowledge I was bound to obey, gave me in charge a prisoner of note, saying that if he escaped my life should answer for it. I admit that I failed, though not designedly; but while thy servant was busy here and there he was gone. Ought I to suffer for that slight negligence?" And when Ahab answered, "Yes," the disguise was flung off, and the daring prophet appeared, saying, "In pronouncing my doom, thou hast pronounced thine own." [Read vers. 42 and 43.] The prophet set before the king a picture of his neglect of opportunity which is worthy of our study. We observe—

I. THAT OPPORTUNITY IS GIVEN OF GOD. "There is a time for every purpose under heaven." Examples: (1) *In the operations of nature.* There is a suitable time for the gathering of fruit. It may not come when you wish it or expect it; but neglected then, the fruit is spoiled. A farmer may in the spring be "busy here and there" with other things, and so neglect to sow his seed. The opportunity does not recur. (2) *In the cultivation of mind.* The indolent schoolboy never gets again the leisure and opportunity for study; and if he did, his capacity for acquiring knowledge has decreased. Contrast the flexibility of mind of the lad with that of the man in middle life. (3) *In the acquisition of material good.* Energy, promptitude, and diligence displayed at a critical moment make a man a millionaire. "There is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune," &c. (4) *In the consecration of life.* No father is content with the physical beauty of his child if mentally he is dead—an idiot; nor is our heavenly Father satisfied to see mental vigour accompanied by spiritual death. He looks for a change, which is a passing from death unto life, and for this He gives opportunity. Observe, secondly—

II. THAT OPPORTUNITY IS GRANTED TO ALL. If you would discover this, (1) *Consider your outward circumstances.* The helpfulness of a Christian home; inherited tendencies; direct religious teaching; exemplars of holy life; recognition of God at the family altar; services frequented from childhood. If these leave you unblest, they leave you under heavier condemnation. Soon the home may be broken up, and the encouragements to good may vanish, and with unavailing regret you will say, "As thy servant was busy here and there, they were gone." (2) *Consider your inward condition.* There are seasons when it is easier to avail ourselves of religious advantages. *Youth* is such a season, for then impulses are generous, susceptibilities are tender, affections free. Under the influence of *bereavement* or *personal illness* religious convictions are experienced. In and through these the Holy Spirit works. Such a time may be like the morning twilight which brightens into day, or like the evening twilight that deepens into night. Beware of letting convictions slip!

III. THAT OPPORTUNITY IS NEGLECTED BY MANY. Two causes of this may be suggested: (1) *The pressure of business.* The man on the battle-field was busy enough, but he failed to remember his special charge. Nothing he did was wrong in itself, but it became a wrong when it led to the neglect of obvious duty: and if his life was sacrificed because of that neglect, the advantage gained by other activity was of no value. Apply this, and show the difficulty in the way of

meditation and prayer, created by the multitudinous claims upon our activity. (2) *The effect of frivolity.* Some people are "busy here and there" in another sense. You never know where to find them. Their character is indeterminate; their information is incomplete; their work is wanting in persistence and thoroughness; and their whole life is frittered away, they scarcely know how. Each day comes to such an one, saying, "Here is something for you to do for God, something for you to think of for your spiritual good;" and, having delivered its message, the day falls back into the darkness of night. Again and again the message comes in vain, until the last day approaches, then vanishes, and eternity is at hand! The work is left undone; and over the lost opportunity he can only say, "While thy servant was busy here and there, it was gone."

CONCLUSION.—1. *Apply to Christians who are neglecting work for God.* 2. *Apply to the careless who are neglecting decision for God.*—A. R.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER XXI.—1—29.

THE STORY OF NABOTH. THE DOOM OF AHAB'S HOUSE. HIS PENITENCE.—Ver. 1.—And it came to pass after these things [These words are omitted in the Vat. LXX., which, as before remarked, transposes chs. xx. and xxi. See introductory note, ch. xx.], that Naboth ["Fruit," "produce" (Ges.)]. Wordsworth sees in him a type of Christ, cast out of the vineyard (Matt. xxi. 39) and slain] the Jezreelite [The Alex. LXX. here, and throughout the chapter, reads ὁ Ἰσραηλίτης. Josephus (Ant. viii. 13. 8) says that Naboth was of illustrious family] had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel [See note on ch. xviii. 46], hard by the palace [LXX. *threshing-floor*. Stanley (Dict. Bib. vol. ii. p. 454), arguing from this word, would reject the Hebrew text of this narrative, which places both the vineyard and the plot of ground (2 Kings ix. 25, 26) in Jezreel, and would locate the vineyard on the hill of Samaria, in the "void place" of ch. xxii. 10] of Ahab king of Samaria. [It is clear from these last words that Jezreel had not replaced Samaria as the capital. It was a "palace" only that Ahab had there. No doubt the beauty of the situation had led to its purchase or erection. As Jezreel is only twenty-five miles distant from Samaria, it is obvious that it might be readily visited by the court.]

Ver. 2.—And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard [The prediction of Samuel (1 Sam. viii. 14) is being realized], that I may have it for a garden of herbs [as in Deut. xi. 10; Prov. xv. 17], because it is near unto [Heb. *beside*] my house: and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it: or [Heb. omits *or*], if it seem good to thee [Heb. *if good in thine eyes*], I will give thee the worth of it in money. [Heb. *I will give to thee silver, the price of it*. See note on ch. xx. 39. Whatever Ahab's moral

weakness, he was certainly a prince of some enterprize. Ch. xxii. 39 speaks of the "cities" which he built. And the palace of Jezreel would seem to have been erected by him. This vineyard was to be one of his improvements.]

Ver. 3.—And Naboth said to Ahab, The Lord forbid it me [Heb. *Far be it to me from Jehovah*. These words reveal to us, first, that Naboth was a worshipper of the Lord—otherwise he would hardly have used the sacred name, and that to Ahab, with whom the servants of the true God had found but scant favour; and, secondly, that he looked upon the alienation of his patrimony as an act displeasing to the Lord, and as violating the law of Moses (Levit. xxv. 23 sqq.; Num. xxxvi. 7 sqq.) We have instances of the sale of land to the king in 2 Sam. xxiv. 24—but that was by a Jebusite—and in ch. xvi. 24], that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee. ["The

preservation of the הַלְוָה was for every covenant-keeping Israelite a matter not merely of piety towards his family and his tribe, . . . but a religious duty" (Bähr). It is clear, however, that the restraints of the old Mosaic law began to be irksome in that latitudinarian age. Many of its provisions were already regarded as obsolete.]

Ver. 4.—And Ahab came into his house [At Samaria, as we gather from vers. 18, 14, 16, &c.] heavy and displeased [Heb. *sullen and angry*; same words as in ch. xx. 43. Ewald thinks that we have here a clear reference to that passage] because of the word which Naboth, the Jezreelite had spoken to him: for [Heb. *and*] he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him down upon his bed [Rawlinson understands this to mean the couch on which the Orientals recline at meals. And הַלְוָה is used with this meaning in Esther i. 6 Ezek. xxiii.

41, and elsewhere. But "his bed" seems rather to point to his private chamber; see on ver. 5], and turned away his face [The Vulgate adds *ad parietem*. Cf. 2 Kings xx. 2; from which place it may have been unconsciously introduced here], and would eat no bread. [Keil contends that "this childish mode of giving expression to his displeasure shows very clearly that Ahab was a man sold under sin (ver. 20), who only wanted the requisite energy to display the wickedness of his heart in vigorous action;" but whether this is a just inference from these words may well be questioned. It rather shows that so little did he meditate evil that he accepted the refusal of Naboth as conclusive, and gave way to childish grief.]

Ver. 5.—But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said unto him, Why is thy spirit so sad [same word as in ver. 4], that thou eatest no bread? [It would seem that the queen missed him from the banqueting hall—he can hardly, therefore, have lain down on one of the divans or couches therein—and went to his bedroom to inquire the reason.]

Ver. 6.—And he said unto her, Because I spake unto Naboth the Jezreelite, and said unto him, Give me thy vineyard for money [Heb. *silver*]; or else, if it please [Heb. *delight*] thee, I will give thee another vineyard for it: and he answered [Heb. *said*], I will not give thee my vineyard. [Ahab does not mention the reason which Naboth assigned for his refusal. But Naboth's reasons were nothing to him, and he had hardly given them a second thought.]

Ver. 7.—And Jezebel his wife said unto him, Dost thou now govern [Heb. *make*; LXX. *ποιεῖς βασιλεύς*] the kingdom of Israel? [There is no question expressed in the Hebrew which stands, "Thou now makest the kingdom over Israel." The commentators generally, however, understand the words—as the LXX. and the A. V.—as an ironical question, "Art thou ruler in aught but name?" though some take it as an imperative: "Do thou now exert authority over the kingdom of Israel." And on the whole, this latter interpretation appears to be preferable. "Do thou now play the king. Make thy power felt. Give me the requisite authority. I will," &c.] Arise, and eat bread [or food], and let thine heart be merry [Heb. *good*; same words 1 Sam. xxv. 36]; I [This word is emphatic. "If thou wilt do thy part, I will do mine."] will give thee [no need to buy it] the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.

Ver. 8.—So she wrote letters [Heb. *writings*] in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal [The use of the seal, for the pur-

pose of authentication, is of great antiquity. Some of the Egyptian signets are more than 4,000 years old. Their use in the age of the patriarchs is attested by Gen. xxxviii. 18 and xli. 42; their importance is proved by the text, by Esther iii. 10; viii. 2, 8, 10 (cf. "Herod," iii. 128); Dan. vi. 17; Jer. xxxii. 10, 54; Hag. ii. 23, &c. Whether this seal—which does not necessarily prove that those who used it could not write—was impressed upon the writings themselves according to the modern practice of the East, or upon a piece of clay (Job xxxviii. 14), which was then attached to the letter by strings, we have no means of knowing. The use of Ahab's seal affords a strong presumption that he was privy to her designs (Bähr), but of this we cannot be absolutely certain, and sent the letters unto the elders [see Deut. xvi. 18] and to the nobles [same word Neh. ii. 16; iv. 13; Eccles. x. 17] that were in his city, dwelling [or inhabitants, as in ver. 11] with Naboth.

Ver. 9.—And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast [The object of this ordinance was to give the impression that the city was labouring under, or threatened with, a curse, because of some undiscovered sin (2 Sam. xxi. 1; Josh. ix. 11; Deut. xxi. 9), which must be removed or averted by public humiliation. Cf. Joel i. 14; ii. 12; 1 Sam. vii. 6; 2 Chron. xx. 3], and set Naboth on high among the people. [Heb. *at the head of the people*. Keil, *al. interpret*, "bring him into the court of justice, as defendant before all the people." And certainly הַיְשִׁיבוּ here, and in the next verse—where it is used of the witnesses (cf. ver. 13)—means, *make to sit*; which looks as if judicial procedure were intended. But "at the head of the people" rather suggests that in the public assembly, which marked the fast (Joel ii. 15), Naboth was assigned the most distinguished place. The reason for this is obvious, viz., to give a colour of impartiality to the proceedings. As Grotius, *Ne odio damnasse crederentur, quem ipsi honoraverunt*. It would also accord with the popular idea of retributive justice that Naboth should be denounced in the very hour of his triumph and exaltation. Josephus, however, says that it was because of his high birth that this position was assigned him.]

Ver. 10.—And set two men [according to the provisions of the law (Deut. xvii. 6, 7; xix. 5; Num. xxxv. 30)]. "Even Jezebel bears witness to the Pentateuch" (Wordsworth). Josephus speaks of three witnesses, sons of Belial [*i.e.*, worthless men. This use of the word "son" (cf. Psa. lxxxix. 22, "son of wickedness"), which is one of the com-

monest idioms of the East, throws some light on the expression "sons of the prophets" (see ch. xx. 35, note; cf. Deut. xiii. 13; Matt. xxvi. 60), before him [confronting him], to bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme [Heb. *bless*; cf. Job i. 5, 11; ii. 5; LXX. εὐλόγησε. The Lexicographers are not agreed as to how this word, the primary meaning of which is to kneel, hence to pray, to bless, came to signify curse or blaspheme. According to some, it is an euphemism, the idea of cursing God being altogether too horrible for the Jew to express in words; whilst others derive this signification from the fact that a curse is really a prayer addressed to God; and others, again, account for it by the consideration that a person who bids farewell to another sometimes does so in the sense of dismissing and cursing him. Anyhow, it is noticeable that the word "blessing" is sometimes used with a similar meaning amongst ourselves] God and the king [God and the representative of God in Israel are here coupled together, as in Exod. xxii. 28. To curse the king was practically to curse Him whose vicegerent he was (cf. Matt. xxiii. 18-22). Hence such cursing is called blasphemy and was punishable with death (Deut. xiii. 11; xvii. 5; 2 Sam. xvi. 9; xix. 21; and see on ch. ii. 43, 44)]. And then carry him out [i.e., out of the city (cf. Levit. xxiv. 14; Acts vii. 58; Luke iv. 29; Heb. xiii. 12)]. "*Locus lapidationis erat extra urbem, omnes enim civitates muris cinctae paritatem habent ad castra Israelis*" (Babyl. Sanh.), and stone him [the legal punishment for blasphemy (Levit. xxiv. 16)], that he may die. [The terrible power accorded to "two or three witnesses," of denouncing a man to death, accounts for the prominence given to the sin of bearing false witness (Exod. xx. 16; xxiii. 1; Deut. xix. 16). It found a mention in the Decalogue.]

Ver. 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 [Their ready compliance shows not merely the "deep moral degradation of the Israelites" at that period, but also the terror which the name of Jezebel inspired], and as it was written in the letters which she had sent unto them. [That she did not hesitate to put her infamous command into writing shows the character of the woman.]

Ver. 12.—They proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people.

Ver. 13.—And there came in [Heb. *came*]. The assembly was probably held *al fresco*. From the word שָׁנָה, A. V. *yesterday*, but

strictly, *yesternight*, Stanley suggests that the trial took place by night. But the word is often used in the wider sense of "yesterday" (Gesenius)] 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 [The whole congregation was interested in a charge of blasphemy. If unpunished, the guilt rested on the congregation. Hence the provision of Deut. xxiv. 14. By the imposition of hands they testified that the guilt of the blasphemer thenceforth rested upon his own head], saying, Naboth did blaspheme God and the king. Then they carried him forth [Heb. *made him to go forth*] out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died. [It appears from 2 Kings ix. 26 that the children of Naboth, who otherwise might have laid claim to their patrimony, were put to death at the same time, and probably in the same way; cf. Josh. vii. 24, 25; Num. xvi. 27. This was the rule of the East (Dan. vi. 24). The principle of visiting the sins of the parents upon the children seems to have been carried to an excess, as we find Joash (2 Kings xiv. 6) instituting a more merciful rule.]

Ver. 14.—Then they sent to Jezebel [clearly she was not at Jezreel], saying, Naboth is stoned, and is dead. [Stanley observes that it is significant that this announcement was made to her and not to Ahab. It appears from ver. 19 that the corpses both of Naboth and his children were left to be devoured of dogs.]

Ver. 15.—And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned, and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, Arise, take possession [or *inherit, succeed to*; same word Gen. xxi. 10; Deut. ii. 24; Jer. xlix. 1. The possessions of a person executed for treason were *ipso facto* forfeited to the crown. There was no law prescribing this, but it followed the principles of the Mosaic code. Just as the goods of the idolater were devoted as *cherem* to the Lord (Deut. xiii. 16), so those of the traitor reverted to the king. So Keil] of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give to thee for money [there is a proud malicious triumph in these words. "He refused, simple fool, to sell it. Now thou canst have it for nothing. I have discovered a better plan than buying it"]: for Naboth is not alive, but dead.

Ver. 16.—And it came to pass, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab arose up [According to the LXX., his first act was to rend his clothes and put on sackcloth. Afterwards "he rose up," &c.] to go down [The "Great Plain, on the

margin of which Jezreel stands, is at a much lower level than Samaria, which is in the mountain district of Ephraim"] to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it. ["Behind him—probably in the back part of his chariot—ride his two pages, Jehu and Bidkar (2 Kings ix. 26)," Stanley. But the expression "riding in pairs after Ahab" (A.V. "rode together after") does not make it certain that they were in the same chariot. Indeed, they may have been on horseback. This was apparently (2 Kings ix. 26) on the day after the murder.]

Ver. 17.—And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying [As in ch. xvii. 1, 8; xviii. 1].

Ver. 18.—Arise, go down [Bähr hence concludes that Elijah was at this time in a mountain district. But wherever he might be, this word would probably be used of a journey to the plain of Esdraelon] to meet ["The word used 1 Sam. xvii. 48 of David going out to meet Goliath" (Stanley). But the same word is used (*ib.*, ch. xviii. 6) of the women going out to meet Saul, and indeed it is the usual word for all meetings. We cannot hence infer, consequently, that Elijah went forth as if to encounter a foe] Ahab king of Israel, which is in Samaria [*i.e.*, whose seat is in Samaria; who rules there. There is no need to understand the word of the territory of Samaria]; behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to possess it. [The words imply that Elijah found Ahab—strode into his presence—in the vineyard; not that he was there already when the royal chariot entered it (Stanley).]

Ver. 19.—And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Hast thou killed [כָּרַעְתָּ], a rare and expressive word. We might render, *slaughtered*], and also [this word suggests that Jezebel's programme, which he had accepted, was fast being accomplished. But in the very hour of its completion it should be interrupted] taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the Lord [For the repetition, see on ch. xx. 13, 14], In the place where dogs [LXX. *ai hēc kai oi kúves*] licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood [according to the *lex talionis*, as in ch. xx. 42], even thine, [Heb. *even thou*. The LXX. adds, "And the harlots shall bathe in thy blood." For the construction see Gesen., Gram. § 119. 3; and cf. Gen. xvii. 34; Prov. xxiii. 15; Psa. ix. 7. Theinus contends that there is a contradiction between this ver. and ch. xxii. 38 (together with 2 Kings ix. 25) which is absolutely insuperable. But as Bähr ob-

serves, "How thoughtless our author must have been if in two consecutive chapters—*i.e.*, on the same leaf, as it were—he had inadvertently inserted direct contradictions." And the following considerations will show that the discrepancy is only apparent. (1) The sentence here pronounced against Ahab was, on his repentance, stayed in its execution. God said distinctly, "I will not bring the evil in his days," and as distinctly added that He would "bring the evil in his son's days, upon his house" (ver. 29). And (2) with the prophecy, as thus modified, the facts exactly record. The body of Jehoram was "cast into the portion of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite" (2 Kings *l.c.*). And if it be objected (3) that our historian sees in the death of Ahab in Samaria (ch. xx. *l.c.*) a fulfilment of this prophecy, the answer is that that death was a *partial* fulfilment of Elijah's words. The repentance of Ahab, having secured him immunity from this sentence, his subsequent folly and sin (cf. ch. xxii. 27) nevertheless brought down upon him a judgment of God strikingly similar, as we might expect it would be, to that originally denounced against him, which was now reserved for his son. In other words, the prophecy was fulfilled to the letter in the person of his son, but it had a secondary fulfilment in its spirit on himself].

Ver. 20.—And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me [Not merely, "Hast thou found me out? hast thou surprised me in the very act?" though this meaning is not to be excluded, but also, "Has thy vengeance overtaken me?" שָׁנָה is used in this sense 1 Sam. xxiii. 17; Isa. x. 10; Psa. xxi. 9. Ahab is so conscience-stricken by the sudden apparition of Elijah, whom in all probability he had not seen or heard of since "the day of Carmel," and by his appearance on the scene at the very moment when he was entering on the fruit of his misdoing, "in the very blossom of his sin," that he feels that judgment is already begun], O mine enemy? [No doubt the thought was present in Ahab's mind that Elijah had ever been opposed to him and thwarting him, but he does not dream (Von Gerlach, in Bähr) of justifying himself by ascribing Elijah's intervention to personal hatred towards himself. The sequel shows that he was thoroughly conscious of wrong-doing.] And he answered, I have found thee: because [not because I am thine enemy, but because] thou has sold thyself [or *sellest thyself*, *i.e.*, surrenderest thyself wholly. The idea is clearly derived from the institutions of slavery, according to which the bondservant was wholly at his master's disposal and was

bound to accomplish his will. Whether "the practice of men selling themselves into slavery" (Rawlinson) existed in that age may perhaps be doubted. We have the same thought in 2 Kings xvii. 17, and Rom. vii. 14] to work evil in the sight of the Lord. [We can readily gather from these words why the doom was denounced against Ahab, who had but a secondary share in the crime, rather than against Jezebel, its real perpetrator. It was because Ahab was the representative of God, God's minister of justice, &c. If he had not himself devised the death of Naboth; if he had, which is possible, remained in ignorance of the means by which Jezebel proposed to procure him the vineyard, he had nevertheless readily and gladly acquiesced in her infamous crime after its accomplishment, and was then reaping its fruits. And because he was the king, the judge, who, instead of punishing the evil-doer, sanctioned and approved the deed, and who crowned a reign of idolatries and abominations with this shameful murder, the prophetic sentence is directed primarily against him.]

Ver. 21.—Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy posterity [Heb. *exterminate after thee*. See note on ch. xiv. 10. Ahab knew well the meaning of these words. He had before him the examples of Baasha and Zimri], and will cut off from Ahab [Heb. *to Ahab*] him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel [see on ch. xiv. 10].

Ver. 22.—And will make thine house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat [cf. ch. xv. 29], and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah [ch. xvi. 3, 11], for [לִּנְסָה used in the sense of לְעָוָה, as elsewhere] the provocation wherewith thou hast provoked me to anger [ch. xiv. 9; xvi. 7, &c.], and made Israel to sin.

Ver. 23.—And of Jezebel [Heb. *to Jezebel*. LXX. *ῥῆ Ἰεζάβελ*]. But we cannot be sure that she also received a message of doom

from Elijah, as לְעָוָה like לְעָוָה after verbs of speaking sometimes has the meaning of, *concerning*. Cf. Gen. xx. 13; Psa. iii. 3; Judg. ix. 54; 2 Kings xix. 32. Moreover, if the denunciation had been direct, it would have run, "The dogs shall eat thee," &c. See also ver. 27] also spake the Lord [Probably at the same time. Certainly by the same prophet (2 Kings ix. 36). Elijah's words to Ahab appear to be only partially recorded (*ib.*, ver. 26)], saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel [see on ch. xiv. 11] by the wall [לְעָוָה same word as לְעָוָה, is used of the strength and defences of a town, *sc.* its forti-

fications, and especially of the ditch or moat before them. Cf. 2 Sam. xx. 15. The LXX. render by *πρωτεύματα* or *περιερχος*, the Vulgate by *antemurale*. "There is always in Oriental towns a space outside the walls which lies uncultivated and which is naturally used for the deposit of refuse of every kind. Here the dogs prowl, and the kites and vultures find many a feast" (Rawlinson). In 2 Sam. xxi. 12 we find the bodies of Saul and Jonathan impaled in the open space (A. V. "street") of Bethshean. This heap of refuse—for such the place soon becomes—is called in the Arabian Nights "the mounds" (Stanley)] of Jezreel. [Retribution should overtake her near the scene of her latest crime (2 Kings ix. 36). By this the just judgment of God would be made the more conspicuous.

Ver. 24.—Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the fields shall the fowls of the air eat. [See on ch. xiv. 11; xvi. 4. Stanley, forgetting that the phrase is almost a formula, thinks that "the large vultures which in Eastern climes are always wheeling aloft under the clear blue sky doubtless suggested the expression to the prophet." "The horizon was darkened with the visions of vultures glutting on the carcases of the dead, and the packs of savage dogs feeding on their remains, or lapping up their blood."] ]

Ver. 25.—But [Heb. *Only*] there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord [as in ver. 20], whom Jezebel his wife stirred up [or as Marg., *incited*, instigated and urged to sin. Cf. Deut. xiii. 7 Heb.; Job xxxvi. 18].

Ver. 26.—And he did very abominably in following idols [Heb. *to go after the idols*. For the last word see on ch. xv. 12], according to all things as did the Amorites. [Heb. the Amorite—the word is always singular—here put as a *nomen generale* for the seven nations of Canaan. Cf. Gen. xv. 16; 2 Kings xxi. 11; Exek. xvi. 3; Amos i. 9, 10. Strictly the term Amorite, *i.e.*, *Highlander*, is in contrast with Canaanite, *i.e.*, *dwellers in the lowlands*; see Num. xiii. 29; Josh. v. 1. But the word is used interchangeably with Canaanite (cf. Deut. i. 44 with Num. xiv. 45, and Judg. i. 10 with Gen. xiii. 8), Hittites (Judg. i. 10 with Gen. xxiii. 2, 3, 10), Hivites (Gen. xlviii. 22 with Gen. xxxiv. 2), and Jebusites (Josh. x. 5, 6, with Josh. xvii. 63, &c.) The ethnical and geographical ideas of the Jews were never very precise. The idolatries of the seven nations had lingered, as we might expect, amongst the Zidonians, whence they were re-introduced into the kingdom of Samaria—one fruit of disobedience to the command of

Dent. vii. 1—5, &c.], whom the Lord cast out before the children of Israel [Deut. ii. 84; iii. 8, &c.]

Ver. 27.—And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those [Heb. *these*] words [vers. 21—24, and others not recorded], that he rent his clothes [cf. 2 Sam. xiii. 19; Job i. 20; ii. 12; Jer. xxxvi. 24, &c.], and put sackcloth upon his flesh [ch. xx. 31; 2 Kings vi. 30; Joel i. 8; 2 Sam. xxi. 10, Heb.], and fasted, and lay [*i.e.*, slept] in sackcloth, and went softly. [All these were signs of contrition and humiliation (ver. 29). The “going softly”—Josephus says he went barefoot—is especially characteristic of the subdued and chastened mind.]

Ver. 28.—And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, [It is not clear that this mitigation of the sentence was announced to Ahab],

Ver. 29.—Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? [The repentance, if it was not profound, or enduring, was nevertheless,

while it lasted, sincere. The Searcher of hearts saw in it a genuine self-abasement. And “He will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax;” Isa. xlii. 3; Matt. xii. 20.] Because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil [There is a manifest reference to ver. 21, where the same words are used] in his days; but in his son’s days [There is no injustice here—no threat of punishment against the innocent instead of the guilty—as might at first sight appear. For in the first place, God knew well what the son would be, and in the second place, if the son had departed from his father’s sins he would have been spared (Ezek. xviii. 14 *sqq.*); the sentence would have been revoked. Judgment was deferred to give the house of Ahab another chance. When Ahab lapsed into sin, he suffered in his own person: when his sons persisted in sin, excision befell the family] will I bring the evil [ver. 19] upon his house [ver. 22].

### HOMILETICS.

**Vers. 1—15.—The Martyrdom of Naboth.** History tells of few crimes of its kind more flagitious, more cruel and cold-blooded than this. Here we see that spectacle which one of the ancients said was dear to the gods—a just man suffering shameful wrongs with dignity and patience: we see a man because of his fidelity to God and His law judicially done to death by the representative of God, by the authority appointed to execute the law.

And just as the crime has few parallels, so has the history few equals in point of graphic force and quiet pathos. It is like one of those sketches by the hand of a master, which set us wondering to see how much effect can be produced, and how much meaning conveyed, by a few broad lines and touches. We see in the first place the king, from his palace lattices, or from his garden slopes, casting hungry, envious eyes on the rich vineyard of his neighbour. He must have it at any cost. The residence is incomplete without it. We then hear him making overtures to the sturdy owner. There is a smile upon his face. His words are smoother than butter. Nothing could be fairer, as it seems at first, than his proposals. Surely Naboth will do well to sell or exchange on such liberal terms as these. But we find him straightway shrinking in pious horror from the idea. There is nothing to soften or modify his blunt and abrupt refusal. He cannot, he will not, do this thing and sin against God. We see a cloud of vexation gather on the king’s brow. He is foiled. The project on which he has set his heart he cannot realize. With a mortified scowl, a look in which suppressed rage and bitter disappointment are equally blended, he terminates the interview and hurries to his palace, while Naboth, strong in the consciousness of right, but not without misgivings as to the issue, goes to tell his story to his wife and children at home.

And now the scene changes. We are admitted to a room, a bedroom of the palace of Samaria. We see on an ivory couch, in an ivory house (ch. xxii. 29), or in a chamber ceiled with cedar, and painted with vermilion (Jer. xxii. 14), a man whose soul is so vexed and troubled that he can eat no bread, that he has a word for no one, but turns his face sullenly to the wall. Can this be the king of Israel? can this be Ahab, whose recent victories over the Syrians have rung through many lands? It is Ahab indeed. The great conqueror is a slave to himself. By his side there stands his dark, malignant, Phœnician consort. We

ar his pitiful, almost childish, complaint, that he cannot have the vineyard he much covets, and we straightway see a look of something like scorn upon her e. We hear her almost contemptuous rejoinder, "Art thou, then, so helpless, utterly without resources, as to lie here and grieve like a spoilt child? Is it for nothing that thou art a king, or art thou king in name only? If thou art baffled, I am not. Arise, and eat bread. Banish dull care and give thyself up to feasting. I will give thee the vineyard of this wretched peasant."

The next tableau introduces us to another chamber of this same royal residence. The king may keep his bed if he will, but the queen is up and doing. The scribes are now writing at her command. She it is who dictates the words, who stamps the writings with the king's seal. The scribe's hand may well tremble as he pens the infamous decree, for the letter consigns Naboth to death; but she knows no fear, has no scruples. The letters are despatched, the royal posts carry their sealed orders to Jezreel, and the murderess sits down to eat and drink, and rises up to play.

Again the scene changes. We find ourselves in a village convocation. The elders of Jezreel, the officers of the royal borough, have proclaimed a fast. Their town has incurred the wrath of God, and they must find out and expiate the sin. Naboth is there. He fears this meeting bodes him no good, but he is compelled to attend. He finds himself, to his great surprise, set "at the head of the people." But who shall picture the astonishment and pain in this man's face, when there rise up in that assembly, two miserable varlets who swear that he, Naboth, the humble servant of the Lord, the man who has honestly striven to keep the law, even against his king, has committed a horrible breach of law, has blasphemed God and the anointed of God. He thinks, perchance, at the first, that the charge is so utterly reckless and improbable, that none of these his neighbours, who know him so well, and have known him from his youth up, will entertain it for a moment. But he is speedily undeceived. He finds that he has not a chance with them, that all steel their faces and hearts against him. He perceives that there is a conspiracy against him. In vain he protests his innocence; in vain he appeals to his blameless life. His cries and those of his wife and children are alike unheeded. In a trice he is condemned to die the death of the blasphemer.

And now we find ourselves hurried along by a tumultuous crowd. We pass through the city gate, we reach the open space outside the walls. So far, Naboth has hardly realized that they are in earnest, so suddenly has the thing come upon him. Surely it is some grim jest that his neighbours play upon him. It cannot be that he is to die, to look for the last time on the faces of those he loves, on his native fields, on the blessed light of the sun. But if he has any lingering hopes of deliverance they are rapidly dispelled. He sees them making preparations for his execution. They are going to stone him on the spot. "O God in heaven!" he thinks, "is it for this I have kept Thy law? Is this agony and death the reward of mine integrity? Must I then die, when life is so sweet! Is there no power to rescue me out of the jaws of the lion? Has God forgotten me? or will He look on it and require it?" (2 Chron. xxiv. 22.) It is true the history says nothing of any such thoughts, of any prayers, appeals, entreaties, threatenings; but the history, it must be remembered, is but an outline, and that outline it is left for us to fill up. And we cannot doubt that Naboth had some such thoughts as these. But whatever they were, they were speedily brought to a close. "The king's business required haste." Time for reflection would mean time for repentance. The witnesses speedily divest themselves of their *abbas*; they lay them down at the feet of the elders; they take up stones and rush upon him. At the first blow he quivers from head to foot with a great throb of pain, but blow follows fast upon blow; he sinks senseless; the blood streams from his wounds; the dear life is crushed out of him, and Naboth's name and the names of his sons are added to those on the glory roll of the noble army of martyrs.

But it is now for us to ask what led to this shameful deed. There were five parties to this tragedy—Naboth, the king, the queen, the elders, the witnesses. Let us see how each of these contributed, though in very different ways, to this

diabolical result. We shall thus see how Naboth, who was murdered in the name of law and religion, was a martyr to law and religion. And let us consider—

1. *The piety of Naboth.* For it was his religion brought this doom upon his head. He had but to comply with the request of the king—and what loyal subject would not wish to gratify the Lord's anointed?—and all would have gone well. So far from being stoned, he would have been honoured and rewarded. And that request seemed so reasonable. There was no attempt at robbery or confiscation. The king offered an ample equivalent; a better vineyard than it, or bars of silver which could buy a better. Was he not perverse and wrong-headed to let a scruple stand in the way? We should not have done so. No; but is not that precisely because we have not the steadfast piety of Naboth? There is no reason to think that he was not loyal. Doubtless he would have been glad to oblige his king. But there were two considerations stood in the way. First, his duty to God; secondly, his duty to his forefathers and to his posterity. His duty to God. For God's law said, "The land shall not be sold for ever" (Levit. xxv. 23); it laid down that every child of Israel should "cleave to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers" (Num. xxxvi. 7). And Naboth knew this, and Ahab knew it. But to the latter the law was a dead letter; to the former it was a living reality. To him there was no God but one, no will to be considered in comparison with His. If Naboth could but have consented to do as others had done (ch. xvi. 24), he would have kept his life. But he could not. He "did not fear loss, but sin." It was a crime against Jehovah, and he would not consent. Moreover it was—though perhaps this thought had comparatively little influence with him—a wrong to his ancestors and to his posterity. For generations past, ever since it was allotted to his first father, had that vineyard been in his family. It had been transmitted through a long line to him. It was his duty to transmit it intact to those who came after him, and he would do it. It was for these reasons—sentimental reasons some would call them—that Naboth died, because of his belief in a living God, and because he kept His law, and especially the first and fifth commandments of the Decalogue.

2. *The impiety of Ahab.* Just as the action of Naboth arose out of his belief, so did that of Ahab spring out of his practical unbelief—an apt illustration of the close connexion between our faith and our practice. This crime had its beginning, its *fons et origo*, in idolatry. It was because Ahab worshipped gods many and lords many that his allegiance to the Divine law was shaken. The law of Baal, he argued, did not forbid the alienation of land—why should the law of Jehovah? The root of this sin, therefore, like the root of all sin, was unbelief. And its blossom was a direct violation of the Decalogue. Out of the breach of the first commandment sprang violations of the sixth, eighth, ninth, and tenth. Just as Naboth, the believer in the one true God, stands out conspicuously as a keeper of the ten words, so do all the other parties in the tragedy stand convicted of violating them. It was primarily the tenth commandment that Ahab set at naught. He had no right to set his heart upon that vineyard, which the great King had given to another. And a breach of law was the less excusable in his case, inasmuch as he was the guardian of law and was acquainted with its provisions (Deut. xvii. 18). Of all men, he should have been the last to defy or disregard it. But it is only when we consider that when his subject, to whom he should have been an example, set him an example, and refused to participate in his sin, that then, so far from repenting and praying that the thought of his heart might be forgiven him, he mourns and repines that he was not allowed to consummate it—it is only when we consider this that we realize its true character. His was a sin against light and knowledge; a sin against his helper and benefactor (ch. xx. 13, 28); a sin in spite of manifold warnings; a sin which led to blacker sin still. He coveted an evil covetousness to his house. That "love of money" was a root of false witness, of foul murder. And in this estimate of Ahab's sin it is assumed that he neither knew nor sanctioned Jezebel's designs. If he gave her the royal seal with the least idea of the malignant purpose to which she would apply it, he was virtually an accessory before the fact, and so was guilty of murder and robbery. And even if he was ignorant of her intentions, still the

readiness with which he reaped the fruits of her crime makes him a partaker in her sin. It is a common saying that the "receiver is as bad as the thief." And he must have known that "Jezebel could not give this vineyard with dry hands."

3. *The depravity of Jezebel.* Great as Ahab's guilt was, it was altogether eclipsed by that of his wife. At her door lies the real sin of the murder. The hands that accomplished it were not so guilty as the heart that suggested it and the mind that planned it. Ahab broke the tenth, Jezebel the sixth, eighth, ninth, and tenth commandments. Covetousness, false witness, murder, confiscation, she stands convicted of them all. But what lends its most hideous feature to her sin is the consideration that she, the sworn foe of the law of Jehovah, availed herself of its forms to compass Naboth's death. Was ever such black-hearted ingenuity as hers? We can fancy her laughing in her sleeve at the crafty use she made of the hated system of the Jews. We can see her shaking her finger at Naboth and saying "Simple fool! thou hast stood out for the law; thou shalt have a surfeit of it this time." It is possible that she rejoiced at the base part to which she commits the elders of Jezreel. If they will cling to their austere and gloomy creed, she will make them carry out its provisions. To this shameful murderess it added zest to her sin that she scored a triumph against the followers and the law of the God of Israel. We must also observe the evident satisfaction, the malicious triumph, with which she hears of Naboth's death. So far from feeling the least compunction, she hurries with the good news to her husband. Her part, so far as we know, is absolutely without a parallel of all the daughters of our first mother. What name is there so deservedly infamous as hers?

4. *The corruption of the elders.* We may readily acquit them of liking the task entailed upon them. They could not embark on that course of crime without many qualms of conscience and secret self-upbraidings. But the name of Jezebel inspired so much terror that they dared not resist her will. Their sin was, first, that they feared man more than God. It was unbelief at bottom; they had more faith in the finger of the queen than in the arm of the Almighty. They argued, as the Turkish peasant does, that the queen was near and God was a long way off. It was, secondly, that they abused their office. In defiance of law (Exod. xxiii. 2, 6; Deut. xvi. 19), they wrested judgment and condemned the innocent (Deut. xxvii. 19, 25), and so they share with Jezebel the guilt of the murder. It is idle to plead the constraint put upon them, to say that they would have died had they resisted her; they *should* have died rather than slay the innocent. But for their complaisance, the queen might have been baffled. One might reasonably expect *elders*—the "judges and officers" of the land (Deut. xvi. 18)—to answer, "We ought to obey God rather than man." History tells of many judges who have withstood the corrupt commands of their sovereign. During the Mohammedan rule in Spain one of the caliphs took forcible possession of a field belonging to one of his subjects. This man, as a forlorn hope, stated his grievance before the kadi, a man renowned for his integrity, and the kadi promised to bring his case before the king. Loading his mule with a sack of earth which he had taken from the stolen field, he strode into the presence of the prince, and asked him to be so good as to lift the sack of earth to his shoulders. The caliph tried to comply with his request, but the burden proved too heavy for him; he could not move, still less carry, it. "Wretched man!" cried the judge, "see what thou hast done. Thou canst not carry one mule's burden of the earth of this field of which thou hast deprived thy subject. How, then, canst thou hope to sustain the whole field on thy shoulders in the dreadful day of judgment?" The appeal was successful; the prince made immediate restitution and rewarded the judge. But nothing of this kind did the elders of Jezreel. They only feared for their skins. They argued that one or the other must die, and if so it must be Naboth. **And so he died, and they bore the stain of blood upon their souls.**

5. *The perjury of the witnesses.* It is hardly correct to describe their sin as perjury. It was much more than that. It was actual murder also. As witnesses, they had to cast the first stone—to take the principal part in the execution. Even without this they were guilty of murder, for it was upon their testimony that

Naboth was condemned to die. They share with the elders, consequently, the guilt of violating the sixth and ninth commandments. But they were "sons of Belial" to begin with. They were not ministers of God; still less were they the "Lord's anointed." And they were but instruments in the hand of others. The elders were the hand; the queen was the head.

It is clear, then, that Naboth's death was a true martyrdom. He died a victim to his faith in God and his obedience to law. He was a witness (*μάρτυς*), consequently, for God no less than Elijah or Elisha. Like Elijah, he was a public vindicator of the law, and he sealed his witness with his blood. He died because he would not deny it; because others, its guardians and executors, violated and abused it.

But if any deny his right to be enrolled in the army of martyrs, it only needs to compare his end with that of the protomartyr Stephen, and indeed with that of our blessed Lord. The analogy could not well be closer. 1. The same passions and influences were at work in each case. It was unbelief and pride and covetousness occasioned the death of Naboth. These were the forces arrayed against our Lord and against Stephen. Was there a coveted vineyard in one case? so there was in the other (Luke xx. 14, 15). 2. The tribunals were equally corrupt. The Sanhedrim was the counterpart of the elders; the council of Jerusalem of that of Jezreel (Matt. xxvi. 59; Acts vi. 12). 3. The princes of this world occasioned the death of Naboth; the princes of this world took counsel against the Christ (Acts iv. 26, 27), and crucified the Lord of glory (1 Cor. ii. 8). 4. The charge was the same in every case, viz., blasphemy (Matt. xxvi. 65; Acts vi. 13). The variation is extremely slight: "God and the king" in one case; "against Moses and God" in another (Acts vi. 11). 5. The charge was made in each instance by men who were conspicuously law-breakers (John xvii. 19; Acts vii. 53), and it was made in the name of law (John xix. 7; Acts vi. 14). 6. The means used to compass the death were alike in every case, viz., false witness (Matt. xxvi. 59, 60; Acts vi. 11, 13). 7. Each of these three martyrs suffered without the gate (Acts vii. 58; Heb. xiii. 12). Like Naboth, Stephen was stoned; like Naboth, our Lord would have been stoned if the Jews had had the power (John xviii. 31), and if the counsel of God had not willed otherwise (Acts iv. 28). 8. There is indeed one difference, and that is suggestive. The martyrs of our religion prayed for their murderers (Luke xxiii. 34; Acts vii. 60); the martyrs of Judaism could only cry, "The Lord look on it and require it" (2 Chron. xxiv. 22). The blood of the covenant speaks better things than the blood of Naboth.

Vers. 17—24.—*Divine Retaliation.* We have just seen Naboth martyred because of his fidelity to law; we have seen him murdered by men who in the name of law violated all the laws of God and man.

Now the dispensation under which these men lived promised a present recompense, a temporal reward, to obedience, and it denounced temporal punishment against "every transgression and disobedience." We may imagine, consequently, how this tragedy would strike the men of that age. They would see in it a direct failure of justice. They would ask whether there was a God that judgeth in the earth. They would look, and especially the God-fearing amongst them, in utter perplexity and distress on this conspicuous instance of the triumph of force and wrong. "What is the Almighty," they would be tempted to ask, "that we should serve him? and what profit should we have if we pray unto him?" (Job xxi. 15.) They would be tempted to think that "in keeping of his commandments there was no reward; yes, even tempted to say in their hearts, "There is no God" (Psa. liii. 1).

It would have been strange, therefore, if such a red-handed, cold-blooded murder had passed unnoticed and unavenged; if the dogs had been left to feast on the remains of Naboth, and Ahab had been suffered to enter on his vineyard without protest. But this was not to be. The men of Jezreel had not seen the last act in the tragedy. They must learn that "no reckoning is brought in the midst of the meal: the end pays for all;" they must be taught to count no man happy before his death. They must be reminded that there is a prophet in Israel, and a God of

Israel who will by no means clear the guilty. And so Elijah, the great restorer of the law, stands forth to avenge the death of Naboth, the law-keeper, at the hands of law-breakers.

“Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth, which he refused to give thee for money, for Naboth is not alive, but dead.” Did the king stop to ask how this death had been brought about? Did he know the shameful crime that had been committed in his name, and under his palace walls? He must have known something of it, if not all. Even if he thought it prudent to ask no questions, still he would remember the significant promise of ver. 7; he would have some suspicions of the purpose for which the royal seal was required; and it would be clear to him, even if he did not know the exact circumstances, that somehow Jezebel had compassed Naboth’s death. It was clear to him that this vineyard was bought at the price of blood.

But he will not let such considerations as these hinder his enjoyment of it. All he thinks of or cares for is this, that the vineyard is his and he can enter upon it at once. He *will* enter upon it at once. His chariot shall bear him to the spot. He will view his new property that day; he will begin his garden of herbs forthwith.

The citizens of Jezreel, the “elders,” and “children of Belial” amongst them, see the royal chariot crossing the plain, breasting the hill, entering the city. They know full well what is its destination. There is hardly a child in the city but guesses the king’s errand. It causes them no surprise when the chariot and its escort pass on to the vineyard of Naboth. But they shall learn, and through them all Israel shall learn, that there is a just God in heaven, and that even the king is responsible to a Higher Power; and they shall know that God Himself is against the evildoer, and shall render to every man according to his works (Prov. xxiv. 12; Matt. xvi. 27; 2 Tim. iv. 14).

For who is this that strides up to the king as he stands in the coveted vineyard, and shapes his projects concerning it? It is a prophet—the dress proves that; a glance shows that it is the dreaded, mysterious prophet Elijah. “Behold Elijah” (ch. xviii. 8, 11) is on their lips. Whence has he come? Since the day of Carmel he has been hidden from their view. They had often wondered why he had so suddenly disappeared; whether he was still alive; whether the Spirit had cast him upon some mountain or into some valley (2 Kings ii. 16); whether he was hiding among foreigners as he had done before. And now he is amongst them again. And Jehu and Bidkar at least (2 Kings ix. 25), and probably others with them, presently understand the reason of his sudden reappearance. “Hast thou killed,” he thunders forth, “and also taken possession?” They see the guilty look on Ahab’s face; they note his ashy paleness; they observe how he trembles helplessly from head to foot. Then they hear the terrible doom—and their ears tingle, as Elijah’s impassioned words fall upon them—“Thus saith the Lord, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Jezebel shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine.” They hear, and Ahab hears, that for him a death as cruel and shameful as Naboth’s is reserved; that, king though he is, he shall come to the dogs at the last. But more: they presently learn that for his children, born in the purple and delicately nurtured, there remains a reckoning; that their blood must be shed, their bodies torn of beasts, like those of Naboth’s sons. Nor shall proud Jezebel, the prime mover in this murder, escape. In the open space before the city wall the dogs which devoured the flesh of Naboth shall feast upon her dead body. All this was spoken in the broad day, before king and retinue, by a prophet whose words had never fallen to the ground. The king is *found out*; he is taken red-handed in the blossoms of his sin. Yesterday the crime, to-day the sentence. We may compare the feelings of that group standing in the vineyard with those of that surging crowd who saw Robespierre standing under the guillotine to which he had consigned so many hundreds of Frenchmen. “Aye, Robespierre, there is a God.” We may imagine how they stood for a while transfixed to the spot; how, when Elijah had hurled his words at the king, he strode away and left them to rankle in his mind. But the thing was not done in a corner, and it could not be kept secret. As the chariot returns to Samaria the townsman in the street, the peasant in the field,

perceive that something untoward has happened. The news of Elijah's reappearance spreads like wildfire; his scathing words are passed from lip to lip; every town and hamlet soon knows that Naboth is avenged; it knows that with what measure king and queen meted to him it shall be measured to them again.

The lessons which this public manifestation of the righteous judgment of God had for the men of that age, and some of which it has still, may be briefly stated in the words of Scripture. Among them are these:

1. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good" (Prov. xv. 3); God *doth* know, and there *is* knowledge in the Most High (Psa. lxxiii. 11; cf. Psa. xi. 4).

2. "Verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth" (Psa. lviii. 11). "Thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand" (Psa. x. 14).

3. "Be sure your sin will find you out" (Num. xxxii. 23).

4. "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished" (Prov. xi. 21).

5. "I will come near to you in judgment, and I will be a *swift witness* against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the Lord" (Mal. iii. 5).

6. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" (Gen. ix. 6).

7. "Life for life, eye for eye, tooth, for tooth, hand, or hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe" (Exod. xxi. 23—25). "God loves to punish by retaliation" (Hall).

Vers. 28, 29.—*Divine Relentings*.—If we were to seek the Scriptures through for a proof that God's "property is always to have mercy," and that judgment is His strange work, where should we find a more striking and eminent one than in this relenting towards Ahab? Consider—

1. **AHAB'S SIN.** In this respect "there was none like him." He "sold himself to work wickedness." It was not because of Naboth's murder alone that the sentence of vers. 19—22 was pronounced against him; it was for the varied and accumulated sins of a reign of twenty years. Among these were—

1. *The sin of schism.* He continued the calf-worship (ch. xvi. 31). He kept "the statutes of Omri." Despite the warnings of prophets and of history, he maintained the shrines, sacrifices, priests, of Bethel and Dan.

2. *The sin of his marriage.* "Was it a light thing to walk in the way of Jeroboam that he must take to wife Jezebel" (ch. xv. 31 Heb.), in direct violation of the law (Deut. vii. 1—3), in disregard of the example of Solomon? To place such a woman, daughter of such a house, on the throne of Israel was to insult the true religion, and to court its overthrow.

3. *The sin of idolatry.* (Ch. xvi. 32.) Samaria had its house of Baal, its altar for Baal. He did very abominably in following idols (ch. xxi. 26).

4. *The sin of impurity.* This was involved, as we have already remarked, in the idolatry of that age. "Ahab made an Asherah" (ch. xvi. 32). Indeed, it is to the impurities of Canaanitish worship that the words just cited (ver. 26) refer. The abominations of the Amorites are not to be named amongst Christians.

5. *The sin of persecuting the prophets.* It is very possible that Ahab himself was no persecutor, but Jezebel was, and he should have restrained her (1 Sam. iii. 13). He was directly responsible for her deeds. She owed her power, place, and influence to him.

6. *The sin of releasing the persecutor of God's people.* The pardon and favour he accorded to Ben-hadad are mentioned as a part of the provocation wherewith he provoked the Lord (ch. xx. 42). It sprang out of his forgetting God. He ignored altogether God's will and pleasure in the matter. See p. 492.

7. *The sin of slaying Naboth and his sons.* For with this crime Ahab is charged. "Hast thou killed?" "I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth . . . and I will

requite *thee*" (2 Kings ix. 26). Perhaps he flattered himself that that sin lay at Jezebel's door. If so, he is soon undeceived.

Such was Ahab's sevenfold sin. Consider—

II. ITS AGGRAVATIONS. It enhanced his guilt that—

1. *He was the Lord's anointed.* He was the head of the Jewish Church. *Fidei Defensor*—this was the highest function of a true king of Israel. His very position reminded him of the gracious and marvellous history of his fathers. To him it was granted to be the representative of heaven to the chosen people. How great the sin when the champion of the faith became its oppressor, when the "nursing father" of the Church depraved and prostituted it.

2. *He had witnessed miracles.* The drought, the fire, the rain, all these signs and tokens had been wrought in his presence. Unto him they were showed that he might know that the Lord He was God (Deut. iv. 35, 36; cf. 1 Kings xviii. 39). Did ever king hear the voice of God as he had done?

3. *He had been miraculously helped and delivered.* Cf. 2 Chron. xxvi. 15. If he gave no heed to the signs, he should have been moved by the victories God had granted him. These were plain proofs that the Lord alone was God (ch. xx. 13, 28).

But neither plagues, nor signs, nor victories moved that rebellious heart. He is scarce home from his Syrian campaigns, to enjoy the fruit of his success, than he lends himself to fresh sin, to murder and oppression. He, the executor and guardian of law, connives at the murder of a law-abiding subject. Let us now consider—

III. HIS REPENTANCE. Now that he is found out and denounced, like Felix, he trembles. As Elijah stands over him, and announces the doom of his house, he sees a horrible vision of blood and slaughter. The garden of herbs he has pictured dies away from his view. He sees in its stead his own mangled body cast into the plot of ground where he was then standing. He sees his hands, his feet, his face gnawed by the curs of the adjoining city. He sees his proud consort stripped of her silk attire, suffering a like indignity in the neighbouring ditch. He sees his children, the fruit of his body, stretched in the streets of the town, or in the open champaign, a feast for the jackal and the carrion crow. "Like the house of Jeroboam," "like the house of Baasha," he knew the horrors involved in these words. A horrible dread overwhelms him. He is smitten by sudden compunction. He must get away from this cursed spot at once. He might *then* have justly said to his charioteer, "Turn thine hand and carry me away, for I am wounded" (ch. xxii. 34). An arrow from Elijah's lips has pierced his harness through. He mounts his chariot, it bears him through the plain, bears him to his palace—no longer "heavy and displeased," but utterly crushed and terrified. Again he steals to his bed-chamber, and turns his face to the wall and eats no bread. In vain the queen assays to laugh him out of his fears. No instruments of music can charm his melancholy, no physicians can minister to that mind diseased. He cannot banish that vision from his thoughts. It haunts him like a nightmare. Can he not avert the doom? Can he not make his peace with Heaven? He has but lately forgiven a cruel and persistent enemy; is there no forgiveness for him? He will make the effort. He too will "gird sackcloth on his loins, and put a rope on his head," and go to the great king of Israel. He rises from his couch a sadder and a wiser man. He rends his kingly robes and casts them from him; he assumes the garment of humiliation, he fasts, he prays, he goes softly. It is true his penitence was neither profound nor enduring (ch. xxii. 8, 26), but it was undoubtedly—

1. *Sincere while it lasted.* It is a mistake to call it the "shadow of a repentance." There was real contrition—not only fear of punishment, but also sorrow for his sin. We may be sure that, like a former king of Israel, his cry was, "I have sinned against the Lord" (2 Sam. xii. 13).

2. *Open and public.* His queen, his courtiers, saw the sackcloth, marked the hushed voice, the downcast eye, and knew what it meant (ver. 29). "*Seest thou how Ahab?*" &c., implies that it was notorious. The crime was known of all men; the sorrow and humiliation must be the same.

3. *Marked by restitution.* The Scripture does not say so, but it does not need

to say so. There could be no real repentance, certainly no relenting, on God's part so long as Ahab kept the vineyard. His prayers would have been unheeded so long as there was a lie in his right hand. A "penitent thief" has always restored the theft. Ahab could not recall Naboth to life. But he could surrender the vineyard to the widow, and we may be sure he did so.

But this repentance, this self-abasement was observed, was carefully watched outside the palace. As day by day, with contrite heart and bowed head and soft footstep, the miserable king moved among his retainers, the merciful God and Father of the spirits of all flesh beheld his returning prodigal, yearned over him, ran to meet him. He who will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking wick welcomed the first faint tokens of contrition. The sentence of doom shall be deferred. The same voice which just now thundered, "Hast thou killed?" &c., is now hushed into tenderness. "Seest thou," it says, "seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? Because," &c. (ver. 29). Ahab receives—

IV. PARDON. And this pardon, it is to be observed, was—

1. *Instant.* The rebellion had lasted for years. The forgiveness follows on the heels of repentance. While he was speaking God heard. Cf. Dan. x. 12.

2. *Free and full.* If Ahab's repentance, that is to say, had been lasting, the sentence would have been reversed so far as he was concerned. It was not finally reversed because of his subsequent sin and that of his sons. The guilt of innocent blood, no doubt, could only be purged by the blood of him that shed it (Num. xxxv. 33), and it is to be remembered that Jezebel was never included in the pardon. But it is probable that God, to "show forth all long-suffering," would have spared the king and his sons, if they had turned from their evil way.

3. *Conditional* "*Dum se bere gesserit.*" This provision is always understood, if not expressed.

4. *Instant.* When Ahab turned like a dog to his vomit, then the sword which had been sheathed awhile leapt again from its scabbard, and he was suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy.

### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

**Vers. 1—4.—Covetousness.** Amongst the arguments used by Samuel to discourage the people of Israel from desiring a king, he said, "He will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your olive-yards, even the best of them." We have in the verses before us a notable example of the truth of this forecast, understanding covetousness in a bad sense.

I. **DESIRE, IN THE ABSTRACT, IS NOT COVETOUSNESS.** 1. *It is the principle of exchanges.* (1) If persons had no desire to possess anything beyond what they have acquired, there would be no motive to trade. Of the virtuous woman it is said, "She considereth a field and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard" (Prov. xxxi. 16). (2) All commerce is founded upon the desire to make exchanges. 2. *But commerce is fruitful in blessings.* (1) There are evils connected with trading, viz., where dishonest practices come into it. But these are intrusions; and they are denounced as "illegitimate" and "uncommercial." (2) Genuine commerce gives profitable employment to thought and labour. (3) It brings the countries and peoples of the wide world into correspondence. Thereby it enlarges our knowledge of those countries, their peoples and products, and otherwise stimulates science. (4) It encourages philanthropy. Relief is afforded for distresses through famines, floods, fires, earthquakes; and religious missions are organized. 3. *Desire, well directed, should be encouraged.* (1) To be absolutely without desire for things evil would be a happy state. Therefore this state should be earnestly desired. (2) There is also the positive desire to be Christ-like. This can scarcely be too vehement. (3) Ahab does not seem to have signalized himself in either of these directions.

II. **ILLICIT DESIRE IS COVETOUSNESS.** 1. *We should not desire what God has forbidden.* (1) Herein Ahab was wrong in desiring the vineyard of Naboth. It

was the "inheritance of his fathers," transmitted in the family of Naboth, from the days of Joshua, and it would have been unlawful for him to part with it (Levit. xxv. 23; Num. xxxvi. 7). (2) Ahab was wrong in tempting Naboth to transgress the commandment of the Lord. He should never have encouraged a desire, the gratification of which would involve such a consequence. (3) It was a pious act in Naboth, who, doubtless in things lawful would be pleased to gratify the king, to have indignantly refused to gratify him here. "*The Lord forbid it me that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee.*" He had his tenure from the Lord. He looked upon his earthly inheritance as a pledge of a heavenly. 2. *This rule requires the study of God's word.* (1) It is of the utmost moment to us to be acquainted with the will of God. This he has revealed in the Scriptures. (2) In cases of transgression we cannot plead ignorance when we have the Bible in our hands. Neither can we shift now our responsibility on to our teachers. (3) Do we make proper use of our Bibles? Do we *study* them? Do we read them *prayerfully*? We must not sell the moral inheritance we have received from the past.

III. INORDINATE DESIRE IS COVETOUSNESS. *Some things are lawful without limit.* Such are the direct claims of God. (1) The love of God. We may love Him with all our heart. We cannot love Him too much, or too much desire His love. (2) The service of God. This, indeed, is another form of love; for love expresses itself in service (John xiv. 15, 23; Rom. xiii. 10; Gal. v. 14; 1 John v. 3). (3) The knowledge of God. To love and serve God perfectly we must have a perfect knowledge of Him according to our capacity. We cannot too ardently desire this knowledge. (4) If Ahab had loved, served, and known God with perfect desire, he would have found such satisfaction as to have rendered it impossible for him to have sulked as he did because he could not obtain Naboth's vineyard. When God is absent there is a restless void; nothing can satisfy an unholy spirit. 2. *Other things are lawful in measure.* (1) Otherwise they would interfere with the direct claims of God. The creature must not be put into competition with the Creator. "Thou shalt have none other gods beside me." (2) Desire for sensible and temporal things must not displace the desire for things spiritual and eternal. To love the inferior preferably to the superior is to deprave the affections. (3) It would have been lawful for Ahab to have purchased a lease of the vineyard of Naboth at a fair price, leaving it in the power of Naboth to have redeemed it; and for it to revert to Naboth or his heirs in the jubilee (Levit. xxv. 23—25). But this desire to possess it, even under these conditions, could not be justified if a refusal should lead him to go home "heavy and displeased" and sicken with chagrin. Ahab's discontent brought its own punishment. He was a king, yet discontented. Discontent is a disease of the soul rather than of the circumstances.—J. A. M.

Vers. 5—14.—*A Sinful Nation.* Time was when the Hebrew nation was great and respected, "a praise in the earth" for kings wise and honourable, for magistrates upright and noble, and for a people faithful and true. But how completely is all this changed! A more pitiable picture of national depravity could scarcely be drawn than that presented in the text. Here we have—

I. AN INIQUITOUS PALACE. 1. *The king is utterly unprincipled.* (1) See him "heavy and displeased," sick with rage and chagrin, lying in bed in a sulk, his face turned away, refusing to eat. And what for? What dreadful calamity has befallen him? Simply that he could not have the vineyard of Naboth for a garden of herbs! (2) But, to make things worse, he could not have it without inducing Naboth to transgress God's law (see Levit. xxv. 23). Naboth had too much respect for the law to yield. Ahab was really sulking against God! (3) What a model king is this! How could he expect his subjects to be law-abiding when he showed them this example? What a royal soul to take it thus to heart that in addition to his kingdom he cannot have this vineyard! 2. *His queen is a "cursed woman."* (1) Such is the style in which she is described by Jehu (2 Kings ix. 34). She seems never to have failed in any incident of her life to justify this description. (2) Now she promises to give Ahab the vineyard of Naboth. Thus she encouraged his evil humour, instead of pointing out to him, as she should have done, his folly.

(8) **She will accomplish this by an act of cruel and treacherous despotism scarcely to be paralleled in history** (vers. 8—10). She makes her pliant husband her accomplice, using, with his consent, his seal of state, as probably she had done before when she destroyed the prophets of the Lord (ch. xviii. 4), to give authority to the missive of death. She engaged in this business all the more readily because Naboth appears to have been one of the "seven thousand" who would not bend to Baal.

II. AN UNSCRUPULOUS MAGISTRACY. 1. *Their servility is horrible.* (1) Not a voice of any noble or elder in Jezreel is raised in protest against the order from the palace to have Naboth murdered. With eyes wide open—for the sons of Belial are not found for them; they have themselves to procure these wretches—they proceed to give effect to the dreadful tragedy. (2) What motive can influence them? They are afraid of Jezebel. They knew her power over Ahab, and they knew the cruelty and vindictiveness of her nature was nerved by more than masculine resolution. (3) But where was their fear of God? 2. *It is aggravated by treachery.* (1) Naboth was one of their number. Is not this suggested in the words, "the elders and nobles that were in the city, dwelling with Naboth"? Then is there no voice of neighbourly friendship to speak for Naboth? No voice is raised. (2) If one voice found courage surely others would take courage, and it might be found in the sequel that the sense of justice would be represented by such numbers and influence that even Jezebel might hesitate to reek vengeance upon them. But not a voice was raised. 3. *The treachery is aggravated by hypocrisy.* (1) The tragedy opens with a fast. This is proclaimed ostensibly to avert from the nation the judgments of God supposed to have been provoked by the crimes of Naboth. How much more fitting had it been proclaimed to avert the judgment provoked by the crimes of Naboth's murderers! (2) The accusation is, "Thou didst blaspheme God and the King" (ברכת אלהים ומלך), which by some is rendered, "Thou hast blessed the false gods and Molech." Parkhurst says, "The Lexicons have absurdly, and contrary to the authority of the ancient versions, given to this verb (ברך) the sense of *cursing* in the six following passages: 1 Kings xxi. 10, 13; Job i. 5, 11; ii. 5, 9. As to the two first, the LXX. render ברך in both cases by ελογισω, and so the Vulgate by *bendico, to bless*. And though Jezebel was herself an abominable idolatress, yet, as the law of Moses still continued in force, she seems to have been wicked enough to have destroyed Naboth upon the false accusation of *blessing the heathen Aelm and Molech*, which subjected him to death by Deut. xiii. 6; xvii. 2—7." (3) What abominable cruelties have been perpetrated under the name of religion!

III. A DEMORALIZED PEOPLE. 1. *Sons of Belial are at hand.* (1) There seems to have been no difficulty in procuring men so lost to truth and mercy that they will readily swear away the life of a good citizen. Nor is this to be wondered at when the whole magistracy are sons of Belial, no better than those they suborned. Jezebel saw no difficulty in procuring such. The nobles and elders of Jezreel found none. (2) The sons of Belial no doubt were paid for their services. The "consideration" is not mentioned. What will not some men stoop to for gain! What will they hazard in eternity! And for what a trifle! 2. *No voice is raised for justice.* (1) Naboth has no hearing in his defence. The sentence given, he is hurried away to be stoned to death. (2) His family are sacrificed along with him (see 2 Kings ix. 26). This was on the principle that the family of Achan had to suffer with him (Josh. vii. 24). But how different are the cases! (3) Unless the family of Naboth had perished with him, the vineyard would not have fallen to the crown. This would be an objection to Jezebel hiring sons of Belial to assassinate Naboth, for Naboth's heirs would still have to be disposed of. Melancholy is the condition of the nation in which right is sacrificed to might. "Sin is a reproach to any people."—J. A. M.

Vers. 15—24.—*Divine Inquisition.* Ahab lost no time in reaping the fruit of Jezebel's wickedness. The next day, after the murder of Naboth and his family, we find him taking possession of the coveted vineyard (see 2 Kings ix. 26). But in all this dark business there was an invisible Spectator, whose presence does not seem to have been sufficiently taken into the account.

**I. GOD IS AN OMNISCIENT OBSERVER. 1. He inspects all human actions.** (1) He was present in the palace looking upon the king of Israel as he sulked and sickened upon his bed. His eye also was full upon Jezebel as she proposed her ready cure for the monarch's chagrin. "Thou God seest me." (2) He was present in that court of justice when the honest Naboth was "set on high among the people." He witnessed the sons of Belial as they swore away the lives of a worthy family. He looked into the faces of the "nobles" and "elders" of Jezreel who suborned these perjurers. "Thou God seest me." (3) He was a spectator at the place of execution. He saw the steadiness of Naboth's step, and noted well the bearing of his sons as they came forth to suffer for righteousness. And the swelling of every muscle of those who hurled the stones was measured by His piercing vision. "Thou God seest me." 2. *He surveys all human motives.* (1) He clearly discerned the abominable hypocrisy of Jezebel's "fast." It was proclaimed ostensibly to avert from the nation Divine judgments provoked by the alleged blasphemy or idolatry of Naboth. The vineyard of Naboth had more to do with it than his crime. It is "a new thing in the earth" to see Jezebel jealous for the honour of Jehovah! (2) He knew why the sons of Belial publicly perjured themselves, and accurately estimated the price for which they sold the lives of honourable citizens. He also estimated the cowardly fear of Jezebel's wrath, rather than encounter which the magistrates carried out her wicked instructions. "Nobles" and "elders" they were accounted by men; perjurers, murderers, and dastards they were accounted by God. (3) He nicely weighed the motive which nerved the muscle of every man who lifted a stone against the life of Naboth. If any were misled by the hypocrisy of the authorities, and thought they "did God service" when they cast the stones, their sincerity was recognized; and those who were not deceived were also known. 3. *Nothing is forgotten before Him.* (1) As He sees the end from the beginning so does He see the beginning from the end. (2) Let us never forget that God never can forget. Every action of our lives is present with Him—so every word—so every thought and intent of the heart. Therefore—

**II. GOD IS A SUPREME JUDGE. 1. He makes sin bitter to the sinner.** (1) The acquisition of the vineyard, the murders notwithstanding, was at first so pleasing to Ahab that it cured his sickness, and he "rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it." And this is often the first effect of the gratification of covetousness. (2) But how transient is the unworthy satisfaction! It is soon succeeded by a season of reflection. The sudden apparition of Elijah upon the scene filled Ahab with alarm. His conscience now brought his guilt home, and before Elijah uttered a word, the king exclaimed, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" This was the language of mingled hatred and fear (see Gal. iv. 16). The presence of the good is a silent and effective rebuke to the wicked. (3) The enormity of Ahab's guilt was brought home to him by the questions, "Hast thou killed, and also taken possession?" He has killed, for by taking possession he sanctions the means by which his title is made out (see Job xxxi. 39; Jer. xxii. 13, 14; Hab. ii. 12). (4) God's Holy Spirit still, by means of the word of prophecy, if not by the lips of living prophets, carries guilt to the consciences of sinners, and fills them with remorseful shame. 2. *He conveys judgments in His providence.* We read this principle in the denunciations uttered by Elijah. (1) Upon Ahab. "In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine." This was fulfilled (see ch. xxii. 33). But how "in the place?" for Naboth suffered near Jezreel. Jezreel is, generally, called Samaria, being like Bethel, one of the "cities of Samaria" (see ch. xiii. 32). So in verse 18, the vineyard of Naboth is said to be in Samaria. The passage is more clearly thus translated: "And the word of Jehovah came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, Arise, go down to meet Ahab the king of Israel, who is in Samaria; behold, at the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to take possession of it." (2) Upon the family of Ahab (vers. 21, 22, 24). This was a reprisal for the family of Naboth sacrificed with him (see 2 Kings ix. 26). All was to the letter accomplished (see 2 Kings ix., x.) (3) Upon Jezebel. The "cursed woman" is signally execrated (ver. 23). The retribution was as signally accomplished (see 2 Kings ix. 36). (4) This law of retribution in

the judgments of Providence is not limited to sacred history. Orestes recognized it when he said to Ægisthus—

“Go where thou slew'st my father,  
That in the selfsame place thou too may'st die.”

It may be read in every full and accurate history. 8. *He will finally judge the world.* (1) For Naboth and his family have yet to be vindicated. Providence has vindicated their reputation; but they have to be vindicated in person also. To this end all parties concerned in their murder will have to stand face to face, with their hearts exposed to the clear light and sensible presence of Omniscent Justice. What defence can the sons of Belial then set up? The magistrates? Jezebel? Ahab? (2) What a day of vindications will that be to all the righteous! What a day of confusion to all the wicked! Everything will be righteously adjusted in that final sentence (Matt. xxv. 34, 41, 46).—J. A. M.

Vers. 25—29.—*Ahab's Repentance.* After the terrible sentence pronounced by Elijah upon Ahab for his enormities follows this account of his repentance. The record teaches—

I. THAT THERE IS REPENTANCE FOR THE VILEST. 1. *Ahab answered this description.* (1) He “wrought wickedness.” So have we all. But his was evil of no common order. “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.” (See Gen. xv. 16; 2 Kings xxi. 11.) (2) He wrought this wickedness “in the sight of the Lord,” as the Amorites did not, for they had not the religious privileges of an Israelite. Ahab in particular had signal proofs of the presence of God. The shutting and opening of the heavens, to wit, together with the miracle on Carmel. Where much is given much is required. (3) He had “sold himself” to work this wickedness. (See Rom. vii. 14.) He was slave to Jezebel—slave to Satan. He drudged hard in his serfdom. (4) None of his predecessors had gone so far wrong. “There was none like unto Ahab” (see ch. xvi. 33). Jeroboam had “made Israel to sin,” and Omri, at the instigation of Ahab, made “statutes” to confirm that sin. (See Micah vi. 16.) Ahab went further, and established the worship of Baal, with its attendant abominations of Ashere. (See ch. xvi. 29—33.) (5) He was in the worst company. He had married a “cursed woman,” and submitted to be led by her into the extremes of wickedness. “Whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.” Under her instigation he consented to a wholesale massacre of the sons of the prophets; and now she makes him her accomplice in the murder of Naboth, with its attendant atrocities. 2. *Yet Ahab took God's message to heart.* (1) He believed the terrible sentence, as he had good reason to do, for it came by the hand of Elijah. In all his former experience he had found that the word of the Lord in Elijah's mouth was truth. (2) Now, with his death vividly before him, and the fearful doom of his house—all the fruit of his crimes—these crimes live up again, and pass in formidable order before his eyes. (See Psa. l. 21.) Conspicuous amongst the spectres that would move before him would be those of the newly murdered Naboth with his children. (3) This ghastly phantasmagoria would be to him a premonition of the solemnities of the final judgment in which the thousands injured, whether in body or soul, by his bad conduct and influence, would cry to God's justice for vengeance upon the royal culprit. 3. *He humbled himself accordingly.* (1) Before Jehovah. He “rent his clothes” in token of deep grief. (See Gen. xxxvii. 34; Job i. 20; Ezra ix. 3.) “He put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly.” Here were all the signs of deep contrition before God. They were symbols of the prayer of the heart for mercy. (2) Before men. To put on sackcloth he laid aside those robes of state in which he had prided himself. Instead of moving with his former kingly tramp he now “went softly.” (Compare Isa. xxxviii. 15.) He moved with the timid step of a culprit. (3) Who will say his repentance was not genuine? God did not say so. He afterwards, indeed, professed to “hate” a faithful servant of God (ch. xxii. 8). But what does this prove? Simply that he afterwards *relapsed*

into sin. And it admonishes us not to presume upon any dogma of infallible final perseverance, but, by the help of God, to “work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.”

II. THAT THERE IS MERCY FOR THE PENITENT. 1. *God observed the repentance of Ahab.* (1) He observed it before man had. He saw its first motions in the depths of his heart. He saw the prodigal “while yet a great way off” (Luke xv. 20). (2) Doubtless He graciously encouraged these motions so that they ripened into confession. And does not the goodness of God still lead men to repentance, even the vilest? 2. *He called the attention of Elijah to it.* (1) To the prophet he said, “Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me.” This was an encouragement to the man of God. His labour was not in vain. Ahab required some moral courage to humble himself before Jehovah in the presence of Jezebel. (2) God in His goodness directs His servants to those who are penitent that they may minister words of encouragement to them. Ananias was sent to Saul (Acts ix. 11). 3. *He extended His mercy to the suppliant.* (1) “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.” The mercy is not a reversal of the mischief, neither was the repentance. The mischief is done, and cannot be reversed. Early piety is therefore earnestly to be desired that the mischief of an evil life may be avoided. (2) It was a substantial benefit nevertheless. (a) To Ahab personally. It was something to be spared the pain of witnessing the judgments of God upon his wicked house; but, what is still more considerable, this mercy contained a promise respecting the world to come; for, and especially in prophecy, things visible are signs or portents of things spiritual. (b) It was also a benefit to his nation. For after this, probably, came the war with Ben-hadad, in which God interposed in a very remarkable manner on behalf of His people. In the Septuagint, which translation was made from much older copies of the Hebrew Bible than any now extant, this chapter and that here before it change places; and the order in the Septuagint is also followed by Josephus. (3) This fact is very important, for it shows also where the backsliding of Ahab commenced. It was evidently in the false mercy which he showed to Ben-hadad. After this relapse God forsook him and handed him over to evil spirits and lying prophets, who wrought his ruin. “He that endureth to the end shall be saved.”—J. A. M.

Vers. 1—24.—*The Progress of Sin.* This chapter describes one of the blackest crimes which ever blotted the page of history. The description is so graphic that we seem eye-witnesses of the tragedy, and so suggestive that we can understand the motives and feelings of the principal actors. Naboth has been blamed sometimes for refusing what appeared a reasonable request—that he would sell a piece of land to his rightful king at a fair price. It is evident, however, that he was not only acting within his right, but that he could not have assented to the proposal without breaking the Divine law given by Moses. The paternal inheritance might only be sold in extreme poverty, and then on the condition that it might be redeemed at any time; and, if not previously redeemed by purchase, it reverted to the original owner at the year of jubilee (Levit. xxv. 13—28). With Naboth it was not the dictate of churlishness, but of conscience, to refuse the proposal of the king. Nor was Ahab’s guilt the less because the crime was suggested by Jezebel. He might be deficient in nerve and inventiveness, but he was not in iniquity. Let us trace him in this his hideous downfall, that none of us may be “hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.” Our subject is the PROGRESS OF SIN. We see here—

I. POSSESSIONS LEADING TO COVETOUSNESS. His stately palace and park at Jezreel did not content him. With greedy eye he looked on this tiny plot of freehold, and resolved to have it. It is not in the power of material possessions to satisfy man. The rich man must be richer still; the large kingdom must extend itself yet further; the great business must crush the small competitors, &c. How often this leads to wrongs wrought on the poorer and weaker! “The love of money is the root of all evil.” “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of things that he possesseth.”

**II. COVETOUSNESS LEADING TO DISCONTENT.** "He laid himself down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread." Disappointed of that which he coveted he could find no pleasure in that which he already possessed. Show how easily a discontented habit of mind may be formed, and how it embitters everything. Thankfulness, gladness, and hope are strangled by this serpent sin. The necessity of watching against the rise of this in our children.

**III. DISCONTENT LEADING TO EVIL COUNSEL (ver. 7).** Ahab was just in the right condition to welcome anything bad. On an ordinary occasion he might have repelled this hideous suggestion. Satan watches his opportunity. His temptations are adapted to our age, our social position, our mood of mind. What would fail to-day may succeed to-morrow. What the youth would spurn the old man may welcome, &c. "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." It is an evil thing to have a bad counsellor always near you. Let that thought guard us against unholy associates.

**IV. EVIL COUNSEL LEADING TO LIES (ver. 10).** The fast was a hypocritical device to prepare the minds of the people for the death of Naboth. Its appointment presupposed that there was a grievous offence committed by some one, which the community was to mourn. Their suspicions would be ready to fasten on any man who was suddenly and boldly accused by two independent witnesses. The scheme was as subtle as it was sinful. Give examples of the use of deceit and lies in modern life for the purpose of making money, advancing social interests, &c. Show the sinfulness of this.

**V. LIES LEADING TO MURDER (ver. 13).** Not only was Naboth killed, but his children also (2 Kings ix. 26). Hence the property would revert to the king. It was a cold-blooded murder. Few worse are recorded in history. Seldom is this most heinous crime committed until the way has been paved for it, as here, by lesser sins. Exemplify this.

**VI. MURDER LEADING TO RETRIBUTION.** Read Elijah's bold and terrible denunciation of the crime on the very soil of the coveted vineyard (vers. 20—24). Retribution may linger long, but it comes at last. In the light of many a startling discovery we read the words, "Be sure your sin will find you out."

**CONCLUSION.**—"Cleanse thou me from secret faults: keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins," &c.—A. R.

**Vers. 27—29.—Partial Penitence.** Such was the effect of Elijah's message delivered in the vineyard of Naboth. The fearless courage of the prophet had again asserted itself, and once more the king quailed before his terrible words of denunciation. The subject is the more worthy of study because the deceitfulness of the human heart is here laid bare by "the searcher of hearts." If we understand Ahab, we shall better understand ourselves.

**I. THE DECEITFUL NATURE OF AHAB'S HUMILIATION.** We shall show that there was a mixture of the good and evil, of the true and false. 1. *It originated in a true message.* No phantom of his own brain, no utterance of a false prophet misled Ahab; but the declaration of a man who, as he knew by experience, spoke truly, and spoke for God. He dared not refuse credence to the message, but that his heart was unchanged was shown in his continued hatred to the messenger (1 Kings xviii. 17; xxi. 20). In all ages the word of God has been "as a fire," and as a "hammer" (Jer. xxiii. 29). Give examples. The Ninevites, the Jews at Pentecost, &c. It has "pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe." 2. *It asserted itself in fasting and tears.* These would be natural signs of distress. In themselves they were no evidence of sincerity. It is easier to put on the outward than to experience the inward. There is always danger of letting the visible supersede the invisible, though it is only of value as the honest expression of conviction. Leaves and blossoms may be tied around a dead branch, but that does not make it live. (The perils of Ritualism.) Even under the Old Dispensation this was understood. Samuel said, "To obey is better than sacrifice," &c. David exclaimed, "Thou desirest not sacrifice," &c. (Psa. li. 16, 17; see also Micah vi. 8; Isa. i. 11). Compare the words of our Lord, "Moreover when ye

fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance; for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast." 3. *It consisted in terror, not in turning.* Ahab was thoroughly alarmed, but imagination rather than conscience was at work within him. He did not forsake his idols, nor give up Naboth's vineyard, nor abandon his self-confidence. See next chapter, which narrates his dealings with Micaiah. Evidently there was no change of heart or of life; nor had his present feeling any abiding influence. He was like those who are alarmed at the thought of hell, not at the thought of sin. They shrink from punishment, but not from guilt. Examples. The drunkard weeping maudlin tears over his poverty; the detected wrong-doer thrown out of employment; the sinner who believes himself to be at the point of death, &c. True repentance makes us feel and act differently towards sin and towards God.

II. THE DIVINE NOTICE OF AHAB'S HUMILIATION. 1. *It did not escape the Divine search.* God looks down from heaven to see if there were any that do good. He rejoices to find not the evil that must be punished, but the feeble germs of good that may be encouraged. (Compare Psa. xiv. 2.) Even such a sinner as Ahab (ver. 25) was not disregarded when he showed the faintest signs of repentance. God would foster them lovingly, as He fosters the seed sown in the warm earth. The prodigal is seen "when yet a great way off." Even the first beginnings of righteousness were commended by our Lord: "Jesus, beholding him, loved him," &c. 2. *It led to the mitigation of the Divine punishment.* Ahab's feeling was real as far as it went. The postponement of punishment was to give opportunity for more genuine repentance. Had that revealed itself, the judgment would have been averted. Compare this with our Lord's washing the feet of Judas, though He knew he was about to betray Him. "The goodness of God leadeth to repentance." See how ready God is to meet those who may return to Him (Acts ii. 38; Joel ii. 12—14). [NOTE.—We ought to notice and encourage what is right even in those who are not what they should be, commending it whenever it is possible.] 3. *It failed to win a reversal of the Divine judgment.* A temporary repentance may be followed by a temporary reprieve; but final salvation must be preceded by true repentance. If the heart is not turned from sin, it cannot be turned from hell. "Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of; but the sorrow of this world worketh death." Not only must evil be expelled, but good must enter; for if the heart is left "empty, swept, and garnished" by self-reformation, the evil spirits will return. Good must supersede evil; Christ must supplant sin; the Holy Spirit must conquer the evil spirit. (Compare Acts xi. 17, 18.)

*A partial penitence gained reprieve, and much more will a thorough repentance gain justification.* As Trapp says, "If the leaves of repentance be so medicinal, much more the fruit."—A. R.

Vers. 1—4.—*First Steps in the Path of Crime.* I. UNBRIDLED DESIRE. 1. *The spirit in which Ahab came.* He came down to Jezreel not to present a thank-offering to God for recent deliverance, nor to inquire what might be done to meet the wishes or improve the condition of the people. Had he come thus, paths of usefulness would have opened up before him, and, instead of the dark memory of guilt, he would have left behind him blessing and praise. God and man were alike shut out, and self was set up as that which alone was to be regarded and served. Such a spirit not only stands open to temptation; it invites it. Right aims shut out is half Satan's victory. 2. *How the temptation presented itself.* He was about to make improvements upon the palace, and his eye fell on Naboth's vineyard. This made into a garden of herbs would secure greater privacy and allow other improvements to be carried out. As he looked only upon his own things the advantages of the acquisition were magnified, the fire of desire was kindled and fanned into even fiercer flame. A selfish spirit is ready to be set on fire by the slightest spark of evil suggestion. There was much in God's recent goodness, much also in the necessities of Israel, to raise Ahab above so small a care. The spirit of selfish discontent, which "never is, but always to be, blest," makes thankfulness and service alike impossible. If it rule us we are already set in the way of sin. From the

spot on which we stand a hundred dark paths branch out—envies, jealousies, falsehood, dishonest dealing, mean lying artifices, thefts, murders. When tempted to set the heart on what we have not, let us come back into the midst of the good which God has given, and say that if He see it to be best for us, that will be given too. 3. *How the object was pursued.* All restraints were cast aside. Ahab's offer (ver. 2) seems at first sight most generous. But it shut out of sight (1) the ties which bound Naboth to his inheritance, and (2) the duty he owed to God. The Israelite could not alienate his lot even when pressed by direst necessity. It might be parted with for a time, but it returned again to its rightful owners at the year of jubilee. Ahab's offer was a temptation to Naboth to think lightly of God's arrangements and to despise his birthright.

II. MISDIRECTED ANGER. "Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased," not with himself, but with Naboth. His anger was not against his sin, but against the man who had rebuked it. He might have stood and said, "I have sinned. I have abused my position. I have been caring for my own good, and not for theirs over whom God has set me." But he took the side of his sin against the truth. He that struck at that struck him. When God meets us as He then met Ahab, we must either return humbled and penitent into the right way, or withstand Him and pass into deeper darkness.—U.

Vers. 5—14.—*Sin's friendships, and what they lead to.* I. THE SINFUL FIND MANY HELPERS. Ahab seems to have done all that he was able or cared to do. He had tempted Naboth and failed, and the matter seemed to have come to an end. But where Ahab stops, Satan's servants meet him and carry on the work. Jezebel prevails on him to tell the story, and the elders of Jezreel and its sons of Belial are ready to do their part also, to give him his desire and steep his soul in crime. The man who is casting away means and character and health and eternal life will find friends to take the part of his worse against his better self, and agents enough to aid him in accomplishing his sinful will. It is vain to think of arresting a career of vice merely by change of place. Satan has his servants everywhere.

II. THE MISUSE OF INFLUENCE. There is much that may be admired in Jezebel's conduct. However false she was to others, she was true to her own. With tenderness, which lends a peculiar grace to a strong, regal nature like hers, she approaches the moody monarch. Under the warm sunshine of loving sympathy the bands which bind the burden to his soul melt away. It is laid down and exposed to view. But however good the impulses which incite the wicked to action, their feet take to the path of sin. 1. *Her sympathy becomes fierce championship of wrong.* There is love for Ahab, but no consideration for Naboth, and no regard to the voice of justice and of God. How much human love to-day is after the pattern of Jezebel's—narrow, selfish, unjust! The home is everything; the world outside has no claims, sometimes not even rights! Others are regarded with pleasure as they favour those we love; with aversion and hatred so soon as they oppose them, or even stand in their way. Homes are meant to be training schools for God's sons and daughters, where they may learn to be patient, forbearing, less exacting, able to make allowances for difference of disposition and of judgment, and so pass out able to do a brother's, sister's part in the great world around them. But Jezebel's affection frustrates God's plan and arms the home against the world it was meant to serve. 2. *She goads him on to greater sin.* She blames him not for setting his heart so upon a trifle, but for letting the matter rest where it did. She reminds him of his might and Naboth's weakness: "Dost thou now govern?" &c. How often does the sympathy of the wicked daringly recommend what the heart had feared to think, and this too with reproaches of weakness, of wrongs and slights left unavenged! Instead of quenching the fire of hate, they fan it into fiercer flame. 3. *She bears him onward into crime* (vers. 7—10). Ahab's very weakness would have prevented him shedding Naboth's blood, but her subtle brain and indomitable will supply what is needful to steep his soul in guilt. How many dark stains have been in this very way fixed upon the page of history! How much genius and talent have thus served, and are serving now, the devil's purpose!

III. THE EVIL WROUGHT BY TIME-SERVERS (vers. 11—15). There is nothing to relieve the baseness of the elders and nobles of Jezreel. They were not impelled by misguided affection to avenge a fancied wrong. They could not even plead ignorance. They were behind the scenes and arranged for the trial. It was murder of the deepest dye—murder done under the guise of zeal for the offended majesty of God. They had one of the grandest opportunities of shielding innocence and rebuking wickedness in high places. They had only to say they could not lend themselves to such a deed. But these do not stand alone. The greatest crimes in history have been wrought in this very way. Is there no place to-day over which "Jezreel" might well be written? Are there no men and no causes frowned upon, not because that in themselves they deserve such treatment, but because they are not in favour, and it will not pay to befriend them? Are there none who will use their influence in favour of a good cause when it is safe to do so, but who will be looked for in vain when it sorely needs to be befriended? There may be no crime wrought now in this land such as was then done in Israel; but should the time come, these are the men who will do as the elders and nobles did then. The spirit is the same, and in the like circumstances it will bear the same fruit.—U.

Vers. 15—29.—*Guilt and Mercy*. I. TO ENJOY THE FRUITS OF SIN IS TO TAKE ITS GUILT. "Hast thou killed?" &c. It is not said that Ahab knew of the plot. The plain inference is that he did not. *Jezebel* wrote to the elders, and to her the tidings were sent that the deed was done. But if Ahab did not know before, he knew after. Knowing how it had been procured he nevertheless received it, and heard as he stood there the word of the Lord: "Hast thou killed, and also taken possession?" There are men, for example, who could not pass their days in the vile drink traffic. They could not sleep at night for thought of the wives and mothers and children whose misery had pleaded in God's sight against them and their work. The thought of the souls they had helped to lead down into the eternal darkness would terrify them. But they can pocket the gains of that very trade; they can receive the higher rent which their property secures because it is let to the sellers of drink, and live in quietness, and sit at the Lord's table, and die in good esteem, and go forth to meet—what? the same judgment as the publican! Your reputable merchant may not lie and cheat; but if the young men that serve behind his counters do so, and if he knowingly pockets the gains of such baseness, he is equally guilty in God's sight. To take the fruit of falsehood and oppression and wrong is to stain our souls with their guilt. "Thus saith the Lord, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, *even thine*." "Behold I will bring evil upon thee," &c. (vers. 21—24).

II. WHAT IT MEANS WHEN A MAN FINDS THE TRUTH HATEFUL. Ahab's question, "Hast thou found me?" &c., was a self-revelation. There were many to whom Elijah's presence would have been like that of an angel of God; but to Ahab it is as the shadow of death. And the explanation was, "Because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord." It is only to *death* that the truth is a savour of death. He was sin's bondman. For the gratification of evil desire he had sold himself to work Satan's will, and now in his attitude to God's servant he was owning Satan still as master. It is easy to listen with approval, and with pleasure even, when other men's sins are dealt with; but when our own are touched—when we are met with our feet standing in Naboth's vineyard, what is our attitude toward the truth? Is it anger or submission? Whom do we own as master, Satan or God?

III. THE RICHES OF GOD'S MERCY (vers. 25—29). 1. *The greatness of Ahab's sin*. He had outstripped all who had gone before him, great as their sins had been; "but there was none like unto Ahab," &c. 2. *The inadequacy of his repentance*. It was no doubt sincere, but it did not go far enough. It was fear of judgment, not loathing of sin. 3. *The fulness of the Divine compassion*. Verses 25 and 26 might well have been a prelude to the record of full and speedy vengeance, and especially so in view of the unsatisfactory nature of his sorrow. But it is the introduction to the story of mercy. All that sin—sin of deepest dye—will not prevent God running

forth to meet Ahab so soon as he *begins* to turn to Him. That sorrow, shallow though it was, God had marked and accepted. "Seest thou how Ahab?" &c. God is not a stern, relentless Judge. Father's heart has never yearned over child as God's over us.—U.

Ver. 20.—*Naboth's Vineyard.* The robbery and murder of Naboth form one of the darkest episodes in the story of Ahab's life. We see that idolatry and persecution were not the only crimes into which Jezebel seduced him. Indeed, such iniquities never stand alone. They would naturally be the parents of many more. He was probably guilty of many such acts of cruel wrong during his wicked career. This is related to show how completely he had "sold himself to work evil in the sight of the Lord." Let us think of (1) his sin, (2) his punishment, (3) his remorse.

I. HIS SIN. It had many elements of moral wrong in it, and is not to be characterized by any one particular designation. 1. *Avarice.* Large and rich as his royal domain was, he envied Naboth the possession of his little vineyard. 2. *Oppression.* It was a wicked abuse of power. "Might" to him was "right." 3. *Impiety.* Ahab must have known that he was tempting Naboth to the violation of an express Divine command (Num. xxxvi. 7). 4. *Abject moral weakness.* This is seen in his childish petulance (ver. 4) and in his mean subserviency to the imperious will of Jezebel. 5. *Base hypocrisy,* in subjecting the injured man to the decision of a mock tribunal. Crimes like this generally present various phases of evil thought and feeling; and when they attempt to cover themselves with a false veil of rectitude, it only tends to deepen immeasurably our sense of their iniquity.

II. HIS PUNISHMENT. The prophet was assuming his true function in pronouncing this swift judgment on the cruel wrong that had been committed. His calling was to proclaim and enforce the laws of eternal righteousness, to vindicate the oppressed, to rebuke injustice, and that not least, but rather most of all, when it sat enthroned on the seats of authority and power. Note respecting this punishment. 1. *Its certainty.* Ahab could not really be surprised that his "enemy had found" him, for that "enemy" was but the instrument of a God to whom "all things are naked and opened." "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good," and the transgressor can never escape His righteous judgment. "Be sure your sin will find you out" (Num. xxxii. 23). 2. *Its correspondence with the crime.* "In the *place* where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth," &c. (ver. 19). The principle involved in this has often been a marked feature of the Divine retributions. " whatsoever a man soweth," &c. (Gal. vi. 7, 8). "They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind" (Hosea viii. 7). 3. *Its delay.* The sentence was fully executed only in the person of his son Joram (2 Kings ix. 25, 26); but this in no way alters the character or lessens the terribleness of it as a punishment upon *him*. Especially when we remember what an instalment of the full penalty was given in the violence of his own death (ch. xxii. 34—37). "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Eccles. viii. 11). But when, space being thus given them for repentance, they abuse it, they do but "treasure up wrath for themselves against the day of wrath," and, falling under the righteous vengeance of God, they do not escape "till they have paid the uttermost farthing." Thus did Ahab inherit the woe pronounced on him who thinks to secure any good for himself by iniquity and blood (Hab. ii. 12). Ill-gotten gain always brings with it a curse.

III. HIS REMORSE (ver. 27). It can scarcely be called repentance. It may have been sincere enough so far as it went, and for this reason God delayed the threatened punishment; but it was wanting in the elements of a true repentance. It was the compunction of a guilty conscience, but not the sacred agony of a renewed heart. It sprang from sudden alarm at the inevitable consequences of his sin, but not from a true hatred of the sin itself. It soon passed away, and left him still more a slave to the evil to which he had "sold himself" than he was before. "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (2 Cor. vii. 10).—W.

## EXPOSITION.

## CHAPTER XXII. 1—53.

THE EXPEDITION OF AHAB AND JEHOSEPHAT AGAINST RAMOTH-GILEAD. THE DEATH OF AHAB. THE REIGNS OF JEHOSEPHAT AND AHAZIAH.

Ver. 1.—And they continued [rather, rested. Heb. *sate, dwelt*. Cf. Judg. v. 17. The LXX. has *ἐκάθισε*, sing.] three years without war [The Hebrew explains the “rested”—*there was not war, &c.* See Ewald, 286 g. The three years (not full years, as the next verse shows) are to be counted from the second defeat of Ben-hadad; the history, that is to say, is resumed from ch. xx. 34—43. Rawlinson conjectures that it was during this period that the Assyrian invasion, under Shalmaneser II., took place. The Black Obelisk tells us that Ahab of Jezreel joined a league of kings, of whom Ben-hadad was one, against the Assyrians, furnishing a force of 10,000 footmen and 2000 chariots; see “Hist. Illust.” pp. 113, 114. The common danger might well compel a cessation of hostilities] between Syria and Israel.

Ver. 2.—And it came to pass in the third year [Of the peace; not after the death of Naboth, as Stanley], that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down [The journey to Jerusalem being invariably described as a “going up,” one from Jerusalem to the provinces would naturally be spoken of as a “going down”] to the king of Israel. [For aught that appears, this was the first time that the monarchs of the sister kingdoms had met, except in battle, since the disruption, though the marriage of Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat, with Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, had taken place some years before this date (2 Chron. xviii. 1, 2). It is probable that it was the growing power of Syria had led to this affinity and alliance.]

Ver. 3.—And the king of Israel said unto his servants [During the visit. It seems likely that Jehoshaphat went down to Samaria by Ahab’s invitation, and that the latter then had this campaign in view. The chronicler says that Ahab “incited,” or “stirred him up” (same word as in ch. xxi. 25) to go with him to battle. Ahab was unable to contend single-handed, and without Divine assistance—which he could not now look for—against Syria; and saw no means of compelling the execution of the treaty which Ben-hadad had made with him (ch. xx. 34), and which he appears to have shamelessly broken, except by the help of Jehoshaphat, whose military organiza-

tion at this time must have been great, and, indeed, complete (2 Chron. xvii. 10—19). It is in favour of this view that Ahab entertained him and his large retinue with such profuse hospitality. The chronicler, who dwells on the number of sheep and oxen slain for the feast, intimates that it was this generous reception “persuaded” Jehoshaphat to join in the war], Know ye that Ramoth in Gilead [Generally, as below (vers. 4, 6, &c.), “Ramoth-Gilead,” i.e., of Gilead. See note on ch. iv. 13. This “great frontier fortress was, in the hands of Syria, even after many reverses, a constant menace against Israel” (Stanley)] is ours [i.e., it was one of the cities which Ben-hadad had promised to restore (ch. xx. 34). This shows that, as we might expect from a man of Ben-hadad’s overbearing yet pusillanimous character, he had not kept good faith. Though so long a time had elapsed, it was still in his hands],

and we be still [הִשְׁמַח] is onomatopoeic, like our “hush.” Marg. rightly, *silent from taking it*. The word conveys very expressively that they had been afraid of making any movement to assert their rights, lest they should attract the attention and anger of their powerful and incensed neighbour], and take it not out of the hand of the king of Syria? [It is hardly likely that Ahab could have forgotten the warning of ch. xx. 42. It is probable that Ben-hadad’s flagrant disregard of his treaty engagements determined him to run all risks, especially if he could secure the help of the then powerful king of Judah.]

Ver. 4.—And he said unto Jehoshaphat. Wilt thou go with me to battle to Ramoth-Gilead? [It is probable this question was asked with some misgivings. Such an alliance was altogether new, and Ahab might well wonder how the idea would strike a pious prince like Jehoshaphat. That the latter ought to have refused his help, we know from 2 Chron. xix. 2.] And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, I am as thou art [Heb. *as I es thou*], my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses. [From the ready and unreserved way in which he at once engages in this war, we may safely conclude that he, too, had reason to fear the power of Syria. Probably Ben-hadad, when he besieged Samaria (ch. xx. 1), had formed the idea of reducing the whole of Palestine to subjection. And Jehoshaphat would remember that Ramoth-Gilead, where the Syrian king was still en-

trenched, was but forty miles distant from Jerusalem. Bähr holds that horses are specially mentioned "because they formed an essential part of the military power" (Psa. xxxiii. 16, 17; Prov. xxi. 31). It is true that in a campaign against the Syrians they would be especially useful (see on ch. xx. 1.); but they receive no mention at the hands of the chronicler, who reads instead of this last clause, "And we (or I) will be with thee in the war."

Ver. 5.—And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Inquire, I pray thee. at [This word is redundant] the word of the Lord to-day. [D'p] hardly conveys that "he asks to have the prophets called in at once," "lest Ahab should consent in word and put off the inquiry in act" (Rawlinson); but rather means, "at this crisis," "under these circumstances." This request agrees well with what we learn elsewhere as to Jehoshaphat's piety (2 Chron. xvii. 4—9; xix. 5—7, &c.) And, remembering how Ahab's late victories had been foretold by a prophet, and had been won by the help of Jehovah, Jehoshaphat might well suppose that his new ally would be eager to know the word of the Lord.]

Ver. 6.—Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets [Called by Micaiah "his prophets" (ver. 22), and "thy prophets" (ver. 23)] together, about four hundred men [From the number (cf. ch. xviii. 19) it has been concluded that these were "the prophets of the groves," i.e., of Astarte, who escaped the massacre of the Baal prophets (ch. xviii. 40). Others have supposed that they were prophets of Baal. But both these suppositions are negatived (1) by the fact that Jehoshaphat asks Ahab to "inquire at the word of Jehovah," and (2) that these prophets profess to speak in the name and by the Spirit of Jehovah (vers. 11, 12, 24). Moreover (3) Ahab would hardly have insulted Jehoshaphat by bringing the prophets of Baal or Astarte before him (Waterland in Wordsworth). And yet that they were not true prophets of the Lord, or of the "sons of the prophets," appears (1) from ver. 7, where Jehoshaphat asks for a "prophet of the Lord;" and (2), from ver. 20 sqq., where Micaiah disclaims them, and is found in direct opposition to them. The only conclusion open to us, consequently—and it is now generally adopted—is that they were the priests of the high places of Bethel and Dan, the successors of those whom Jeroboam had introduced into the priestly office. It need cause us no surprise to find these priests here described as "prophets" (cf. Jer. xxiii. 13; Ezek. xiii. 1), and as claiming prophetic gifts, for the priests of

Baal bore the same name (ch. xviii. 19, 23, &c.), and apparently pretended to similar powers. "No ancient people considered any cultus complete without a class of men through whom the god might be questioned" (Bähr). The existence of so large a number of prophets of the calves proves that the inroads of idolatry had by no means destroyed the calf-worship. If its priests were so many, its worshippers cannot have been few], and said unto them, Shall I go against Ramoth-Gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up; for the Lord [יְהוָה] It is very significant that at first they hesitate to use the ineffable name. It was probably this circumstance excited Jehoshaphat's suspicions. It has been said that the reason why he was dissatisfied with this answer is unexplained; but when we remember how careful the true prophet was to speak in the name of Jehovah (chs. xiv. 7; xvii. 1, 14; xx. 13, 14, 28), we can hardly doubt that it was their mention of "Adonai" occasioned his misgivings. The chronicler gives the word as *Elohim* shall deliver it [LXX. *ἀκούσθε δώσατε, shall surely give it*] into the hand of the king.

Ver. 7.—And Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the Lord [Heb. *Jehovah*] besides [i.e., in addition to these *soi-disant* prophets. He hardly likes to say bluntly that he cannot regard them as inspired, but at the same time hints clearly that he cannot be satisfied as to their mission and authority], that we might inquire of him?

Ver. 8.—And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man [Cf. ch. xviii. 22], Micalah [The name (=Who is like Jehovah?) is as appropriate to the man who bore it as Elijah's name was to him (ch. xvii. 1; cf. xviii. 39). But it is not an uncommon name in the Old Testament—it is borne by eight different persons. Compare *Michael*, "Who is like God?"] the son of *Imlah* [The chronicler writes the name *Imla*, מִלְיָה], by whom we may inquire of the Lord [Ahab evidently had wished Jehoshaphat to understand that the prophets already consulted were prophets of Jehovah, as no doubt they claimed to be. One of them bore a name in which the sacred *Jah* formed a part]: but I hate [יְהוָה] (cf. *odi*), have learned to hate] him [Ahab had good reasons for not caring to consult a man whom he had put into prison (see ver. 26, and compare Matt. xiv. 3), because of his reproofs or unwelcome predictions. Josephus, and Jewish writers generally, identify Micaiah with the nameless prophet of

ch. xxi. 42]; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. [The chronicler adds *וַיִּקְרַב*; i. e., persistently, throughout his whole career. Ahab insinuates that Micaiah is actuated by personal dislike. The commentators refer to Homer. I. iv., 106—108.] And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so. [He does not mean that the prophet cannot say just what he will, but suggests that Ahab is prejudiced against him. Perhaps he suspected that there might be a very different reason for Micaiah's sinister predictions.]

Ver. 9.—Then the king of Israel called an officer [Heb. *one eunuch*. So the LXX., *εὐνοῦχον ἕνα*. So that Samuel's forebodings have been realized (1 Sam. viii. 15, marg.) Probably, like Ebed Melech, *the Ethiopian* (Jer. xxxviii. 7), he was a foreigner; possibly a prisoner of war (Herod. iii. 49; vi. 32). Deut. xxxiii. 1 suggests that even such a king as Ahab would hardly inflict this humiliation upon an Israelite. From 1 Chron. xxviii. 1, Heb., we gather that even David's court had its eunuchs, and we may be sure that Solomon's enormous harem could not be maintained without them. In later days we find them prominent in the history, and occupying important positions under the king (2 Kings viii. 6; ix. 32; xxiii. 11; xxv. 19; Jer. xxix. 2; xxxiv. 19; lii. 25, &c. Cf. Gen. xxxvii. 36)], and said, Hasten hither Micaiah the son of Imlah.

Ver. 10.—And the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah sat each on his throne ["Oriental kings had portable thrones, which they took with them upon their journeys" (Herod. vii. 212. Layard, "Nineveh and Babylon," p. 150) Rawlinson], having put on their robes [As a council of state was to be held, the kings put on their official vestments. *כִּיְרָבָה* simply means "coverings," "clothes," but that the special royal dress is here intended is clear, as Bähr observes, from Levit. xxi. 10. This gathering of prophets and counsellors seems to have followed the banquet. When Jehoshaphat expressed his readiness to go to war, Ahab appears to have forthwith convened this assembly, in order that the matter might be put in train at once. Ewald says a review of the troops was designed, but of this the text knows nothing] in a void place [Heb. *a threshing-floor*. See note on ch. xxi. 1. The "floor" implies not only a vacant space, but an exalted position. Ordinarily, it would not be enclosed within the city walls, nor does it appear that this floor was] in the entrance [The Hebrew has no prepo-

sition; simply *וַיִּקְרַב* which would be more correctly rendered "at the entrance." The town gate was the great place of concourse (2 Kings vii. 1). Here, too, justice was dispensed. See Ruth iv. 1; 2 Sam. xv. 2; xix. 8; Pss. lxix. 12; cxxvii. 5; Deut. xxi. 19; Gen. xix. 1; xxiii. 10; Amos v. 12, 15, &c.] of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them. [They continued their prophesying even whilst Micah was being summoned. Or the reference may be to the prophesying of ver. 6.

Ver. 11.—And Zedekiah [This name = "Justice of Jehovah," is one of the proofs that these cannot have been prophets of Baal, as Stanley and others suppose] the son of Chenaanah [= "Canaanite." But we gather from 1 Chron. vii. 10 that this, like Shelomith, was a man's name. The Benjamite there mentioned may be identical with the father (or ancestor) of Zedekiah] made him [Rawlinson would translate "had made him." He says that the horns must have "been made previously, in expectation of some such occasion as that now afforded him." But it is quite conceivable that during the prophesying, which clearly lasted some time, the idea occurred to Zedekiah, and it would not take long to put it into execution] horns of iron [Thenius understands that these were iron spikes held on the forehead. But the reference is clearly to the horns of a bullock, and the appropriateness of the prophetic act is only manifest when we remember that Ephraim is compared to a bullock (Deut. xxxiii. 17), and more, that Moses spake beforehand of the strength of his horns, and predicted that with them he should "push the people together to the ends of the earth." Not only, that is to say, was the horn a familiar Oriental symbol of power (1 Sam. ii. 1, 10; 2 Sam. xxii. 3; Pss. lxxxix. 24; xcii. 10; Dan. vii. 21; viii. 8, &c.), but it was identified in a peculiar manner with the powerful tribe of Ephraim; in other words, with the kingdom of Israel. This symbolical act was not necessarily an imitation of the action of Ahijah (ch. xi. 30). Such acted parables were not uncommon among the prophets (2 Kings xiii. 15; Isa. xx. 2; Jer. xiii. 1; xix. 10; xxxii. 9 sqq.; Ezek. iv., v.; Acts xxi. 11)] : and he said, Thus saith the Lord [Heb. *Jehovah*. He now uses the sacred name; no doubt because of Jehoshaphat's demand, ver. 7], With these shalt thou push [the word of Deut. xxxiii. 17] the Syrians, until thou have consumed them.

Ver. 12.—And all the prophets prophesied [Heb. *were prophesying*] so, saying,

Go up to Ramoth-Gilead, and prosper [a Hebraism for "thou wilt prosper." Gesenius, Gram. § 127. 2, cites parallels in Gen. xlii. 18; Prov. xx. 13; Psa. xxxvii. 27; Job xxii. 21; Isa. viii. 9; xxix. 9, and reminds us that in the Latin *divide et impera* we have the same idiom]: for the Lord [all speak in His name now, hoping thus to satisfy the king of Judah] shall deliver it into the king's hand.

Ver. 13.—And the messenger that was gone [or went] to call Micalah, spake unto him, saying, Behold now, the words of the prophets declare good unto the king with one mouth [Heb. *one mouth good to the king*]. The messenger may possibly have had instructions to seek to conciliate Micaiah. In any case he thinks it well to tell him of the unanimity of the prophets. His testimony, he suggests, will surely agree with theirs: let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak that which is good. [Heb. *speak good*.]

Ver. 14.—And Micaiah said, As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak. [We are forcibly reminded of the answer of Balaam, Num. xxii. 18, 38. And we may see not only in the suggestion of this messenger, but also in Ahab's belief (ver. 8), that Micaiah could prophesy at pleasure, a striking correspondence with the ideas of Balak (*ib.* v. 6, 17). Instead of regarding the prophet as being merely the mouthpiece of Deity, he was believed in that age to have a supernatural influence with God, and to be entrusted with magical powers to shape the future, as well as to foretell it.]

Ver. 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? [Same words as in ver. 6. There is an apparent studied fairness in this repetition. It is as if Ahab said, "Despite his prejudice against me, I will not attempt to influence his mind. I only deal with him as with the rest."] And he answered him, Go, and prosper: for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king. [As Ahab's inquiry is the echo of the question of ver. 6, so is Micaiah's response identical with the answer of the prophets. He simply echoes their words, of which perhaps, he has been informed by the eunuch. There was an exquisite propriety in this. The question was insincere; the reply was ironical (cf. ch. xviii. 27). Ahab is answered "according to the multitude of his idols" (Ezek. xiv. 4). He wishes to be deceived, and he is deceived. No doubt Micaiah's mocking tone showed that his words were ironical; but Ahab's hollow tone had already proved to Micaiah that he

was insincere; that he did not care to know the will of the Lord, and wanted prophets who would speak to him smooth things and prophecy deceits (Isa. xxx. 10).]

Ver. 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? [Rawlinson concludes from these words that "this mocking manner was familiar to Micaiah, who had used it in some former dealing with the Israelite monarch." But we must remember that Ahab's words were really addressed to Jehoshaphat. He is so manifestly playing a part, that we need not assume that he is strictly truthful. His great desire evidently is to discredit Micah's predictions, which he clearly perceives, from the bitter and ironical tone of the letter, will be adverse to him.]

Ver. 17.—And he said [We may imagine how entire was the change of tone. He now speaks with profound seriousness. Thenius sees in the peculiarity and originality of this vision a proof of the historical truth of this history. "We feel that we are gradually drawing nearer to the times of the later prophets. It is a vision which might rank amongst those of Isaiah or Ezekiel" (Stanley)], 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. [The last words are illustrated by the command of ver. 31; compare ver. 36. We may also picture the effect these words would have on the assembly at the city gate. For, however much they might be inclined to discredit Micaiah's words, and however much the reckless, unreasoning war-spirit might possess them, there were none who did not understand that this vision portended the dispersion of the Israelite army and the death of its leader. King and people had been constantly represented under the figure of shepherd and sheep, and notably by Moses himself, who had used these very words, "sheep without a shepherd" (Num. xxvii. 17; cf. Psa. lxxviii. 70, 71; Isa. xlv. 23; Jer. xxiii. 1, 2; Ezek. xxxiv. *passim*). It is observable that Micaiah's vision, like Zedekiah's parable, borrows the language of the Pentateuch. Coincidences of this remote character are the most powerful proofs that the Pentateuch was then written.]

Ver. 18.—And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell thee that he would [Heb. *say to thee, He will, &c.*] prophesy no good concerning me but evil? [It is clear that Ahab had understood perfectly the purport of Micaiah's words. He

now appeals to them as a proof of the latter's malice.]

Ver. 19.—And he said, Hear thou [in 2 Chron. xviii. 18, *Hear ye*] therefore [The LXX. has *ὄψις οὐρανῶς*, whence it would almost

appear that they had the text  $\text{יָדָהּ}$  before

them (Bähr). But  $\text{יָדָהּ}$  is every way to be preferred. It is emphatic by position, and the meaning is, "Since you will have it that my words are prompted by malice, hear the message I have for you," &c.] the word of the Lord. I saw the Lord [It is not implied (Wordsworth) that he had any direct and objective vision of God, such as Moses (Exod. xxxiv. 5), Elijah, or St. Stephen. He here declares what he may have seen in dream or trance. (Cf. Rev. i. 10; iv. 2; Isa. vi. 1; Ezek. i. 1.) It was a real but inner vision (Keil). In its interpretation the caution of Peter Martyr is carefully to be borne in mind; *Omnia hæc dicuntur ἀνθρωποπαθῶς*] sitting on his throne [It was natural for some of the commentators to see in these words a reference to the two kings then sitting in their royal apparel, each upon his throne. But it is very doubtful whether any such thought was present in the mind of the speaker, who simply relates a vision of the past], and all the host of heaven [The celestial powers, cherubim, angels, archangels, who surround the Lord of glory. That there can be no reference to the sun, moon, and stars, notwithstanding that these are called "the host of heaven" in Deut. iv. 19, xvii. 3, is clear from the next words. The expression is to be explained by Gen. xxxii. 1, 2]

standing by him  $\text{יָדָהּ}$ ; for the meaning, see Gen. xviii. 8] on his right hand and on his left. [The resemblance of this vision to that of Isaiah (ch. vi. 1—8) must not be overlooked.]

Ver. 20.—And the Lord said, Who shall persuade [Same word in Exod. xxii. 16, Heb.; Judg. xiv. 15; xvi. 5; Prov. i. 10, &c.; in all of which instances it is translated "entice." Compare with this question that of Isa. vi. 8.] Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-Gilead? [The meaning is that Ahab's death in battle had been decreed in the counsels of God, and that the Divine Wisdom had devised means for accomplishing His purpose.] And one said on this manner, and another said [Heb. *saying*] on that manner. [Bähr again quotes from Peter Martyr: "*Innuit varios providentiæ Dei modos, quibus decreta sua ad exitum perducit*, and adds that in this vision "inner and spiritual processes are regarded as real phenomena, nay, even as persons."]

Ver. 21.—And there came forth a spirit [Heb. *the spirit*. By some, especially of the earlier commentators, understood of the evil spirit. But the view now generally adopted (Thenius, Keil, Bähr) is that "the spirit of prophecy" is meant, "the power which, going forth from God and taking possession of a man, makes him a prophet (1 Sam. x. 6, 10; xix. 20, 23). The  $\text{רוּחַ}$  is the  $\text{רוּחַ הַקּוֹדֵשׁ}$  (Hosea ix. 7)"]

Bähr. This power is here personified, and stood before the Lord, and said, I [emphatic in the Hebrew] will persuade [or entice] him.

Ver. 22.—And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? [Heb. *By what?*] And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit [Heb. *a spirit of a lie*. Cf. Zech. xiii. 2; 1 John iv. 6] in the mouth of all his prophets. [His prophets, not God's. Cf. 2 Kings iii. 13.] And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so.

Ver. 23.—Now therefore, behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy [Cf. *ὁ οἶκος ὑμῶν*, Matt. xxiii. 38] prophets [This statement, especially to those who have taken the narrative literally, and who have seen in "the spirit" either one of the angels of God, or Satan himself, has presented almost insuperable difficulties. The main difficulty lies in the fact that the Almighty and All Holy is here made to give His sanction to deceit and lying, for the purpose of tempting Ahab to his death. We have precisely the same difficulty, though, if possible, more directly expressed in Ezek. xiv. 9: "If the prophet be deceived . . . I the Lord have deceived that prophet." Cf. Jer. xx. 7; 1 Sam. xvi. 15. But this difficulty vanishes if we remember that this is anthropopathic language, and is merely meant to convey that God had "taken the house of Israel in their own heart," because they were "estranged from Him through their idols" (Ezek. xiv. 5). Ahab wished to be guided by false prophets, and the justice of God decreed that he should be guided by them to his ruin. Sin is punished by sin. "God proves His holiness most of all by this, that He punishes evil by evil, and destroys it by itself" (Bähr). Ahab had chosen lying instead of truth: by lying—according to the *lex talionis*—he should be destroyed. The difficulty, in fact, is that of the permission of evil in the world; of the use of existent evil by God to accomplish His purposes of good], and the Lord [not I alone, ver. 18] hath spoken [i.e., decreed] evil concerning thee.

Ver. 24.—But Zedekiah the son of Che-

naamah [Rawlinson holds that he was a sort of coryphaeus of the false prophets. It is more probable that, having put himself forward on a former occasion (ver. 11), he now feels specially aggrieved at Micaiah's blunt assertion, that he and the rest have been possessed by a spirit of lies] went near, and smote Micaiah [A thoroughly natural touch. But the whole narrative has every mark of naturalness and veracity. It is easy to see how enraged Zedekiah would be at the slight cast upon his prophetic powers. Apparently this gross indignity elicited no protest or word of displeasure from either of the kings. Micaiah, like Elijah, was left alone, on the cheek [cf. Job xvi. 10; Lam. iii. 30; Luke vi. 29; and above all Matt. xxvi. 67; Luke xxii. 64; Acts xxiii. 2. Herein Micaiah had "the fellowship of sufferers" (Phil. iii. 10) with our blessed Lord. Rawlinson thinks that his hands would be bound, but this is extremely improbable. In that case Ahab could hardly have asked him to prophesy (ver. 15), or if he did, Jehoshaphat would know beforehand what to expect], and said, Which way [Heb. *What, or where*. The chronicler supplies "way," thereby bringing the expression into unison with ch. xiii. 12; 2 Kings iii. 8; Job xxxviii. 24] went [Heb. *passed, crossed*, *לָּךְ*] the Spirit of the Lord [These words are important, as showing that the speaker had not identified "the spirit" of ver. 21 with the evil spirit: Job. i. 6 sqq.] from me to speak unto thee? [It is pretty clear from these words, in connexion with ver. 23, that Zedekiah had been conscious of an inspiration, of a spirit not his own, which impelled him to speak and act as he did. We must not attach too much importance to a taunting and passionate speech, but its meaning appears to be: I have spoken in the name and by the spirit of Jehovah. Thou claimest to have done the same. How is it that the Spirit of God speaks one thing by me, another by thee? Thou hast seen (ver. 19) the secret counsels of Heaven. Tell us, then, which way, &c.]

Ver. 25.—And Micaiah said, Behold, thou shalt see [Keil understands, "that the Spirit of the Lord had departed from thee." But the meaning rather appears to be, "Thou shalt see which was a true prophet." He does not answer the insolent question, but says, "Thou wilt alter thy mind in the day," &c. With this may be compared our Lord's words, Matt. xxvi. 64. He also manifests our Lord's spirit (1 Peter ii. 22 sqq.) "as if the Great Example had already appeared before him" (Bähr) in that day when thou shalt go into an inner chamber [see note on ch. xx. 30] to hide thyself. [When was

this prediction fulfilled? Probably when the news of the defeat reached Samaria, or on the day after Ahab's death. Jezebel would almost certainly take summary vengeance upon the false prophets who were responsible for her husband's death and the reverses of the army. Or if she did not, the prophets had good reason to fear that she would, and would hide accordingly.]

Ver. 26.—And the king of Israel said, Take [Sing. *Take thou*. This command was probably addressed to the eunuch mentioned in ver. 9] Micaiah, and carry him back [Heb. *make him return*. This shows clearly that he had come from prison] unto Amon the governor [*יְרֵךְ* chief; same word in ch. iv. 2; xi. 24; xvi. 9; Gen. xxxvii. 36; xl. 9, 22, &c. The "chief of the city" is also mentioned 2 Kings xxiii. 8; cf. Neh. xi. 9] of the city [who would naturally have charge of the town prison. Probably the prison was in his house. Cf. Gen. xl. 3; Jer. xxxvii. 20], and to Joash the king's son. [Thenius supposes that this prince had been entrusted to Amon for his military education, and refers to 2 Kings x. 1. But in that case he would hardly have been mentioned as associated with him in the charge of so important a prisoner. Whoever Joash was, he was a man in authority. It is curious that we find another prophet, Jeremiah, put into the prison of Malchiah, the son of the king (A. V. *the son of Hammelech*; same expression as here), Jer. xxxviii. 6; cf. xxxvi. 26. Some have seen in this designation a name of office, and Bähr thinks that "Joash was not probably a son of Ahab, but a prince of the blood." But when we remember what a number of sons Ahab had (2 Kings x. 1), no valid reason can be assigned why Joash should not have been one of them. He may have been billeted upon Amon, and yet associated with him in the government of the city.]

Ver. 27.—And say [Heb. *thou shalt say*], Thus saith the king, Put this fellow in the prison [Heb. *house of the prison*. Bähr thinks that Micaiah had formerly been in arrest under Amon's charge, and now was to be committed to the prison proper. But more probably the words mean, "put him in the prison again." His superadded punishment was to be in the shape of prison diet. It is probable that it was owing to the presence of Jehoshaphat that Micaiah escaped with no severer sentence], and feed him with bread of affliction [or *oppression*, *יָרֵךְ*] *pressit*; cf. Exod. iii. 9; Num. xxii. 25; 2 Kings vi. 32], and with water of affliction [Josephus (Ant. viii. 15. 4) relates that after Micaiah's prediction the king was in

great suspense and fear, until Zedekiah deliberately smote him, in order to show that he was powerless to avenge an injury as the man of God did (ch. xliii. 4), and therefore no true prophet. This may be an "empty Rabbinical tradition" (Bähr), but we may be sure that Ahab did not hear Micaiah's words unmoved. He had had such convincing proofs of the foresight and powers of the Lord's prophets that he may well have trembled, even as he put on a bold front, and sent Micaiah back to the prison house, until I come in peace. [This looks like an effort to encourage himself and those around him. But it almost betrays his misgivings. He would have them think he had no fears.]

Ver. 28.—And Micalah said, If thou return at all in peace, the Lord hath not spoken by me. And he said, Hearken, O people [Rather, O nations. *Audite, populi omnes*, Vulgate. He appeals, so to speak, to the world], every one of you. [It is a curious circumstance that these same words are found at the beginning of the prophecy of Micah (ch. i. 2). The coincidence may be purely accidental, or the words may have been borrowed by the prophet, not, indeed, from our historian, but from some record, the substance of which is embodied in this history. Micah lived about a century and a half after Micaiah; about a century before the Book of Kings was given to the world.]

Ver. 29.—So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth-Gilead to battle. ["By the very network of evil counsel which he has woven for himself is the king of Israel led to his ruin" (Stanley). We can hardly doubt that Jehoshaphat at least would have been well content to abandon the expedition. After the solicitude he had manifested for the sanction of one of the prophets of Jehovah, and after that the one who had been consulted had predicted the defeat of the army, the king of Judah must have had many misgivings. But it is not difficult to understand why, notwithstanding his fears, he did not draw back. For, in the first place, he had committed himself to the war by the rash and positive promise of ver. 4. In the next place, he was Ahab's guest, and had been sumptuously entertained by him, and it would therefore require some moral courage to extricate himself from the toils in which he was entangled. Moreover, he would have subjected himself to the imputation of cowardice had he deserted his ally because of a prophecy which threatened the latter with death. The people around him, again, including perhaps his own retinue, were possessed with the spirit of battle, and treated the prophecy of Micaiah with con-

tempt, and it would be difficult for him to swim alone against the current. It is probable, too, that he discounted the portentous words of Micaiah on account of the long-standing quarrel between him and Ahab. And, finally, we must remember that his own interests were threatened by Syria, and he may well have feared trouble from that quarter in case this war were abandoned. Rawlinson suggests that he may have conceived a personal affection for Ahab; but 2 Chron. xix. 2 affords but slender ground for this conclusion.]

Ver. 30.—And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat [At Ramoth-Gilead, on the eve of the battle], I will disguise myself [same word ch. xx. 38] and enter [The margin, "when he was to disguise himself," &c., is quite mistaken. The Hebrew has two infinitives; lit., *to disguise oneself and enter*; a construction which is frequently employed to indicate an absolute command. Cf. Gen. xvii. 10; Exod. xx. 8; Isa. xiv. 31; and see Ewald, 328 c. "The infinitive absolute is the plainest and simplest form of the voluntative for exclamations" (Bähr). It agrees well with the excitement under which Ahab was doubtless labouring] into the battle. [It is not necessary to suppose with Ewald, Rawlinson, *al.*, that he had heard of Benhadad's command to his captains (ver. 31). It is hardly likely that such intelligence could be brought by spies, and there would be no deserters from the Syrian army to that of the Jews. It is enough to remember that Micaiah's words, "these have no master," could not fail to awaken some alarm in his bosom, especially when connected with the prophecy of ch. xx. 42. He will not betray his fear by keeping out of the fray—which, indeed, he could not do without abdicating one of the principal functions of the king (1 Sam. viii. 20), and without exposing himself to the charge of cowardice; but under the circumstances he thinks it imprudent to take the lead of the army, as kings were wont to do (2 Sam. i. 10), in his royal robes. He hopes by his disguise to escape all danger]: but put thou on thy robes [LXX. *τὸν ἱματισμὸν μου*. "My robes." "We can neither imagine Ahab's asking nor Jehoshaphat's consenting to such a procedure. Jehoshaphat had his own royal robes with him, as appears from ver. 10" (Rawlinson). If this LXX. interpretation could be maintained it would lend some colour to the supposition, otherwise destitute of basis, that Ahab by this arrangement was plotting the death of Jehoshaphat in order that he might incorporate Judah into his own kingdom. It is clear, however, that Ahab then had other work on his hands,

and it is doubtful whether even he was capable of such a pitch of villainy. What he means is, either (1) that the Syrians have a personal enmity against himself (ver. 31), whereas they could have none against the king of Judah; or (2) that Jehoshaphat's life had not been threatened as his own

had. "These words אַתָּה לְבִישׁ are not to be taken as a command, but simply in this sense: Thou canst put on thy royal dress, since there is no necessity for thee to take any such precautions as I have to take" (Keil). Do they not rather mean that Jehoshaphat should be the recognized leader of the army in which Ahab would serve in a more private capacity? And the king of Israel disguised himself, and went into the battle.

Ver. 31.—But the king of Syria commanded [rather, *had* commanded. These words are of the nature of a parenthesis. "Now the king," &c. אָמַר is so rendered in 2 Chron. xviii. 30] his thirty and two captains [mentioned in ch. xx. 24. It does not follow, however (Wordsworth), that these very men had been spared by Ahab] that had rule over his chariots [Heb. *chariotry*. Another indication that the chariots were regarded as the most important arm of the Syrian service], saying, Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel. [This Orientalism, translated into Western ideas, means, "Direct your weapons against the king." What Ahab had done to provoke such resentment is not quite clear. Rawlinson supposes that Ben-hadad's "defeat and captivity were still ranking in his mind, and he wished to retaliate on Ahab the humiliation which he considered himself to have suffered." But it is impossible to see in Ahab's generous conduct towards him a sufficient reason for the fierce hatred which these words disclose. It is much more probable that some affront had subsequently been offered to the Syrian monarch, possibly in the shape of the reproaches which Ahab may have addressed to him on account of his retention of Ramoth-Gilead, and the gross violation of the treaty of ch. xx. 34. It is also possible that he hoped that the death of Ahab would terminate the war (Bähr).]

Ver. 32.—And it came to pass when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, Surely אַתָּה, not *only* (Bähr, Keil), but *certainly*; cf. Gen. xlv. 28; Judges iii. 24; 2 Kings xxiv. 3] it [Heb. *he*] is the king of Israel. And they turned aside [Cf. ch. xx. 39, same word. The Hebrew inserts אֲשֶׁר]

The chronicler reads יָסְבּוּ *they surrounded him*, instead of יָקְרוּ; and the LXX. has ἐκύκλωσεν in both places. But the Syrians can hardly have actually closed round the king, and the alteration might easily be made in the course of transcription] to fight against him [according to their instructions]; and Jehoshaphat cried out. [This cry has been very variously interpreted. According to some, it was his own name that he ejaculated, which is possible, if the command of ver. 31 was known in the allied army. According to others, it was the battle-cry of Judah, which, it is said, would be familiar to the Syrians, and which would rally his own soldiers round him. The Vulgate, no doubt influenced by the words of 2 Chron. xviii. 31, "And the Lord helped him, and God moved them to depart from him," interprets, *clamavit ad Dominum*. That it was a cry for Divine help is the most probable, because it is almost an instinct, especially with a pious soul like Jehoshaphat, to cry to God in the moment of danger. That he had doubts as to whether the course he was pursuing was pleasing to God, would make him all the more ready to cry aloud for mercy the moment he found himself in peril. But it may have been merely a cry of terror. It must be carefully observed that the Scripture does not say that it was this cry led to his being recognized and spared.]

Ver. 33.—And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots perceived [in what way we are not told. But Ahab would be known to some of them, ch. xx. 31] that it was not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him.

Ver. 34.—And a certain man [Heb. *a man*. It was natural for some of the Rabbins to identify this archer with Naaman—the tradition is found in Josephus. But it is directly contrary to the spirit of the narrative to attempt to identify him. As it was a chance arrow, so it was by an unknown archer] drew a bow at a venture [Heb. *in his simplicity, i.e.*, with no intention of shooting Ahab: not knowing what he was doing. That this is the meaning is clear from the use of the words in 2 Sam. xv. 11], and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness [The marg., *joints and the breastplate, comes nearer the Hebrew*. But it is clear that the rendering *joints*, notwithstanding that it has the support of Gesenius and others, is a mistaken one. "In the joints" we can understand, but "between the joints and the coat of mail," gives no sense. It is obvious that הַרְבֵּקִים like הַיָּשָׁרִים following, must signify some portion of the armour, and the

meaning of the verb **דָּבַק**, *adhaesit*, leads us to conclude that “the hanging skirt of parallel metal plates—hence the plural”—(Bähr) is intended. The coat of mail only covered the breast and ribs. To this a fringe of movable plates of steel was attached or fastened, hence called **דָּבָקִים**. So Luther, *Zwischen den Panzer und Hengel*. One is reminded here of the Parthian arrow which wrung from Julian the Apostle the dying confession, “Thou hast conquered, O Galilean.” Cf. Psa. vii. 13, 14; wherefore he said unto the driver of his chariot, Turn thine hand [or, according to the Chethib, *hands*]. The charioteers of Palestine, like those of Egypt and Assyria, or those of modern Russia, held a rein in each hand. Same expression 2 Kings ix. 23. The meaning is “turn round”] and carry me out of the host; for I am wounded. [Heb. *made sick*. The king probably felt his wound to be mortal, as a wound in such a part, the abdomen (cf. 2 Sam. ii. 23; iii. 27; xx. 10), would be. Vulgate, *graviter vulneratus sum*. How far an arrow in such a place could penetrate, we may gather from 2 Kings ix. 24; cf. Job xvi. 13. And he was seemingly anxious that the army should not know it, lest they should be discouraged. They would soon discover it if he remained with the host; he can fight no longer; his wound needs attention; hence this command. It is quite possible that the charioteer, in the din and confusion of battle, may not have observed that his master was wounded. The arrow had not struck any part of the armour.]

Ver. 35.—And the battle increased [Heb. *went up*. Marg. *ascended*. The tide of warfare rose higher and higher. Both Keil and Bähr think that the image is taken from a swelling river, and cite Isa. viii. 7. The object of this verse is to explain how it was that the king’s request was not complied with] that day: and the king was stayed up in his chariot [Heb. *made to stand*. LXX. ἦν ἰστηκώς. He was supported in his chariot by some of his servants, and maintained in an erect posture. Chariots were destitute of seats. According to Thenius and Keil, he maintained himself erect, by his own strength. But the word is passive] against the Syrians [Heb. *in the face of the Syrians*. **לפני**, *coram*. His back was not turned to them, as he had desired. The idea that he was in any way fighting against the Syrians is altogether foreign to the text. It is at first sight somewhat difficult to reconcile this statement with the direction given to the charioteer in the preceding verse, and

some have been led, though without sufficient warrant, to conclude that Ahab left the field, had his wound bound up, and then returned to take his part in the battle. But the explanation is very simple. As the battle increased, it became impossible to comply with the king’s desire. So thick was the fight that retreat was impossible. Hence the wounded king, who would otherwise have sunk down to the bottom of the chariot, had to be “stayed up in the presence of the Syrians.” This circumstance may also account for the fact that he died at even. Had it been possible to remove him and staunch his wounds, he might have lingered for some time. As it was, he bled to death. It is not clear, therefore, that “his death was kingly” (Kitto), or that we must concede to Ahab “the credit of right princely fortitude on this occasion” (Rawlinson). He would have left the host could he have done so. It was his servants propped up the dying man in his chariot, to encourage the army. What a picture for an artist—the king with the pallor of death spreading over his face, the anxious faces of the attendants, the pool of blood, the sun sinking to the horizon, &c., and died at even: and the blood ran out of the wound [Heb. *the blood of the wound poured*] into the midst [Heb. *bosom*; LXX. κόλπον, the hollow part, or “well.” The same word is used of the concave part of the altar] of the chariot.

Ver. 36.—And there went a proclamation throughout the host [Heb. *And the shouting passed over in the camp*. Gesenius will have it that **וַיִּהְיֶה** must mean a “joyful cry,” and would see the cause of joy in the cessation of hostilities and the permission to return home] about the going down of the sun [According to the chronicler (ch. xviii. 34), it was at sunset that the king died. It seems natural, therefore, to connect this shout with his death. But the approach of night would of itself put an end to the battle. It does not appear that Israel had been utterly defeated, or had suffered great loss. But “they had no master”], saying, Every man to his city, and every man to his own country [or *land*].

Ver. 37.—So the king died [The LXX. makes this to be a part of the proclamation, *ἔκαστος εἰς τὴν . . . γῆν ὅτι τέθνηκεν ὁ βασιλεύς*, which involves a very slight change in the Hebrew text, **כִּי מָת הַמֶּלֶךְ** instead of **וַיָּמָת הַמֶּלֶךְ** and gives a better sense. It has already been stated that the king died. Such repetitions however are common in Hebrew, and this reading has

almost the look of an emendation] and was brought [Heb. *came*. The A. V. is against the grammar. As "came" would be a strange word to use of a dead man, it is highly probable that instead of נָסַח we should read נָסַח with the LXX. *καὶ ἔθαρον*] to Samaria; and they buried the king in Samaria ["with his father," ch. xvi. 28].

Ver. 38.—And one washed the chariot in [or at; Heb. *בַּיַּם*] the pool of Samaria. [Nearly all Eastern cities had their tanks or pools, often outside the city gate. Jerusalem has several of these, and we read of one at Hebron (2 Sam. xiv. 12) and Gibeon (ib. ii. 13). Cf. Cant. vii. 4. The Hebrew word *בַּיַּם* is preserved in the modern Arabic *Birkeh*]; and the dogs [The LXX. has *the swine and the dogs*. The mention of swine is hardly likely to have been omitted, had it formed part of the original text] loked up his blood [cf. ch. xxi. 19, note. According to Joseplus, the chariot was washed "in the fountain of Jezreel." The alteration would appear to have been made to avoid the difficulty occasioned by the discrepancy between the statement of the text, and that of ch. xxi. 19], and they washed his armour [So the Chaldaic and the Syriac. But this translation is now abandoned, (1) because it is contrary to the usage of the language to make *אֶרֶב* the object; and (2) because that word occurs in the Old Testament only in the sense of *harlots* (Bähr). The true meaning is that given by the LXX., *καὶ αἱ πόρνοι ἐλούσαντο*. *אֶרֶב* does not require any object such as "chariot," or "corpse," for it is found in the sense of bathe (intrans.) in Exod. ii. 5; Num. xix. 19; Ruth iii. 21; 2 Kings v. 10. Bähr reminds us that harlots are elsewhere associated with dogs (Deut. xxiii. 19; Rev. xxii. 15). This fact is mentioned as a proof of the just judgment of God. Even if these harlots were not prostitutes devoted to the service of the Phœnician deities, whose cultus Ahab had sought to establish in Israel, still the result of his religious policy had been the spread of prostitution. It is a fine example of the *lex talionis*. "He which is filthy, let him be filthy still"]; according unto the word of the Lord which he spake [the reference is to ch. xxi. 19].

Ver. 39.—Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, and the ivory house which he made [So called because it was adorned with ivory. See on ch. xi.; and cf. Amos iii. 15; Psa. xlv. 8; Cant. vii. 5. Rawlinson cites several passages from Greek and Latin authors to prove that

ivory was anciently applied, not only to furniture, but to the doors and walls of houses], and all the cities that he built [Probably Jezreel was one, but we have no information concerning them. The fact that he did build cities, however, is one proof of Ahab's enterprize. He was not weak in all particulars], are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

Ver. 40.—So Ahab slept with his fathers; and Ahaziah ["Whom Jehovah upholds." The name suggests that, notwithstanding his idolatries, Ahab cannot have completely abandoned the worship of the Lord] his son reigned in his stead.

### Reign of Jehoshaphat.

Ver. 41.—And Jehoshaphat ["Whom Jehovah judges"] the son of Asa began to reign over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel. [The historian now resumes for a moment the history of Judah, which has dropped out of notice since ch. xv. 24, where the accession of Jehoshaphat was mentioned. His reign, which is here described in the briefest possible way, occupies four chapters (xvii.—xx.) of 2 Chron.]

Ver. 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.

Ver. 43.—And he walked in all the ways of Asa his father [Apart from his alliance with the house of Ahab, and the troubles in which it involved him, his reign was alike pious and prosperous. Like Asa's, it was distinguished by internal reforms, and by signal deliverances from foreign enemies]; he turned not aside from it [as Asa was tempted to do in his old age], doing [Heb. *to do*] that which was right in the eyes of the Lord: nevertheless the high places were not taken away [Heb. *departed not*, as in ch. xv. 14; 2 Chron. xv. 17; 2 Kings xii. 4, Heb.; xiv. 4, Heb. But see 2 Chron. xviii. 6. The discrepancy is the exact parallel of that between 1 Kings xv. 14 and 2 Chron. xiv. 3; or between this latter passage and 2 Chron. xv. 17. And the explanation is the same, viz., that an effort was made to remove the high places, which was partially, and only partially, successful]; for the people offered and burnt incense yet in the high places [cf. ch. iii. 2].

Ver. 44.—And Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel. [One great feature of his reign was this: that the hostility which had lasted, even if it sometimes slumbered, between the two kingdoms for

seventy years, from the date of their separation to the time of Asa's death, gave way to peace and even alliance. Judah now recognized the division of the kingdom as an accomplished fact, and no longer treated Israel, even theoretically, as in rebellion. It is probable that the marriage of Jehoram and Athaliah was at once the fruit of, and was intended to cement, this good understanding (2 Chron. xviii. 1). It is hardly likely (Bähr) that the peace was the result of the union of the two families. From the analogy of *ib.* xix. 2; xx. 37; cf. 1 Kings xvi. 31; 2 Kings iii. 14, we should conclude that the marriage at any rate was ill-advised and displeasing to God. Bähr sees in it a step on the part of Jehoshaphat towards realizing the union of the two kingdoms under the supremacy of Judah. He thinks that we cannot otherwise account for this complete change of front.]

Ver. 45.—Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, and his might [as in ch. xv. 23, xvi. 27, &c. It is noticeable that this word is not used of Ahab, notwithstanding his wars and victories] that he showed [see 2 Kings iii. 9 sqq.; 2 Chron. xvii. 12 sqq. His judicial reforms are hardly referred to here], and how he warred [*ib.* chs. xviii., xix.], are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

Ver. 46.—And the remnant of the Sodomites, which remained in the days of his father Asa [It appears hence that Asa's removal of the religious prostitutes (ch. xv. 12), like that of the high places, had been but partial], he took [Heb. *exterminated*] out of the land.

Ver. 47.—There was then no king in Edom: a deputy [נָפֵץ], same word as in ch. iv. 7. It is implied that this officer was appointed by the king of Judah [Wordsworth] was king. [This fact is mentioned to show how it was that Jehoshaphat was able to build a fleet at Ezion-Geber, in the territory of Edom (ch. ix. 26). That country would seem to have regained its independence very soon after Solomon's death (ch. xi. 14), but would also appear from the text, and from 2 Kings viii. 20, 22, to have been again made subject to Judah, probably by Jehoshaphat himself; see 2 Chron. xvii. 10, 11.]

Ver. 48.—Jehoshaphat made [The Chethib has עָשָׂה *ten*, obviously a clerical error for עָשָׂה *made*] ships of Tharshish [see note on ch. x. 22] to go to Ophir [In 2 Chron. xx. 36, *Tharshish* is read for Ophir. Wordsworth holds that two separate fleets are intended, but this is most improbable] for gold [Evidently the great prosperity of his reign had suggested to him the idea of emulating Solomon's naval exploits, and or

reviving the commerce of his people with the East]: but they went not [Heb. *it went not*]: for the ships were broken [Probably they were dashed by a storm against the rocks which "lie in jagged ranges on each side," Stanley] at Ezion-Geber.

Ver. 49.—Then said Ahaziah the son of Ahab unto Jehoshaphat; Let my servants go with thy servants in the ships. But Jehoshaphat would not. [But we are told in 2 Chron. xx. 37 that the ships were broken, according to a prophecy of Eliezer, the son of Dodavah, because Jehoshaphat had joined himself with Ahaziah. The explanation is that the fleet had been built by the two kings conjointly, and manned by the subjects of Jehoshaphat exclusively; and that, after the disaster, Ahaziah proposed either to repair the injured vessels, or to construct a second fleet, which should then be partly manned by sailors of the northern kingdom, "men probably accustomed to the sea, perhaps trained at Tyre" (Rawlinson). This proposal was declined by the king of Judah, not so much on account of the "reflection on his subjects' skill contained in it," as because of the prophecy of Eliezer, and the evidently judicial disaster which had befallen the fleet already built.]

Ver. 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 [2 Chron. xxi.]

#### Reign of Ahaziah.

Ver. 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. [Parts of two years; 2 Kings iii. 1; and cf. i. 17 and viii. 16. It is suggested that Jehoram was associated with his father in the government of Judah from the date of the expedition against Ramoth-Gilead, and this is not improbable. But it has been already remarked that these chronological notices appear to have undergone a revision which has sometimes resulted in confusion.]

Ver. 52.—And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father [ch. xvi. 30—33; cf. 2 Kings iii. 2] and in the way of his mother [The powerful influence of Jezebel, even after Ahab's death, is hinted at here. It was to her that *idolatry* owed its position in Israel], and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat [the calf-worship and idolatry existed side by side], who made Israel to sin.

Ver. 53.—For he served Baal, and wor

shipped him, and provoked to anger [or vexed] the Lord God of Israel, according to all that his father had done. [The termination of this book at this point could hardly be more arbitrary if it had been

made by accident. These verses are closely connected with 2 Kings ch. i. The division here obscures the connexion between the sin of Ahaziah and the judgments which it provoked.]

### HOMILETICS.

**Vers. 1—40.**—*The Death of Ahab and the Defeat of Israel.* This chapter is almost entirely occupied with an account of the death of Ahab, and of the circumstances which preceded and attended it. The earlier portion of the chapter, which contains the prophesyings of the false prophets and the vision of Micaiah, is only recorded because of its bearing on the death of the king, and the dispersion of his army.

And the prominence accorded to Ahab's end only corresponds with the space assigned to his reign. That reign was so full of evil for Israel that it occupies a fourth part of this entire book. It was meet, therefore, that the death which avenged it should be recorded with proportionate detail. For the battle of Ramoth-Gilead was the final payment—so far as this world is concerned—for the sins of two and twenty years.

But it is to be observed in the first place that Ahab's repentance (ch. xxi. 29), as the penitence begotten of fear often is, was but shortlived. Had it lasted, we had not read of this tragical death. How soon the king shook off his impressions we know not, but we do know that—thanks to the natural weakness of his character, still further enfeebled by years of self-indulgence and submission to a stronger will than his own; thanks to the evil genius (ch. xxi. 25) ever at his side to stifle good resolves and to steel his heart against the true religion; thanks to the impious system to which he found himself committed, and the toils of which he found it impossible to break, this unhappy king steadily lapsed into his old sins. It happened unto him according to the true proverb, "The dog is turned to his vomit again" (2 Peter ii. 22).

And it is also to be considered here that Israel had gone hand in hand with him in his downward course. Had the king's career been one of steadily increasing demoralization? so had that of the people. The death of Naboth affords sufficient proof of this. The ready compliance of the elders, the alacrity with which they perpetrated that judicial murder, shows to what a moral depth the example of the court and the idolatry around them had plunged the holy nation. No; king and queen had not sinned alone, and justice required they should not suffer alone. Nations and their rulers, as we have already seen, receive a reckoning in this life; how much more the covenant people and the Lord's anointed? Placed as they were under a direct law of temporal punishments and rewards, it would have been strange, indeed, if such a reign as this had gone unrecompensed. But so far from that, they have already received part reckoning for their sin. The three years drought, the famine, the terrible Syrian invasions, have avenged a part of their idolatries and immoralities; but there still remains a long score of guilt to be expiated in shame and suffering and blood.

And here it may be well to remind ourselves what were the sins which awaited a settlement under the walls of Ramoth-Gilead. They were five in number. (1) The calf-worship—the hereditary sin of the northern kingdom, the sin of Jeroboam; (2) the worship of Baal with the prostitution which accompanied it—the sin primarily of Jezebel and her Phœnician following, but shared in by almost the entire nation; (3) the determined persecution of the prophets and the virtual proscription of the ancient faith; (4) the release of the Syrian king in disregard of God's will—the sin of Ahab and his captains; and (5) the murder of Naboth in defiance of all law—the sin of the rulers and elders. It may be thought that the two last were peculiarly Ahab's or Jezebel's sins, and that the people had no part in them; but this is a mistaken view. No doubt he and his infamous consort had by far the

largest share in all the four, and therefore they received, as we shall see presently, by far the severer punishment. But just as the people worshipped at the shrines which the king supported, just as they practised the abominations which he had introduced, so had they approved his policy towards Ben-hadad—see the words of ch. xix. 42, “thy people for his people”—and the guilt of innocent blood, as we know (Num. xxxv. 33; Deut. xxi. 7; 2 Sam. xxi.) rested on the community until it had been cleansed in blood. It is clear, then, that at the time when this chapter opens, king and people, though in very different degrees, were chargeable with the sins of schism, of idolatry, of unfaithfulness to God, of murder. It is now for us to observe how these things were expiated.

Now there are two principles which underlie all God’s retributive dealings with his ancient people. First, that sin is left, or made to bring its own penalties. *Per quod quis peccat, per idem quoque plectitur idem*. Secondly, that the penalty is ever correspondent with the sin. This latter is what we commonly call the *lex talionis*. We have had instances of the working of both of these laws, but especially of the latter, in the earlier portions of this history. We shall find the same laws in operation here.

For consider—I. By what means Ahab was led to death and Israel to defeat. II. By what instruments these punishments were inflicted. III. In what way they were signalized as the chastisements of sin.

I. In considering the INFLUENCES which moved Ahab to war, and which led to his destruction, we must assign the first place to—

1. *The perfidy of Ben-hadad*. No doubt it rankled in Ahab’s breast that, after he had dealt so magnanimously with a prostrate foe, after he had treated an insolent invader with unexampled generosity, and after a solemn covenant had been made betwixt them, it rankled in his soul that a Syrian garrison, in spite of all embassies and remonstrances, should hold the Jewish fortress of Ramoth-Gilead and thus offer a standing menace to Israel and Judah alike. But did it never occur to him that the conduct of Ben-hadad was but the counterpart of his own? He too had forgotten his benefactor and deliverer, to whom he was bound by solemn covenant; he still maintained a garrison of idolatrous priests in the heart of Immanuel’s land. Ben-hadad’s breach of faith was no greater than his own. Probably, he never thought of this when he debated whether he should go up against Ramoth-Gilead. He would remember, however, that he had only himself to blame for this act of perfidy, and he would devoutly wish he had dealt with the oppressor as he had deserved; he would perhaps think that it only served him right for his weakness and sin. We see, however, that he is paid back in his own coin, that the measure he has meted to God is measured to him again. The sin of three years before gave the first impulse to war and death.

2. *The lies of the false prophets*. It is hardly likely that Ahab would have engaged in this war but for the unanimous verdict of the four hundred prophets in its favour. We see in Micaiah’s vision that a “lying spirit” was the principal means employed to procure his fall (ver. 22). But what were these prophets, and how came they to prophesy thus? One thing is certain, that they were *not* prophets of Jehovah, and another thing is also clear, that whether they were prophets of Baal, or, as is most probable, prophets of the calves, the false system which Ahab had supported became through them a means of his destruction. The schism or the idolatry, as the case may be, is bearing its bitter fruit. He has sown to lies, he reaps to delusions. It is a conspicuous instance of the just judgment of heaven that Ahab is lured to his death by the impostors he had cherished and patronized. “He that hates truth shall be the dupe of lies.” The sin of the calves too brings its own retribution.

But how was it, it is worth asking, that these four hundred sycophants came to counsel him thus? Was it not that they took their cue from him, and prophesied what they knew would please? They saw that the king had already made up his mind—for his resolution was taken before they were summoned (vers. 4, 5), and they thought it wisest to swim with the stream. It may be they were guided by other and inscrutable impulses (ver. 23), and were constrained, they knew not how, to prophesy as they did; it may be they honestly mistook the *vox populi*

for the *vox Dei*, but probably the working of their minds was this: "The king wishes it. Jehoshaphat assents to it. The people are set upon it. We should be going against common sense and our own interests to resist it."

And so the king was a second time paid in his own coin. Those martial prophecies had been minted in his own brain. He wished for lies and he had them. His own passions and pride were reflected, were echoed, in the voices of his four hundred soothsayers. It is the case of which both sacred and profane history supply so many examples, *Homo vult decipi et decipiatur*. It is thus God deals with deceivers still. He leaves them to be deceived, to be the prey of their own disordered fancies. It is notorious how men find in the Bible what they *wish* to find there; how all unsuspectingly they read their own meanings into the words of Scripture: how they interpret its injunctions by the rule of their own inclinations. "He feeleth on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned him aside that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" (Isa. xlv. 20). "Ephraim is joined unto idols: let him alone" (Hosea iv. 17).

3. *The silence of the Lord's prophets.* Why was it, we cannot help asking here, why was it that there were no true prophets present, at this crisis in the history of Israel, to step forth and warn the king against this undertaking? Why were the four hundred deceivers left to have their own way? We see here the fruit of persecution, the recompense of those fierce dragonades which Jezebel had maintained against the prophetic order. Of the men who might have interposed to prevent this disastrous expedition, some were dead, others were banished; king and queen had wickedly silenced them. They now reap the fruit of those repressive measures. Their curses come home to roost. Elijah might have saved king and country, but he is hiding from the wrath of Jezebel, or is withdrawn by God from the arena of history. Micaiah the son of Imlah foresaw the end, but Ahab had imprisoned him, and could not brook to take his advice, and had persuaded himself that his admonitions were the outcome of personal enmity. It is true *this* prophet was not silent, but plainly foretold defeat and death; but Ahab was in a manner bound not to regard his warnings. He had told Jehoshaphat it would be so. It would look like cowardice to be influenced by *his* vaticinations. And so he is left to the prophets of his choice: no hand is raised to stop him: he goes straight into the jaws of death, the victim of his own folly and cruelty and sin.

II. The INSTRUMENTS of retribution were—

1. *The king whom Ahab had wickedly spared.* We have already seen in what the sin of sparing the tyrant Ben-hadad consisted (p. 492). It is now for us to observe that this foolish and impious deed brought its own peculiar Nemesis. It was Ben-hadad himself who said, "Fight neither with small nor great, but with the king of Israel only." Ahab's ill-advised clemency procures his own destruction. With base natures, it only needs that we should put them under obligations which they cannot possibly discharge, in order to provoke their bitter enmity. But it is much more material to observe here that in Ben-hadad's conduct we may see a parable of the cruel revenge which a cherished sin will often take on those who have once conquered and then trifled with it. The devil that was cast out returns bringing with him seven other devils more wicked than himself (Matt. xii. 45). We are constantly as tender to the sins which tyrannized over us as was Ahab to Ben-hadad. Instead of slaying them—hewing them in pieces before the Lord—we leave the roots of bitterness in the heart's soil, and they spring up and trouble us. It is like that peasant of whom we have all read, who found a viper in the field, benumbed with the winter's cold, and put the venomous beast into his bosom to warm it back into life. The first use it made of its restored power was to wound and destroy its benefactor. How dearly have we often paid for our pleasant vices!

2. *The Syrians who were once subjects of Israel.* It is well to remember here that these enemies who gave Ahab his death-wound at Ramoth were once under the heel of Israel (2 Sam. viii. 6). Now we see their relations reversed. Syria has now become the standing oppressor of the chosen people. We have already pointed out some of the steps which led to this result. The sin of Solomon (see p. 223) and the unfaithfulness of Asa alike were factors in the change. But the most influential

reason was the godlessness of Ahab. But three years ago Syria lay at his mercy; its power was completely broken. But Ahab, so far from learning that the Lord was God (ch. xx. 13, 28), had ignored the Lord, and acted as if his own might had gotten him the victory. How fitting that these same Syrians should be the instruments to scourge him.

3. *An unknown, unconscious archer.* The arrow that pierced Ahab's corselet was shot "in simplicity," without deliberate aim, with no thought of striking the king. It was an unseen Hand that guided that chance shaft to its destination. It was truly "the arrow of the Lord's vengeance." (Cf. 2 Kings xii. 17.) It would be deeply instructive could we know the thoughts of that unhappy king, as with the arrow in his side, and the blood draining from his wound, and forming a sickening pool in the well of the chariot, he was stayed up those wretched weary hours until the sunset against the Syrians. Surely he knew at last that "the Lord was God" (ch. xviii. 39; xx. 13, 28). His cry would now be, "Thou hast found me, O my enemy." He would think, it may be, of Elijah's and Micaiah's prophecies; he would think of Naboth's bleeding and mangled corpse; he would think, above all, that his sin had found him out, and that Jehovah had conquered. He had fought all his life for Baal, but it was in vain; he had been kicking against the pricks; he had been wrestling not with flesh and blood, but with an Invisible, Irresistible, Omnipotent God, and now he is thrown, cast down never to rise again.

III. It now only remains for us to consider the CIRCUMSTANCES of Ahab's death. These were of so portentous and exceptional a character as to mark it—

1. *As a direct visitation of God.* The army, that day defeated, the contingent of Judah, the citizens of Samaria, the subjects of both kingdoms, could not think that a mere chance had happened to Ahab when they remembered (1) That this death had been distinctly foretold. Not once or twice, but three times had a prophetic voice foreshadowed for him a sudden and shameful end (ch. xx. 42; xxi. 19; xxii. 17, 28). Moreover, Micaiah, the last of these monitors, had staked his reputation as God's prophet on the fulfilment of his prediction of disaster. And his oracle had not been spoken in secret; he had appealed to the entire assembly gathered round the two kings—and the flower of Israel and Judah alike were there—and even to neighbouring nations (ver. 23, Heb.), to be witnesses of his words, and those words were fresh in their memories. (2) How the king met his death. For it was of course known to the army that Ahab had disguised himself, whilst Jehoshaphat had put on his robes. After the sinister prophecy of Micaiah, we may be sure that the allied armies would watch, with the gravest anxiety, for the issue. They would perceive that the king himself was not without his fears; they would wonder whether his disguise would procure his escape. And when at the end of the day they learnt that Jehoshaphat who had been arrayed like a king, and who on that account had been exposed to imminent peril, had escaped unhurt, whilst their king, who had never been recognized, had been pierced by a chance arrow between the joints of his harness and mortally wounded, was there one but would see the finger of God in this death? Surely if the Psalmist's words were then written, they would occur to their minds, "Whither shall I go from thy spirit, and whither shall I flee from thy presence?" &c. (Psa. cxxxix. 9—12), or that other Psalm, "God shall shoot at them with a swift arrow; suddenly shall they be wounded" (Psa. lxiv. 7), and the result would be that all men would fear and declare the work of God (*ib.* ver. 9), and confess that this was His doing. The fugitives who stole away in the dark and black night to their homes, like sheep without a shepherd, would have learnt one lesson at least that day, viz., that there was "a God that judgeth in the earth."

2. *As God's appropriate recompense for the sins of that age.* We have already seen how this history puts its stamp of reprobation on (1) the calf-worship, inasmuch as by the prophets of the calves the king was beguiled into this enterprize. But the sin of Jeroboam was not the special sin of Ahab's reign. On the contrary, the calf-worship was rather overshadowed and eclipsed by the frightful idolatries, which had so much greater fascination for the evil heart of unbelief. It was the characteristic of that reign that the unclean rites of Baal and Astarte, the abominations of the Amorites, were re-established in the land. We see in Ahab's death (2) the requital

of his share in that sin (ch. xvi. 31, 32). The idolatry which had desolated the church was avenged by a horde of idolaters ravaging the land and slaying the arch-idolater in battle. There is a rough *lex talionis* here. (Cf. Jer. v. 19.) If they *would* have idolatry they should taste the tender mercies of idolaters. On that field were the predictions of Moses (Deut. xxviii. 25), Samuel (1 Sam. xii. 25), and Solomon (1 Kings viii. 33) fulfilled.

(3) But a recompense still more exact and conspicuous attended the impurities which Ahab had practised under the name of religion. He had filled the land with prostitutes. What a proof of the just judgment of God it was that these infamous persons added dishonour to his death! He had maintained them through life: he should be associated with them in his end. The harlots bathed in the pool that was reddened with his blood (vers. 38, Heb.)

(4) Nor was the connexion of Ahab's death with the sin of releasing Ben-hadad any less conspicuous. What meant that strange malignant command, "Fight . . . only with the king of Israel?" Was it not that the Syrian king, on whom Ahab would not execute vengeance, had become, in the counsels of God, an instrument of vengeance, a minister to execute wrath, against the anointed of the Lord? "Thy life shall go for his life"—it was thus that every religious mind would interpret so singular and, considering the circumstances (chap. xx.), so otherwise inexplicable a word of command. It was as if Ben-hadad had proclaimed that his mission primarily was to settle the long arrears of justice with that wicked Ahab.

(5) How the murder of Naboth was avenged that shameful day, it is hardly necessary to point out. There was a strict retaliation—wound for wound, stripe for stripe, blood for blood, dishonour for dishonour. There were many, besides Jehu and Bidkar, who would recall the fierce threatening of the Tishbite (ch. xxi. 19); many, besides priests and prophets, would remember the axiom of their law, "blood defileth the land," &c. (Num. xxxv. 33), or would think on that day of the so-called "precept of Noah," "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" (Gen. ix. 6). The elders of Jezreel, yes, and Jezebel herself, understood that Naboth's blood had cried from the ground, and that the cry had come up into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. It was His foot that was dipped in the blood of His enemies (Psa. lxxviii. 23).

And this ignominious death—in what sharp contrast it stands with the indolent, luxurious, sensual life! "The ivory house that he made," what an irony we may see in those words! "Shalt thou reign, because thou closest thyself in cedar. . . . He shall be buried with the burial of an ass," &c. (Jer. xxii. 15, 19). The cities he built, the victories he won, how poor and empty do these exploits seem as we stand by the pool of Samaria, and see the livid, blood-stained corpse dragged from the chariot! The Latin poet asks what all his pleasures, travels, knowledge, can avail a man who has to *die* after all; but the question presents itself with tenfold force when life's fitful fever is followed by such a sleep, by such a dream, as Ahab's. "It had been good for that man if he had not been born" (Matt. xxvi. 24).

And the death of Ahab was followed by the dispersion of his army. When the proclamation rang through the host, "Every man to his country," and when the serried ranks precipitately broke up, and horseman and footman fled for his life, then the share of Israel in the sins of Ahab and Jezebel was in part expiated. There was not a man but knew why "the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies." "There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel" (Josh. vii. 12, 13). Baal had troubled them, had made of the heights of Ramoth a very valley of Achor.

#### HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—8.—*Bad Company*. According to the order of the chapters in the LXX., which is probably the original or true order, chapter xx. should immediately precede this. Then, after the history of the war between Ahab and Ben-hadad, this chapter opens naturally: "And they continued three years without war between Syria and

Israel." In the third year of this peace Jehoshaphat visited Ahab; and from this visit arose serious events, which are admonitory to us that we should avoid the company of the wicked.

**I. BAD COMPANY COMPROMISES CHARACTER.** 1. *It injures morals.* (1) The earlier career of Jehoshaphat was faultless. He is highly commended for his faithfulness to God and zeal against idolatry (2 Chron. xvii. 1—6). (2) His first fault was sanctioning the marriage of his son Jehoram with Athaliah the daughter of Ahab (2 Kings viii. 18, 26). (3) This led the way to the further fault of that friendly visit to Ahab mentioned here, for which he was rebuked by "Jehu the son of Hanani the seer" (2 Chron. xix. 2). (4) Yet once again we find him falling into a similar snare. He agreed with Ahaziah the son of Ahab, a wicked scion of a wicked house, jointly to equip a fleet at the port of Ezion-Geber, on the Red Sea, to sail to Ophir for gold. In this also he incurred the anger of the Lord and suffered the loss of his fleet. (ver. 48; 2 Chron. xx. 35—37). Note: A fault is like a seed, fruitful "after its kind." A fault once committed prepares the way for a repetition. 2. *It damages reputation.* (1) Reputation is character as estimated by men. This estimate may or may not be just; for men may judge wrongly through ignorance of circumstances which would put a new complexion upon conduct. Therefore judgments should be charitable, and not too hastily formed. (2) But it is a maxim among men, generally true, that "you may know a man by his friends." Friendships involve sympathies. It had been better for Jehoshaphat's reputation had he never made affinity with the wicked house of Ahab. (3) This principle will apply to books. Hence the kindred maxim, "You may see a man in his library." It is bad enough when the newspaper shuts up the Bible; it is worse when the Bible is neglected through preference for sensational fictitious literature. 3. *It impairs influence.* (1) This follows. Character is influence. Reputation is influence. Advice will be readily received from a genuine man, which coming from an artificial character would be spurned. (2) What a power for good or evil is moral influence! See the evil exemplified in Israel under Ahab and Jezebel. See the good in Judah under Jehoshaphat. Lessons: Let your character be true. Jealously guard your reputation. Look to these for the sake of your influence.

**II. BAD COMPANY COMPROMISES HAPPINESS.** Because—1. *Happiness is involved in character.* (1) This truth is abundantly illustrated in sacred history. Examples are furnished in the text. Secular history teaches this truth. Everyday experience evinces it. (2) Yet is it difficult so to convince individuals of this as to lead them to abandon sin and throw their energies wholly into the blessed service of God. Happiness is proportionate to the completeness of consecration. This consecration cannot be reconciled with the friendship of the world (James iv. 4). 2. *Goodness is grieved in it.* (1) Jehoshaphat was not long in the company of Ahab before his ear was offended by horrible words. "I hate him." Whom did Ahab hate? Micaiah, the faithful prophet of the Lord. Does not this look like a declaration of hatred against the Lord? (See Prov. xiv. 31; xvii. 5; Zech. ii. 8.) (2) Why does Ahab hate Micaiah? "For he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil." Because he does not falsify the truth of God to flatter me. Because he does not play the devil to please me, as these four hundred do! Note: Hatred to God means love to Satan. (3) Such sentiments were distressing to the feelings of Jehoshaphat. To the revulsion of his righteous soul he gave expression (but too feeble) in the remonstrance, "Let not the king say so." The conversation of such as are in sympathy with evil will offend the good in proportion to their pureness. 3. *It leads the most wary into trouble.* For the persuasions of the wicked are subtle. (1) In presence of Jehoshaphat "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?" It was a considerable city in the tribe of Gad on the other side Jordan, and one of the cities of refuge. It was one of the cities which Ben-hadad, by the letter of his covenant, was bound to restore (see ch. xx. 34). The cause of Israel was obviously just. (2) Then turning to Jehoshaphat, Ahab said, "Wilt thou go with me to battle at Ramoth-Gilead?" To which, carried away with the

obvious justice of the cause, Jehoshaphat responded, "I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses." This was too strong a compliment to Ahab and his people, and the response was too ready. We may not champion every just cause. It may be wrong to champion a good cause in wicked company. (3) *Bethinking himself, as a godly man should do*, "Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Inquire, I pray thee, at the word of the Lord." A good man seeks to take God with him, and so long as he abides in this holy company he is safe. But let him beware that he be not persuaded by the wicked to forsake it. (4) Ahab was equal to the occasion. He had four hundred prophets ready with one mouth to pronounce for the war, and that, too, in the name of the Lord. This hireling company, however, did not satisfy Jehoshaphat, yet he fell into their snare. He should have availed himself of the opportunity to withdraw given him in the prophecy of Micaiah; but, under the spell of Ahab's evil influence, he went to the battle and got into trouble. There is no safety in the company of the wicked. 4. *It provokes judgments of God.* (1) The good partake in the plagues of their wicked associates. Jehoshaphat barely escaped, through the mercy of God, with his life; and he suffered the loss of many of his people (see Rev. xviii. 4). The fly that keeps aloof is not entangled in the spider's web. (2) The good incur Divine judgments for their own sin. The sin of friendship with the enemies of God. The sin such friendship must infallibly occasion. Such was the experience of Jehoshaphat (see 2 Chron. xix. 2). Such will be yours. Avoid it.—J. A. M.

Vers. 9—14.—*The False and the True.* There would be no counterfeit coin if there were no sterling; so neither would there be false prophets if there were no true. Because there are both, their qualities have to be tested, that we may refuse the spurious and value the genuine (see Jer. xxiii. 38). To this end let us consider—

I TESTS WHICH MAY NOT BE TRUSTED. 1. *The test of profession.* (1) Ahab's prophets "prophesied." That is to say (a) They used modes usual with prophets to procure information from Heaven. These were sacrifice, prayer, music (see 1 Sam. x. 5, 6; 2 Kings iii. 15), and, when time permitted, fasting. (b) They used modes usual with prophets to communicate the information when received. "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" (cf. Jer. xxvii. 2; xxviii. 13). The "horn" was the symbol of a king (see Dan. vii. 24; Rev. xvii. 12). These were "two," to represent Ahab and Jehoshaphat, Israel and Judah. They were of "iron" to express strength (see Dan. ii. 40). The prophecy was that, aided by Jehoshaphat, Ahab should push the Syrians to destruction. (2) They prophesied "in the name of the Lord." Some think because their number corresponded to that of the prophets of Ashere (ch. xviii. 19) these were the same, having escaped when the prophets of Baal were slain at the brook Kishon (ch. xviii. 40). If so, then their profession on this occasion was designed to deceive Jehoshaphat (see Jer. xxiii. 30). (3) Anyhow there was profession enough, but it was hollow, and proved conclusively that profession must not be taken as a test of truth. 2. *The test of numbers.* (1) Here were "four hundred" who prophesied professedly in the name of the Lord. Against this number Micaiah the son of Imlah stands alone; yet the truth of God is with him against the multitude. "Truth is not always to be determined by the poll. It is not numbers, but weight, that must carry it in the council of prophets" (Bishop Hall). (2) This instance does not stand alone. The majority was in the wrong against Noah. Elijah was in the minority on Carmel, but he was right. Jesus had the whole Jewish Church against Him, though He was Truth itself. 3. *The test of unanimity.* (1) The four hundred were united against Micaiah. Sometimes there is unanimity of this kind against a common object, where otherwise there is little agreement. Herod and Pilate made friends in opposition to Jesus. (2) But these prophets were agreed among themselves. They all seem to have followed the leadership of Zedekiah. "And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, Go up to Ramoth-Gilead, and prosper: for the Lord shall deliver it into the king's hand." 4. *How does this argument bear upon the authority of the Church?* (1) It is pleaded that the

Church, which is practically understood to be the clergy in council, has authority to bind the conscience in matters of faith. The arguments relied upon to sustain this view are generally based upon claims of profession, numbers, and agreement. (2) On the other hand, the definition of the Church is questioned, and the claims are refused as insufficient for their purpose, since by them Ahab's prophets might prove themselves true!

II. TESTS WHICH MAY BE TRUSTED. 1. *The witnesses should be honest.* (1) Ahab's prophets were interested in their testimony. They enjoyed the patronage of the king, and they said what they knew would gratify him. Their testimony, therefore, is open to suspicion. (2) Micaiah, on the contrary, had nothing to gain, but everything to lose, in taking his course. He knew the temper of the king. He was importuned by the king's messenger to concur with the king's prophets. He had already suffered for his faithfulness, for he seems to have been brought from the custody of Amon, in whose prison he had probably lain for three years. By flattering Ahab he might now obtain release, but by taking an opposite course he could only expect to go back to jail. Probabilities also were against him, for in the last two battles, Ahab, without the aid of Jehoshaphat, worsted the Syrians. Should the king of Israel now "return in peace" what may Micaiah expect? (3) Nothing but the conscientiousness that he was uttering the truth of God could account for the son of Imlah deliberately encountering all this. And only upon this ground could he hope for any favour from God. Suspicion, therefore, as to the honesty of Micaiah is out of the question. (4) But can it be pleaded that the honesty of the ecclesiastics who framed the decrees of councils is beyond suspicion? In decreeing the infallibility of the bishop of Rome, *e.g.*, were they disinterested, when they knew how pleasing to him would be the reputation of such an attribute, and when they knew what patronage and power to injure were vested in his hands? 2. *They should have miraculous authentication.* (1) It is easy to say, "Thus saith the Lord," but not so easy to evince it. The four hundred could say it, but they could show no miracle to prove that they spoke from God. (2) It was otherwise with Micaiah. For, with the Jews, we presume he was that prophet who "prophesied evil concerning Ahab," and authenticated his message by the sign of the lion destroying his fellow for disobedience (cf. ver. 8 with ch. xx. 35-43). (3) Clergy in council may claim Divine authority for their decrees, but unless they can verify their claim by adequate signs they presume when they impose. 3. *Their testimony should be agreeable to the word of God.* (1) "Micaiah said, As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak." The one question for us in these days is this: Is the testimony agreeable to the Bible? This we know by infallible proofs to be the word of God. "But," it is objected, "the Bible needs authoritative interpretation, and who is to interpret but the Church?" To which we may answer, And the Church still more needs authoritative interpretation, and who is to interpret but the Bible? The authority of the Bible is admitted; that of the Church is in question. (2) The right of private judgment must be maintained. For the exercise of this right we shall every one of us give account of himself unto God. That ill-defined thing, the Church, cannot release us from this obligation. We cannot put our judgment and conscience into commission.—J. A. M.

Vers. 15-28.—*Micaiah's Prophecy.* It is evident from the text and from ver. 9 that this was not the first time Ahab and Micaiah had met. The Jews suppose, apparently with reason, that Micaiah was that prophet who, when Ahab sent Ben-hadad away with a covenant, said to the king of Israel, "Thus saith the Lord: Because thou hast let go out of thine hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people" (see ch. xx. 35-43). In considering the prophecy of Micaiah now before us, we notice—

I. THAT IT IS PREFACED WITH A SALLY OF IRONY. 1. *He answers the king in the words of his prophets.* (1) Cf. vers. 6, 12, 15. (2) These words are equivocal. "The Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king." What king? "The king" may mean either Ahab or Ben-hadad. What? This is not clear; for the word

“it” is supplied. Is it Ramoth-Gilead or something else that is to be delivered into the hand of the king (of Israel)? or is it the king of Israel or something else to be delivered into the hand of the king (of Syria)? What kind of prophecy is this? (3) The utterance of these prophets resembles those of the heathen oracles, the following appropriate samples of which are given by A. Clarke: “The Delphic oracle spoke thus of Cræsus, which he understood to his own destruction: ‘*Cræsus, Halym penetrans, magnam subvertet opum vim;*’ which is to say, ‘If you march against Cyrus, he will overthrow you,’ or ‘you will overthrow him.’ He trusted in the latter, the former took place. He was deluded, yet the oracle maintained its credit. So in the following: ‘*Aio te, Æacida, Romanos vincere posse. Ibis redibis nunquam in bello peribis.*’ Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, understood by this that he should conquer the Romans, against whom he was making war; but the oracle could be thus translated: ‘The Romans shall overcome thee.’ He trusted in the former, made unsuccessful war, and was overcome; and yet the juggling priest saved his credit. The latter line is capable of two opposite meanings: ‘Thou shalt go, thou shalt return, thou shalt never perish in war,’ or, ‘Thou shalt go, thou shalt never return, thou shalt perish in war.’” 2. *But he repeats those words with significant expression.* (1) The bare repetition, with proper emphasis, of the equivocal words of the false prophets would be a fine stroke of irony. But when to emphasis were added tone, gesture, play of feature, the irony would become very keen. (2) This sarcasm of Micaiah is worthy to compare with that of Elijah (see ch. xviii. 27). “Go and prosper.” This assurance of thy prophets is vague enough to encourage the confidence of a simpleton! 3. *God uses terrible rhetoric in His wrath.* (1) Irony and sarcasm are fitting weapons to be wielded against those who have neither conscience nor reason (see Prov. xxvi. 3—5). Ahab was a man of this class. Witness the logic of his hatred (ver. 8). He felt the sting (ver. 16). (2) These weapons are formidable in the hands of the Almighty (see Psa. ii. 4, 5; xxxvii. 13; Prov. i. 24—32; Eccles. xi. 9; Mal. ii. 17 and iii. 1; Rom. ii. 1—9).

II. THAT IT COMPARES FAVOURABLY WITH THAT OF HIS COMPETITORS. 1. *Its burden is the reverse of equivocal.* (1) There is in sacred prophecy a double sense, but the sound is certain. It is not a dubiousness but a manifoldness of meaning, a development, an evolution, such as we find in a seed that opens first into the blade, then into the ear, and eventually into the full corn in the ear. (2) This prophecy of Micaiah gave a distinct answer to the question of Ahab (ver. 13). The advice was to forbear. These “sheep.” The sheep is not a creature fitted for battle. They have “no shepherd.” Their king, deserted by the Spirit of God, has not the qualities of a shepherd. Therefore “Let them return every man to his house in peace.” (3) But the advice contains a prophecy. It is to this effect: their king who ought to be their shepherd, shall fall at Ramoth-Gilead, and his people shall be like sheep, “scattered upon the mountains” by the power of the enemy (compare Zech. xiii. 7). 2. *The vision shows that all worlds are under Divine control.* (1) “I saw the Lord sitting on his throne.” Here was a comparison with the scene before him, described ver. 10. Ahab and Jehoshaphat are enthroned as kings on the earth; but there is a King in the heavens immeasurably above them. (2) “And all the host of heaven standing by him on the right hand and on the left.” The host of heaven stood while Jehovah sat. They awaited His commands. Those on His “right hand” probably to render services of *benevolence*; those on His “left,” services of *judgment*. (3) Then comes in another kind of agency (vers. 20—23). This scene is analogous to that described in the Book of Job (see Job i. 6; ii. 7). Things in heaven, things in earth, things under the earth, all serve the purposes of Divine Providence (see Job xii. 16; 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12; Rev. xx. 7, 8). (4) The waywardness of Ahab showed how fully he was under the control of the spirit of falsehood. This is seen in his senseless resentment against Micaiah. Turning to Jehoshaphat, he said, “Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil?” as if Micaiah’s own utterances could control the providence of God. Then turning to his officers he had Micaiah marched back to the prison where Ahab knew he could find him (cf. ver. 8 with vers. 26, 27). Let us give due heed to the more sure word of prophecy.—J. A. M.

Vers. 24-29.—*The Argument of Wickedness.* The Bible is a book of texts because it is a book of types. It does not profess to give full histories, but refers to public records for these (see Josh. x. 13; 2 Sam. i. 18; 1 Kings xi. 41; 1 Chron. ix. 1). Inspiration selects from histories typical or representative incidents to bring out the principles of the grace and truth of God. In the scene before us we have types of wickedness in Zedekiah and Ahab, the one ecclesiastical, the other civil, which may be profitably studied in the arguments they use contending with Micaiah, the representative of the truth of God. These arguments are—

I. RAGE AGAINST THE TRUTH. The reason is obvious, viz., because the truth is the worst that can be said of the wicked. 1. *It is the worst that can be said of their character.* (1) It shows up their selfishness. The one object of Ahab was that "good" might be prophesied for him. To gain this he sold himself to his four hundred liars. These liars, to gain the patronage of Ahab, sold their consciences. Because Ahab could not gain flattery from Micaiah, he hated him. (2) It shows up their folly. For what was the selfishness of Ahab but self-deception? The patronage of liars could not convert falsehood into truth, neither could the persecution of a true man convert truth into falsehood. Zedekiah, in deceiving Ahab, deceived his own soul. All sin is folly. (3) It evinces their degradation, for it proves them to be the dupes and serfs of infernal spirits. Can degradation go lower? 2. *It is the worst that can be said of their doom.* (1) The wicked are to be destroyed in time. Ahab in particular was to fall at Ramoth-Gilead. From that battle he was "not to return in peace." Zedekiah was to "go into an inner chamber to hide himself," as Ben-hadad had done (ch. xx. 30), and there to meet his fate. While to the righteous death is an entrance to glory, it is the "king of terrors" to the wicked (see 1 Cor. xv. 55-57). The sting is here: (2) The wicked are to be destroyed in eternity. The alarm with which the ancients received predictions of maltreatment to their corpses arose from their apprehension that it presaged a posthumous retribution upon the soul. The dogs licking the blood of Ahab would suggest that devils would not only be the instigators but also the instruments of his ruin. (3) Who can estimate the horrors of damnation? The truth will prove to be the worst that can be said of the lost. Is it wonderful, then, that the wicked should abhor the truth? 3. *They are therefore constrained to hypocrisy.* (1) For their own sakes they have to play the hypocrite. They conceal their selfishness and affect generosity, conscious that were their base soul-hunger to come honestly to the day, they would become odious. They hide their folly and affect wisdom lest they should suffer contempt. (2) For the sake of society wicked men are hypocrites. Were they to be honestly known to each other, respect and confidence would be at an end; in fact, society would be impossible. There are no friendships in hell.

II. THE RESENTMENT OF VIOLENCE. 1. *The logic of the wicked is weak.* (1) Zedekiah's speech was pertinacious: "Which way went the Spirit of the Lord from me to speak unto thee?" He assumed what Micaiah had not conceded, that he *ever had* the Spirit of the Lord. Micaiah had declared him, on the contrary, to have been influenced by a "spirit" of a very different description. Zedekiah also denied what he should have disproved, viz., that Micaiah *had* the Spirit of the Lord. (2) Ahab wanted a prophet of the God of truth to tell lies to please him. He found four hundred to tell him lies, professedly in the name of the Lord. But the one honest man who told him the truth he imprisoned, because the truth did not please him. Yet the truth was what he adjured him to tell. What reason is there in all this? (3) What sinner is there in our day who can clear himself of folly? (See Prov. xiii. 19; 1 Cor. iii. 19.) 2. *The strength of the wicked is tyranny.* (1) The reason of Zedekiah was in his fist (ver. 24). "Which way?" From the fist to the cheek? The coward used this argument with a council of four hundred ecclesiastics about him, and the civil power in reserve. So was Jesus insulted (see Matt. xxvi. 57-68). So were the Protestant confessors. False prophets have ever been the worst enemies of the true. Micaiah did not return the blow, but referred the decision to God. True prophets wield other than carnal weapons. (2) The reason of Ahab was in his bribes and prisons. Micaiah could not be cajoled as the four

hundred were, therefore "the king of Israel said, Take Micaiah, carry him back unto Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son, and say, Thus saith the king, put this fellow in prison, and feed him with bread of affliction, and with water of affliction, until I come in peace." (3) But truth is not vanquished thus. How confident was Ahab that he should "come in peace"! And this is that Ahab who three or four years before so sagaciously said to Ben-hadad, "Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off." Persistency in sin does not sharpen men's wits. Time vindicates truth. To this vindicator Micaiah called the attention of the people (ver. 29). (4) But where was Jehoshaphat? He was silent when he should have spoken for the prophet of God. See the influence of bad company. "So the king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth-Gilead." Alas, Jehoshaphat!—J. A. M.

Vers. 30—38. *Lessons of the Battle.* After disposing of Micaiah by sending him to prison with hard fare as the reward of his faithfulness, Ahab and Jehoshaphat gathered their forces and set out together to fight for the recovery of Ramoth-Gilead. The events of the day show—

I. THAT PROPHECY MAY TEND TO ITS OWN FULFILMENT. 1. *Micaiah's words influenced Ahab's conduct.* (1) Though Ahab had imprisoned the prophet he could not shake off the influence of his prophecy. So with a view to obviating its effect he proposed to disguise himself. He speaks of himself in the third person (ver. 30), thus (התחפש), "He will [strip] disguise himself"—a form of speech, perhaps, considered suitable to an action in which he was to appear as a third person. To complete the deception, if we follow the LXX., he induced Jehoshaphat to put on his (Ahab's) robes. (a) Note the subtlety of the wicked. Ahab's proposal to Jehoshaphat was ostensibly to give him the post of honour in commanding the army. This, too, may have suggested the use of the third person in speaking of himself. Ahab's real purpose was to divert from himself the fury of the battle; and probably he hoped Jehoshaphat might be slain. In that case his son-in-law would succeed to the throne of Judah, and he might be able so to manage him as to serve his own purposes. (b) In all this we see the danger of bad company. We see it likewise in the sad fact that Jehoshaphat should become a party to a contrivance to falsify the word of God! (2) But how useless are disguises when the providence of Omniscience is concerned! Ahab might hide himself from the Syrians, but he could not hide himself from God. Neither could he hide himself from angels and devils, who are instruments of Divine Providence, ever influencing men, and even natural laws, or forces of nature. Note: No disguise will avail to evade the scrutiny and retributions of the judgment-day. (3) Yet by his disguise Ahab, unwittingly, helped the prophecy. "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." Suppose Ahab had been in Jehoshaphat's place, and had fallen into the hands of the captains, what would have become of the words of Elijah? (See ch. xxi. 19.) But as things worked out these words became literally true. 2. *They also influenced the conduct of the Syrians.* (1) The Syrians would be aware of the prophecy of Micaiah dooming Ahab to fall at Ramoth-Gilead. For in a country about the size of North Wales, Samaria being distant from Ramoth-Gilead only thirty miles, the news of this public meeting of kings and contest of prophets could not be a secret. Ahab would facilitate the publication of the encouragement he had from the four hundred, to strike terror into the Syrians; but where the news of his encouragement went the words of Micaiah also would travel. (2) Probably this intelligence determined the Syrians to "fight only against the king of Israel," in which they would have the God of Israel with them, the formidableness of whose hostility they had experienced in the last two battles (compare 2 Chron. xxxv. 21, 22). To this Jehoshaphat probably was indebted for the sparing of his life, for "God moved the Syrians to depart from him" (see 2 Chron. xviii. 31). And probably they were influenced by it to agree to the proclamation to disband, when the death of Ahab became known (cf. vers. 17, 36). 3. Note a remarkable illustration of this principle in the zeal of Jehu in exterminating the house of Ahab (see

2 Kings ix. 25, 26; x. 10, 11, 16, 17). Those who are "looking for," are thereby "hastening the coming of the day of God" (see 2 Peter iii. 12).

II. THAT NEVERTHELESS THE HAND OF GOD IS IN IT. 1. *This was evident in the case of Ahab.* The purpose of Ben-hadad, should Ahab have fallen into his hands, is not recorded. Would he return Ahab's compliment of releasing him with a covenant? Would he show Ahab how he ought to have treated him? (2) But God had other means than the captains of Ben-hadad to accomplish His purpose. "A man drew a bow at a venture (marg. "in his simplicity") and smote the king of Israel between the joints and harness." A simpleton brings down a king! (See Prov. i. 32.) God guided the arrow to the opening in the joints of the armour, as He guided the pebble from the sling of David into the frontals of Goliath. No armour is proof against the shafts of Divine vengeance. (3) The hand of God also was seen in the sequel. The prophecies of Elijah and Micaiah seem to be in conflict. The one speaks of the dogs licking the blood of Ahab at "Samaria;" the other of Ahab falling at "Ramoth-Gilead." Who but God could so order events that there should be no conflict here? "The blood ran out of the wound into the midst (Heb. bosom) of the chariot;" perhaps more correctly, "into the bosom of the charioteer," on which the king leaned. "And one washed the chariot;" or rather, "And the driver washed himself in the pool of Samaria, and the dogs licked his blood" *i.e.*, the blood of Ahab which fell from the bosom of the driver. "And the things they washed." For נְיָוָה denotes the *several kinds of things*, being derived from נָ, a *kind or species*. Before the person and things defiled with blood were permitted to enter the city, they were to be washed; and the dogs licked up the blood that fell from the driver's bosom, and off the things, as they lay to be washed (see Psa. lxxviii. 23). (4) But were not the words of Elijah "In the place where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth" (*viz.*, Jezreel) "shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine"? But in the context there, the vineyard of Naboth is said to be in Samaria (see ch. xxi. 18, 19), because Jezreel, like Bethel, was one of the "cities of Samaria" (see ch. xiii. 32). In the very vineyard of Naboth did the blood of Ahab flow from the veins of his son (see 2 Kings ix. 25, 26). The providence that accomplished is no less admirable than the omniscience that predicted. 2. *This was also evident in the case of Jehoshaphat.* (1) Micaiah did not say that the king of Judah should fall at Ramoth-Gilead; but his prophecy did intimate that he would be of little use to the army. The word (מַלְכִים) in ver. 17 rendered "master" is plural, and evidently associates Jehoshaphat with Ahab. When Ahab was wounded to death and Jehoshaphat had fled for his life, the people had "no masters," so the proclamation soon followed which determined "every man to his house in peace." (2) Jehoshaphat's danger lay in his being assimilated to Ahab. He should never have said, "I am as thou art" (ver. 4), then would he not have been persuaded to don Ahab's robes. By the influence of his company Jehoshaphat was becoming morally like him, and therefore was in danger of sharing his miserable fate (see Prov. xiii. 20). (3) To avoid this danger he had to become himself again. "He cried out" [to Jehovah] (see 2 Chron. xviii. 31); and thus was discovered to the captains, who would expect to hear Ahab cry rather to Baal. The hand of God was evident in his deliverance; and this he might read as a parable assuring him that his future safety must lie in his renouncing evil companions and returning to the piety of his earlier years.—J. A. M.

Vers. 39, 40, 51—53.—*Survival.* After the account of Ahab's death and burial, and of the manner in which the dogs of Samaria fulfilled the prophecy of Elijah, the earlier verses of our text follow. In the first of these the reader is referred to the archives of the nation for an account of the "rest of the acts" and works of this monarch, *viz.*, those to which inspiration was not here specially directed. In the second, the succession of Ahaziah is mentioned. With these verses, because of the unity of the subject, we associate the three verses referring to the reign of Ahaziah, with which the chapter closes. Taking the latter first in order, we see—

I. THAT AHAB SURVIVED IN AHAZIAH. 1. *This was legally true.* (1) "So Ahab slept with his fathers; and Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead." In law, a

man is said to "live in his heirs." He is never legally dead while he has an heir. There is a good reason for this. Ahaziah would never have mounted the throne of Israel unless his father had been there before him. He reigned in the posthumous influence of Ahab. His representative. (2) When a man is what is called "the architect of his own fortune," he is said to have had "no father." But in this language the fact is ignored that, under Providence, this "architect" is indebted to his ancestry for his existence, for his faculties, and for the circumstances which he may have seized and moulded into this "fortune." 2. *It was also morally true.* (1) In Ahaziah the vices of Ahab were reproduced. "He did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father." The bad example of his father wrought its influence into his character, and thus Ahab survived in Ahaziah. (2) The record descends to particulars. "He walked in the way of his father, and in the way of his mother." Here not only is Jezebel reproduced in Ahaziah, but Ahab's sin in marrying Jezebel also survives. "And in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." Here is not only the posthumous influence of Jeroboam, but also of the sin of Ahab in perpetuating it. "For he served Baal, and worshipped him." The establishment of this Canaanitish abomination was due to Ahab and Jezebel, and they infamously survive in its perpetuation. (3) Note (a) A Church is not the more true for being established. Here were two State Churches which were, in the Biblical sense, atheistic. (b) For concurrent endowment, whatever may be said for its expediency, there can be no moral defence. 3. *But there was no necessity for this.* (1) Legal representation is an accident over which we have no control. It is a notable truth that men have influences in spite of themselves, and that these also are posthumous. (2) But moral representation is in a different category. Ahaziah might have reigned in Ahab's stead without imitating his vices. "Jehoram the son of Ahab," e.g., "wrought evil in the sight of the Lord; but not like his father, and like his mother; for he put away the image of Baal that his father had made" (2 Kings iii. 2). (3) Ahaziah should have been admonished by the history of the judgments of God upon the house of Jeroboam. He should have taken the warning given in the judgments of God on the sins of his father. His guilt, therefore, was upon his own head, and he suffered accordingly. He reigned two years. God makes short work with some sinners. His death was provoked by his perversity (see 2 Kings i. 3, 4). We see further—

II. THAT AHAB SURVIVES IN HISTORY. 1. *He survived in secular history.* His acts and works were written in the chronicles of his nation. (1) Amongst these were mentioned "all the cities that he built." Perhaps this building of cities simply meant the construction of fortifications for their defence. Whether they reflected credit or discredit upon his memory we cannot pronounce. A man may do a great deal of work to very little profit. (2) The chronicles mentioned "the ivory house which he made." This palace had its description probably from the quantity of that valuable substance used in its ornamentation. But this does not seem to have been to his honour. A kingdom impoverished through famines, wars, and idolatries was in no position to bear the cost of such a piece of luxurious and selfish vanity. Amos accordingly denounces this work of pride (Amos iii. 15). (3) The survival of Ahab in secular history was a consequence of his social position. The masons and carpenters, whose skill brought the works of Ahab to perfection, had no mention there. Social status is a talent from God, for the right use of which men are accountable. 2. *He survives in sacred history.* (1) The sacred history consists of selections from the secular under the guiding influence of Divine inspiration, with a view to illustrating the principles of the providence, truth, and grace of God. To illustrate such principles is the noblest end of writing. So of reading. What quantities of trash, in which the claims of God are ignored, is both written and read! (2) In these selections the notices of the wicked are generally brief. Perhaps no wicked man has a larger share of the sacred writings occupied with his acts than Ahab. Such acts are not agreeable to the Spirit of God. But in the hands of inspiration they are made an influence for good. They are recorded, apparently, because of their relation to the actions of

prophets and good men. They are made to serve as a dark background to show up to admiration virtuous qualities, and to be made themselves odious in the contrast. The principles of the wicked should only be studied to be shunned. So God brings good out of evil. (3) The sacred records have survived the secular. "The book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel" has long since perished. The sacred records have come down to our times. In these, after a lapse of nearly thirty centuries, Ahab survives. But for these his name would not be known. Note (a) the Providence which has preserved the Scriptures evinces their Divine authenticity. (b) Things are permanent as they stand related to the everlasting God. (c) The posthumous influence points to the immortality of man.—J. A. M.

Vers. 41—50.—*Jehoshaphat*. These words give a summary of the life of this king of Judah, and faithfully record, as the Scriptures do to admiration, the good and the bad, as these will be considered in the judgment of the great day. Consider—

I. THE PRAISE OF JEHOSEPHAT. 1. *He came of a good stock*. (1) He was "of the house and lineage of David." The traditions of that house were in many respects a glorious inheritance. David was a "man after God's own heart." In no instance was he found inclining to idolatry. (2) He was the son of Asa. Of his mother we have this significant mention: "And his mother's name was Azubah, the daughter of Shilhi. And he walked in the ways of Asa his father, and departed not from it, doing that which was right in the sight of the Lord." This suggests the healthiness of his mother's moral influence. The reference here to Asa, too, is highly honourable. (3) The blessing of pious parents is inestimable. It works beneficially in example, in precept, in solicitude. This last is most effectual in prayer to God. Those who are favoured with godly parents should praise God evermore. Wicked children of pious parents are doubly culpable.

2. *He improved his advantages*. (1) He "walked in the ways of Asa his father." These were ways of righteousness. Let the children of godly parents now ask themselves whether they walk in the good ways of their ancestors. (2) He "turned not aside from it." He showed no favour to idolatry. The note which follows is no impeachment of the truth of this statement: "Nevertheless the high places were not taken away; for the people offered and burnt incense yet in the high places." The high places that Jehoshaphat spared were those in which the true God was worshipped in accordance with the usage of patriarchal times (see 2 Chron. xxxiii. 17). (3) He went farther than Asa in the work of reformation:—"The remnant of the Sodomites which remained in the days of Asa his father he took out of the land." The parallel place to this in the Chronicles is: "And his heart was lifted up in the ways of the Lord: moreover he took away the high places and the groves (אֲשֵׁרִים) out of Judah" (2 Chron. xvii. 6; xix. 3). By removing the Sodomites we understand that he demolished their shrines, their Asherim, their instruments of pollution. When the nests are destroyed the rooks fly.

3. *This was to his praise*. (1) Others, similarly placed, failed to make this good use of their advantages. Jehoram, his own son, may be mentioned in sad contrast to him. Several of his ancestors had scandalously departed from the godly ways of their father David. Men will be justified or condemned in the light of such comparisons in the last great day (see Luke xi. 31, 32). (2) God rewarded him with prosperity (2 Chron. xvii. 4, 5). He had an army—probably an enrolled militia—of 1,100,000 men. The Philistines, Arabians, and Edomites were subject to him. The note here, that "there was then no king in Edom: a deputy was king," which prefaces the account of his fleet at Ezion-Geber, was designed to explain how Jehoshaphat was able to have a fleet at a port which belonged to Edom (see ch. ix. 26), viz., because he appointed the viceroy in Edom which was tributary to him (see Gen. xxvii. 29, 37; 2 Sam. viii. 14).

II. THE BLAME OF JEHOSEPHAT. This seems all to have been connected with the "peace" which he made "with the king of Israel." It appears to have commenced with—1. *The marriage of his son*. (1) Jehoram, the eldest son of Jehoshaphat, and with his consent, took Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, to be

his wife. Jehoshaphat's heart was lifted up with the abundance of his "riches and honour," and "joined affinity with Ahab" (see 2 Chron. xviii. 1). He became too great to be content with an humble match for his son, and sacrificed godliness to grandeur. He has many imitators in this. (2) Unequal yoking has ever been prolific in mischief. Athaliah inherited the evil spirit of both her parents, and she led away the heart of Jehoram from God to his ruin. The object of this marriage was to build up the house of Jehoshaphat, but it well-nigh proved its ruin (see 2 Chron. xxii. 10, 11). God is the builder of families (see 2 Sam. vii. 11, 27; 1 Kings ii. 24; xi. 38; Psa. cxxvii. 1). 2. *His friendship with Ahab.* (1) This evil grew out of the marriage. The peace between Israel and Judah, which in the abstract was a benefit, was probably a condition of the marriage. But the friendship between Jehoshaphat and Ahab which followed, was too intimate for the good of the king of Judah's soul. (2) Evils beget evils. This friendship led to Jehoshaphat helping Ahab in his war against Syria, and had nearly cost Jehoshaphat his life. It also sullied his reputation, for he was persuaded into it by Ahab against the voice of Micaiah. This friendship exposed Jehoshaphat to the reproof of the prophet Jehu (2 Chron. xix. 2). 3. *His friendship with Ahaziah.* (1) This son of Ahab was no more a companion fit for Jehoshaphat than Ahab. For Ahaziah "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: for he served Baal and worshipped him, and provoked to anger the Lord God of Israel, according to all that his father had done." (2) Yet Jehoshaphat formed a trade alliance with Ahaziah. They jointly fitted out a fleet at the port of Ezion-Geber, on the Red Sea, to sail to Ophir for gold. But for this God rebuked him, and "the ships were broken" in the port (see 2 Chron. xx. 35—37). Let no money consideration, no gold of Ophir, induce godly young men to enter into trade partnerships with the ungodly. (3) This judgment of God had a salutary effect upon Jehoshaphat. For when Ahaziah would renew the attempt at Ezion-Geber, Jehoshaphat declined (ver. 49). Let us be careful never to repeat a blunder.—J. A. M.

**Vers. 1—28.—Crime brings its own punishment. I. THE WICKED RUSH UPON DESTRUCTION.** 1. *Ahab provokes the war in which he himself will perish.* The peace which had lasted so long might have continued. Every day it was prolonged was a day placed between him and death; and yet with his own hand he brings to an end the period of grace. How often are the calamities of the wicked invoked by themselves, and are the fruit of their own rashness! 2. *It came as the prompting of the deepest wisdom.* Jehoshaphat's presence afforded the opportunity of forming a league to which success seemed certain. The selfish cunning of the sinful becomes a snare to them. 3. *He closes his ear against God's deterring counsel.* (1) When asked to inquire of God, he brings those only who will speak the things that accord with his own determination. The false prophets are called, but not the true. (2) When compelled to bring Micaiah from the prison (see ver. 26, "carry him back unto Amon," &c.), he endeavours to prevent Jehoshaphat being moved by his words. Micaiah is his enemy, therefore a prophecy of good is not to be expected from him. (3) When warned he will not be hindered, but defies God, who would save him, by insulting and persecuting His servant (ver. 27).

**II. THE FALSE PROPHETS.** 1. *They bind the cords which are leading a sinful soul to death.* The word which they profess to speak for God is a word which it pleases the king to hear. It is the echo of his own desires (ver. 6). There are those who by voice and pen proclaim a new gospel. It is no longer sought to lead up the world to God and thus reconcile it to Him. It is boldly declared that the reconciliation is already effected. God has come down to it. There is no anger and no threatening and no terrible shadow of judgment. There is nothing but goodness and love. They are the false prophets of to-day, and these do for the men of their generation what those did for Ahab. 2. *Their blasphemy.* When a prophet of *Jehovah* was asked for (ver. 7), they who have hitherto spoken only of Adonai do not scruple to take the name of the Highest into their lips (vers. 11, 12). We do not escape the false prophets when we appeal from their speech concerning the

God of nature to His revealed will, the word of the Lord. They meet us there. It is in vain we seek to rest upon the plainest words; they are explained away. Hell is a superstitious dream, and the cross of the disciples of Christ a mere figure of speech, with no hard, stern reality behind it. 3. *They are possessed by a spirit of falsehood* (vers. 21—23). Their position is more a punishment of past sin than conscious transgression. They speak with honesty of a sort, but it is out of their heart's darkness. They were willing to be deceived, and they have been deceived. They did not wish to know God as He is, and they have been left with the god of their own imagination. In which school are we, that of the false prophets, or of the true? 4. *They smite the true servants of God*. Zedekiah's blow preceded the king's judgment. It proved nothing but his own soul's distance from God. It was the act of a man provoked by zeal for his own honour. He who had been moved by zeal for God's honour would have stood in silent awe of that terrible but certain judgment which the man was braving.

III. THE TRUE SERVANT OF GOD. 1. *In a corrupt court his is no welcome presence* (ver. 8). The distance between Ahab and God was reflected in that which separated him from the speaker of God's word. Continued faithfulness, if it may not win, must be repelled and hated. "Woe unto you when all men speak well of you; for so," &c. 2. *The necessity laid on him to declare the whole counsel of God* (ver. 14). He cannot turn to the right hand or the left; the world's wealth cannot bribe him, its power and cruelty cannot terrify him. What king or people desire to hear, or courtly prophets or current creeds have said, weighs nothing with him. He cannot speak in God's name aught save what *God has said*. 3. *His message*. He speaks first in easily discerned irony (vers. 15, 16). It was an intimation to the king that he desired to hear no prophecy that would run counter to his inclinations. Then, when he is solemnly appealed to, a picture is presented (ver. 17) of the smitten, shepherdless people, which might well have touched even Ahab's heart. Next king and people are led up to the throne of God. The servant and his words are forgotten in the revelation of his Master. Even the false prophet's utterances are turned to account; they and the reliance which the king is placing on them are part fulfilment of the Divine vengeance. There was deeper tenderness and truer love for Ahab in that one breast than in all the four hundred. 4. *The greatness of all true service for God*. There is a glory about that despised, persecuted man before which that of both kings pales. It is a glory which nothing can tear from the loyal heart, and which shines the brighter amid the world's darkening hate. It is a glory which may be our own.—U.

VERS. 29—40.—*The Certainty of God's Threatenings*. I. **AHAB'S ATTEMPT TO ELUDE THE DIVINE VENGEANCE**. 1. *His apprehension of coming evil*. If Micaiah's words were not the words of God, why should he take precautions? His heart gives the lie to his own unbelief; the words cling to him. The bold refusal to listen to God's word is no assurance that the soul will not afterwards be shaken by a fearful looking for of judgment. 2. *His ungenerousness* (ver. 30). "I will disguise myself; but put thou on thy robes." The effect of the counsel was necessarily to concentrate the enemy's attention upon Jehoshaphat. Sin not only makes a man a coward, it robs him of nobleness. 3. *The immediate effect of Ahab's stratagem*. Ben-hadad's arrangements for the capture or slaughter of Ahab were rendered of no avail. The captains could not find the man they sought. A momentary success often attends the plans of those who endeavour to flee from God. 4. *The chance shot*. The success of Ahab's device only served to make the blow come more plainly from the hand of God. Ben-hadad's purpose could be baffled, but not His. There is no escape from God.

II. THE FULFILMENT OF GOD'S WORD. 1. *He fell at Ramoth-Gilead* (ver. 20). 2. *"Israel was scattered upon the hills," and the command was given to return* (vers. 17, 36). 3. *The dogs licked Ahab's blood* (ch. xxi. 19), not in Jezreel, indeed, because the judgment then pronounced was that of the overthrow of the dynasty. This was delayed on account of Ahab's repentance, and happened, as predicted, "in his son's days" (ch. xxi. 29). But the personal part of the prediction, "The dogs

shall lick thy blood, even thine," was not revoked. There are prophecies both of evil and of good, within the range of which we set ourselves. God's words are touching us, and will likewise be literally fulfilled.—U.

Vers. 41—53.—*Two Life Stories.* I. JEHOSEPHAT'S. 1. *He prolonged the good influence of his father's reign.* Judah's thought was still kept under the light of truth, and its life more fully led into the ways of God: he completed his father's reforms (ver. 46). The continuance of God's work anywhere is as important as the origination of it. 2. *He was consistent.* "He turned not aside from it." He did not merely begin well; over his whole reign there rested the Divine approval; he did "that which was right in the eyes of the Lord." The life which is ever sinning, repenting, forgetting, achieves nothing. It is like a plant uprooted and planted again, to be again uprooted, &c., and which, even should its life be preserved, will never bear fruit. It is like "a backsliding heifer," and with such a life the great Husbandman's work cannot be carried on. 3. *There was failure as well as success in his career.* "Nevertheless the high places were not taken away." He had endeavoured to remove them (2 Chron. xvii. 6). But "the people offered and burnt incense yet in the high places." The mightiest efforts in the great warfare with darkness leave something for other hands to do, and must till He come who alone can perfect all things. 4. *He sought to be at peace with his brethren* (ver. 44). He went further in this, indeed, than he ought to have done (2 Chron. xix. 2), but the desire for peace was laudable. 5. *He humbled himself under God's rebuke* (compare vers. 48, 49 with 2 Chron. xx. 35—37). At first he had been beguiled into fellowship with the idolatrous king of Israel without reflecting upon the danger which lay in it for himself and his people. But when God had manifested His displeasure, nothing could make him renew the confederacy. The judgment might mistake, but the heart was loyal to God.

II. AHAZIAH'S. 1. *A sinful life.* "He did evil in the sight of the Lord." With such a life there was no possibility of blessing for his people. The roots of his usefulness were destroyed. To do, we must first of all become. Our work cannot rise above the level of our life. 2. *A disastrous policy* (vers. 52, 53). He continued the work of Israel's destruction. The departure made by Jeroboam and perfected by Ahab and Jezebel, he accepted in its full rejection of Jehovah. He did not go beyond them, he simply did "according to all that his father had done," but in doing this his sin was of the deepest dye. His father had been judged, but God was still braved, and Israel was led still nearer to destruction. We may only continue what others have begun; but if we pay no heed to the proofs of God's anger, and take no thought of the inevitable results of the policy we pursue, our persistence may be one of the deepest crimes against God and man.—U.

Ver. 34.—*The Pierced Armour.* This occurred during the third campaign of Ben-hadad against Israel. Micaiah had forewarned Ahab against the danger he incurred, and was cast into prison for his pains. The warning was, however, taken sufficiently to heart to induce the king to disguise himself. Describe the expedient adopted, and its remarkable failure. Ahab was in many respects a typical sinner. He was an idolater, a persecutor, impenitent, though sometimes touched; and in the plenitude of power he fell. We see here—

I. A MAN ARMED AGAINST GOD. True he was fighting against the Syrians, but as he girded on his armour he remembered and defied the words of the prophet. His ominous prophecy should not be fulfilled, he would yet come back safe and victorious to put Micaiah to death, and with this determination he put Jehoshaphat in command, and clad himself with proof armour. In spirit, therefore, he was fighting not only against the hosts of Syria, but against the word of God. Hence let us depict one who is armed *against* God. Reverse the description St. Paul gives (Eph. vi.) of one armed *by* God. The impenitent sinner represented by Ahab defends himself. 1. *By false hopes* (Deut. xxix. 19, 20). These constitute his "helmet," which wards off true thoughts of self and sin. He blindly trusts in Divine mercy, while sin is unrepented, forgetting that "a God all mercy is a God

unjust" (Young). "There is none other name given under heaven whereby we may be saved," &c. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" 2. *By a hardened heart.* This is his "breastplate." A man impenitent is a man lost. Some are "past feeling," their consciences are "seared as with a hot iron," and God gives them over to their "hardness of heart," and to an "impenitent mind." "Who has hardened himself against God, and prospered?" We may become "hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." 3. *By defiant words.* There is a tongue which is set on fire of hell. Adduce examples. Ahab defied Micaiah. 4. *By an unbelieving mind.* The king questioned the truth of the prophet's message. He had more confidence in his own past success and in his military skill than in the declaration of a man who knew something of God but nothing of war. Unbelief ever prevents the inflowing of Divine goodness. Jesus "could do no mighty works because of their unbelief." 5. *By a dumb spirit.* No asking for pardon, no cry for mercy rose from Ahab's heart, or it would not have proved too late; for the Lord is "not willing that any should perish."

II. A MAN STRICKEN BY GOD. The chance arrow of the Syrian archer fulfilled the Divine purpose. 1. *By the arrow of conviction.* God's word is sharp and powerful, and pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (1) *It may be shot unwittingly,* as the archer drew at a venture not knowing what he might hit. Let our words for God be pointed, and be winged by faith, and He will see that they hit the mark. (2) *It may touch the one vulnerable spot.* That arrow pierced "between the joints of armour" otherwise proof. So David's stone would have fallen powerless on the greaves or the breastplate of the giant of Gath. God, who knows our hearts, tries every avenue. Through our reason, through our affections, through our conscience, His word seeks to find its way. 2. *By the arrow of judgment.* (1) *It was foretold* (ver. 28). Ahab ran the risk. So do they who continue in sin after hearing of "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." (2) *It was inevitable.* All disguise and precaution were unavailing. The justice of God sooner or later reaches the right man. (3) *It was terrible.* The weak, sensuous man, whose promise had sometimes been so fair, fell in a moment from kingship, from life, and from hope. "He that being reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."—A. B.



# HOMILETICAL INDEX

TO

## THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS.



### CHAPTER I.

THEME	PAGE
The Chamber of Sickness .. ..	12
Adonijah's History and its Lessons ..	13
Adonijah and the Lord's Anointed ..	15
The Jewish Prophet: an Example to the Christian Pastor .. ..	16
The Benedictus of the Old Testament, and the Benedictus of the New ..	17
The Two Triumphal Entries .. ..	18
The Sin of Ambition .. ..	18
Moral Ruin in a Religious Home ..	20
The Dethronement of the False by the Enthronement of the True .. ..	22

### CHAPTER II.

A Jewish Deathbed .. ..	29
Eikon Basiliké .. ..	31
"Show thyself a man" .. ..	32
A Royal Father's Last Words .. ..	33
A Charge from a Dying King .. ..	34
The Brothers .. ..	39
The Degraded High Priest .. ..	42
The Death of Joab .. ..	43
The End of the Transgressor .. ..	47
Retributions .. ..	48

### CHAPTER III.

The Grace and Place of Love .. ..	53
God's Gifts and Solomon's Choice ..	54
The Prayer of Solomon and its Fulfillment .. ..	56
A Wise Prayer .. ..	56
Waiting for God's Voice; a Sermon for Children .. ..	57
The Reverent Prayer of a Royal Petitioner .. ..	59

1 KINGS.

THEME	PAGE
The Wisdom of Solomon's Choice ..	60
Solomon's Judgment a Foreshadowing of the Judgment to come .. ..	63
"Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it" .. ..	64

### CHAPTER IV.

The Servants of Solomon .. ..	71
The Twelve Prefects and the Twelve Apostles .. ..	72
The Golden Age .. ..	77
"The greatest, wisest, meanest of mankind" .. ..	78
A Prosperous Reign .. ..	80
The Voice of Nature speaking for God ..	81

### CHAPTER V.

Tyre and Israel—a Lesson on Personal Influence .. ..	89
Sure Foundations .. ..	91
The Temple .. ..	92
The Building of the Temple .. ..	94
Lessons from the Conduct of a Heathen Prince .. ..	94

### CHAPTER VI.

Christianity built on the Foundations of Judaism .. ..	111
The Ark of the Covenant of the Lord ..	115
The Purposes of the Temple .. ..	116
Building in Silence .. ..	118
The Mystery of the Cherubim .. ..	119
"The house which King Solomon built for the Lord" .. ..	121
The Glorious House of the Lord .. ..	121

THEME	PAGE	THEME	PAGE
<b>CHAPTER VII.</b>			
The Pillars of Brass .. ..	136	The Divine Chastisements .. ..	245
The Molten Sea and the Brazen Lavers .. ..	138	The Call to Jeroboam .. ..	245
The Clay Ground in the Circuit of the Jordan .. ..	140	The Successful Man .. ..	246
Jachin and Boaz .. ..	143	The Judgments of God on Judah and Israel from the Death of Solomon to the Time of Ahab .. ..	247
<b>CHAPTER VIII.</b>			
The Dedication of the Temple and its Teaching .. ..	161	Judicial Infatuation .. ..	256
The Silence and the Darkness .. ..	164	The Dead and the Living .. ..	259
The Holy of Holies and the Heaven of Heavens .. ..	165	Israel's Magna Charta .. ..	260
The Prayer of Dedication .. ..	167	Infatuation .. ..	260
The Feast on the Sacrifices .. ..	169	The Revolution .. ..	261
The Ark of the Covenant .. ..	171	The Message of Shemaiah .. ..	262
The Presence of the Lord in the House of the Lord .. ..	172	The Rending of the Kingdom .. ..	263
The Glory-Cloud .. ..	173	Rehoboam's Folly .. ..	265
The Unfulfilled Purposes of Life .. ..	175	The Revolt .. ..	266
The Prayer of Dedication .. ..	176	The Accomplishment of the Predicted Judgment .. ..	267
The Praying King .. ..	177	The Sin of Jeroboam .. ..	274
The Consecration of the Temple .. ..	179	Jeroboam's Despondency .. ..	277
The Stranger's Interest in the Temple .. ..	180	Jeroboam's Calves .. ..	278
Occasions for Prayer .. ..	181	Jeroboam's Sin .. ..	279, 280
A Royal Benediction .. ..	182	The Golden Calves .. ..	281
<b>CHAPTER IX.</b>			
The Second Appearance to Solomon .. ..	186	<b>CHAPTER XIII.</b>	
The Renewed Covenant .. ..	188	Protest and Excommunication .. ..	285
The Two Altars of Judaism .. ..	196	The Fire of Jehovah .. ..	289
Solomon's Worship .. ..	200	The Man of Sin .. ..	289
<b>CHAPTER X.</b>			
The Queen of Sheba .. ..	205, 209	The Man of God .. ..	290
The Queen of the South .. ..	208	The Nameless Prophet .. ..	291
The Decline and Fall of Solomon .. ..	216	The King confronted by the Prophet .. ..	293
<b>CHAPTER XI.</b>			
The Sin of Solomon .. ..	223	The Man of God and the People of God .. ..	300
The Fall of a King .. ..	226	The Two Prophets .. ..	303
The Anger of God .. ..	227	The Old Serpent again .. ..	305
Solomon's Sin .. ..	228	The Voice of Reproof .. ..	306
The Downfall of Solomon .. ..	229	The Visitation of Judgment .. ..	307
Solomon's Fall .. ..	230	The Law of Extremity .. ..	308
The Punishment of Solomon's Sin .. ..	238	Lead us not into Temptation, &c. .. ..	309
Premotions of Wrath .. ..	241	The Disobedient Prophet .. ..	310
Jeroboam .. ..	242	The Tempter .. ..	311
The Message of Ahijah .. ..	243	Judgment and its Result .. ..	312
Solomon's End .. ..	244	<b>CHAPTER XIV.</b>	
		Abijah and Ahijah .. ..	317
		The Impenitent Seeker .. ..	321
		Spiritual Vision .. ..	322
		Hard Tidings .. ..	323
		The Reprobate's Doom .. ..	324
		The Future of Israel .. ..	324
		Death and Mourning .. ..	325

THEME	PAGE
The Review .. ..	326
Early Piety in an Unexpected Place	327
The Dead Child .. ..	329
Affliction and Judgment .. ..	330
The Invasion of Shishak .. ..	333
The Sin of Judah .. ..	336
The Entailments of Sin .. ..	337
Unfaithfulness and its Rebuke .. ..	337

CHAPTER XV.

The Reign of Asa .. ..	343
Church and Dissent .. ..	346
The Succession of Abijam .. ..	350
Reformation .. ..	351
The War Policy of Asa .. ..	352
"Beloved for the father's sake" .. ..	353
"Zeal without trust" .. ..	353
Religious Sincerity .. ..	354

CHAPTER XV. Ver. 25—XVI.

The Punishment of Jeroboam's Sin .. ..	362
The Working of Jeroboam's Sin .. ..	364
The Seed of Evil-doers .. ..	366
God's Threatenings find at last a Complete Fulfilment .. ..	367
Unrighteous Zeal .. ..	367
Jehu's Prophecy .. ..	368
The House of Baasha .. ..	369
A Divine Judgment and its Instrument	370
The Kingdom of Men .. ..	370
Change without Improvement .. ..	371
Omri's Reign .. ..	372
Moral Ruin through Moral Weakness	375
Ahab's Wickedness .. ..	377
The Temerity of Hiel .. ..	378

CHAPTER XVII.

The Mission and Ministry of Elijah .. ..	388
The Solitary Place .. ..	391
The Food of the Saints .. ..	393
The Furnace of Trial .. ..	395
Elijah .. ..	398
Resources of Providence .. ..	399
The Widow of Zidon .. ..	400
The Barrel of Meal .. ..	401
The Reproaches of Death .. ..	402
The Sign of the Widow's Son .. ..	403
The Messenger of Jehovah .. ..	404
Strange Provision in a Sad Necessity	406
The Widow's Crucifixion .. ..	407
Prayer for the Dead .. ..	408

THEME	PAGE
Elijah the Tishbite .. ..	410
Entertaining a Stranger .. ..	411
Life from the Dead .. ..	413
Elijah's Advent and Service .. ..	414
Divine Care .. ..	415
Affliction and its Fruits .. ..	415
First Preparation of Elijah for his Great Mission .. ..	415
Second Preparation of Elijah .. ..	416

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Governor of Ahab's House .. ..	430
The King and his Master .. ..	433
Israel's Conversion .. ..	435
Effectual Fervent Prayer .. ..	438
The Cry for Life .. ..	440
The Servant of the Lord .. ..	440
The Troubler .. ..	442
Christ or Belial? .. ..	442
The Test of Fire .. ..	444
The Failure .. ..	445
The Preparation .. ..	446
The Triumph .. ..	447
The Sound of Rain .. ..	448
Obadiah .. ..	449
A Solemn Alternative .. ..	450
Religious Indecision .. ..	451
Elijah's Prayer for Rain .. ..	452
The God that answereth by Fire .. ..	454
The Return of Blessing .. ..	455
Elijah and the Prophets of Baal .. ..	455

CHAPTER XIX.

God and the Man of God .. ..	465
Elijah's Prayer for Death .. ..	470
Elijah at Horeb .. ..	471
The Call of Elisha .. ..	472, 475
The Desponding Prophet .. ..	474
The Causes of Despondency .. ..	476
A Question from God for the Consideration of Man .. ..	478
The Still Small Voice .. ..	479
The Prophet's Despair .. ..	480
Elijah at Horeb .. ..	480
The Prophet's Call .. ..	481
Return of Elijah to the Desert .. ..	481

CHAPTER XX.

The Purgatory of Nations and Kings	492
The Spirit of War .. ..	499

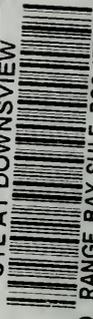
THEME		PAGE	THEME	PAGE
The Hand of God .. ..	..	500	Sin's Friendships, and what they lead to .. ..	528
Wisdom in Counsel .. ..	..	501	Guilt and Mercy .. ..	529
False Mercy .. ..	..	502	Naboth's Vineyard .. ..	530
Veiled Mercies .. ..	..	504		
Resisted Mercy .. ..	..	504		
The Neglected Opportunity .. ..	..	505		
<b>CHAPTER XXI.</b>				
The Martyrdom of Naboth .. ..	..	512	The Death of Ahab and the Defeat of Israel .. ..	542
Divine Retaliation .. ..	..	516	Bad Company .. ..	546
Divine Relentings .. ..	..	518	The False and the True .. ..	548
Covetousness .. ..	..	520	Micaiah's Prophecy .. ..	549
A Sinful Nation .. ..	..	521	The Argument of Wickedness .. ..	551
Divine Inquisition .. ..	..	522	Lessons of the Battle .. ..	552
Ahab's Repentance .. ..	..	524	Survival .. ..	553
The Progress of Sin .. ..	..	525	Jehoshaphat .. ..	555
Partial Penitence .. ..	..	526	Crime brings its own Punishment .. ..	556
First Steps in the Path of Crime .. ..	..	527	The Certainty of God's Threatenings .. ..	557
			Two Life Stories .. ..	558
			The Pierced Armour .. ..	558





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