FARRAR FREDERIC WILLIAM

THE EXPOSITOR'S BIBLE: THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS

Frederic Farrar

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BOOK I

INTRODUCTION

"Ich bin überzeugt, dass die Bibel immer schöner wird, je mehr man sie versteht, d.h. je mehr man einsieht und anschaut, dass jedes Wort, das wir allgemein auffassen und in Besondern auf uns anwenden, nach gewissen Umständen, nach Zeit- und Orts-verhältnissen einen, eigenen, besondern, unmittelbar individuellen Bezug gehabt hat." – Goethe.

"Es bleibt dabei, das beste Lesen der Bibel, dieses Göttlichen Buchs, ist *menschlich*. Ich nehme dies Wort im weitesten Umfang und in der andringendsten Bedeutung. Menschlich muss man die Bibel lesen: denn sie ist ein Buch durch Menschen für Menschen geschrieben; menschlich ist die Sprache, menschlich die äussern Hülfsmittel, mit denen sie geschrieben und aufbehalten ist… Es darf also sicher geglaubt werden: je humaner (im besten Sinn des Worts) man das Wort Gottes liest, desto näher kommt man dem Zweck seines Urhebers, welcher Menschen zu seinem Bilde schuf … und für uns menschlich handelt." – Herder.

CHAPTER I.
THE HIGHER CRITICISM

> "God shows all things in the slow history of their ripening." – George Eliot.

God has given us many Bibles. The book which we call the Bible consists of a series of books, and its name represents the Greek plural τὰ Βίβλια. It is not so much a book, as the extant fragments of a literature, which grew up during many centuries. Supreme as is the importance of this "Book of God," it was never meant to be the sole teacher of mankind. We mistake its purpose, we misapply its revelation, when we use it to exclude the other sources of religious knowledge. It is supremely profitable for our instruction, but, so far from being designed to absorb our exclusive attention, its work is to stimulate the eagerness with which, by its aid, we are able to learn from all other sources the will of God towards men.

God speaks to us in many voices. In the Bible He revealed Himself to all mankind by His messages to the individual souls of some of His servants. But those messages, whether uttered or consigned to writing, were but one method of enabling us to hold communion with Him. They were not even an *indispensable* method. Thousands of the saints of God lived the spiritual life in close communion with their Father in heaven in ages

which possessed no written book; in ages before any such book existed; in ages during which, though it existed, it was practically inaccessible; in ages during which it had been designedly kept out of their hands by priests. This fact should quicken our sense of gratitude for the inestimable boon of a Book wherein he who runs may now read, and respecting the main teaching of which wayfaring men, and even fools, need not err. But it should at the same time save us from the error of treating the Bible as though it were in itself an amulet or a fetish, as the Mohammedan treats his Koran. The Bible was written in human language, by men for men. It was written mainly in Judæa, by Jews, for Jews. "*Scripture*," as the old theological rule said, "*is the sense of Scripture*,"[1] and the sense of Scripture can only be ascertained by the methods of study and the rules of criticism without which no ancient document or literature can be even approximately understood. In these respects the Bible cannot be arbitrarily or exceptionally treated. No *a priori* rules can be devised for its elucidation. It is what it is, not what we might have expected it to be. Language, at the best, is an imperfect and ever-varying instrument of thought. It is full of twilight, and of gracious shadows. Vast numbers of its words were originally metaphorical. When the light of metaphor has faded from them they come to mean different things at different times, under different conditions, in different contexts, on different lips. Language can at the best be but an *asymptote* to

[1] "Scriptura est sensus Scripturæ." – St. Augustine.

thought; in other words, it resembles the mathematical line which approaches nearer and nearer to the circumference of a circle, but which, even when infinitely extended, can never actually touch it. The fact that the Bible contains a Divine revelation does not alter the fact that it represents a nation's literature. It is the library of the Jewish people, or rather all that remains to us of that library, and all that was most precious in it. Holy men of old were moved by the Spirit of God, but as this Divine inspiration did not make them personally sinless in their actions, or infallible in their judgments, so neither does it exempt their messages from the limitation which attaches to all human conditions. Criticism would have rendered an inestimable service to every thoughtful reader of the Scriptures if it had done nothing more than impress upon them that the component books are not one, but complex and multiform, separated from each other by centuries of time, and of very varying value and preciousness. They too, like the greatest apostles of God, have their treasure in earthen vessels; and we not only may, but must, by the aid of that reason which is "the candle of the Lord," estimate both the value of the treasure, and the age and character of the earthen vessel in which it is contained.

There are hundreds of texts in Scripture which may convey to some souls a very true and blessed meaning, but which do not in the original possess any such meaning as that which is now attached to them. The words of Hebrew prophets often seem perfectly clear, but in some cases they had another set

of connotations in the mouths of those by whom they were originally spoken. It requires a learned and a literary training to discover by philology, by history, or by comparison, what alone they could have meant when they were first spoken. In many cases their exact significance is no longer to be ascertained with certainty. It must be more or less conjectural. There are passages of Scripture which have received scores of differing interpretations. There are entire books of Scripture about the general scope of which there have been diametrically opposite opinions. The spiritual intuition of the saint may in some instances be keener to read aright than the laborious researches of the scholar, because spiritual things can only be spiritually discerned. But in general it is true that the *ex cathedra* assertions of ignorant readers, though they are often pronounced with an assumption of infallibility, are not worth the breath which utters them. All artificial dogmas as to what Scripture *must* be, and *must* mean, are worse than idle; we have only to deal with what it *really is*, and what it *really says*. Even when opinions respecting it have been all but unanimously pronounced by the representatives of all the Churches, they have nevertheless been again and again shown to be absurdly erroneous. The slow light of scholarship, of criticism, of comparative religion, has proved that in many instances not only the interpretations of former ages, but the very *principles* of interpretation from which they were derived, had no basis whatever in fact. And the methods of interpretation – dogmatic, ecclesiastical, mystic, allegorical, literal – have

changed from age to age.[2] The asserted heresy of yesterday has in scores of instances become the accepted commonplace of to-morrow. The duty of the Church in the present day is neither to make out that the Bible is what men have imagined that it was, nor to repeat the assertions of ancient writers as to what they declared it to be, but honestly and truthfully to discover the significance of the actual phenomena which it presents to the enlightened and cultivated intelligence.

If it were not so common a failing to ignore the lessons of the past, it might have been hoped that a certain modesty, of which the necessity is taught us by centuries of error, would have saved a multitude of writers from rushing into premature and denunciative rejection of results which they have not studied, and of which they are incapable to judge. St. Jerome complained that in his day there was no old woman so fatuous as not to assume the right to lay down the law about Scriptural interpretation. It is just the same in these days. Half-taught dogmatists – αὐτοσχέδιοι δογματισταὶ, as they have been called – may sweepingly condemn the lifelong researches of men far superior to themselves, not only in learning, but in love of truth; they may attribute their conclusions to faithless infatuation, and even to moral obliquity. This has been done over and over again in our own lifetime; and yet such self-constituted and unauthorised defenders of their own prejudices and traditions – which they

[2] For a decisive proof of these statements I refer to my Bampton Lectures on the *History of Interpretation* (Macmillan, 1890).

always identify with the Catholic faith – are impotent to prevent, impotent even greatly to retard, the spread of real knowledge. Many of the now-accepted certainties of science were repudiated a generation ago as absurd and blasphemous. As long as it was possible to put them down by persecution, the thumbscrew and the stake were freely used by priests and inquisitors for their suppression. *E pur si muove.* Theologians who mingled the gold of Revelation with the clay of their own opinions have been driven to correct their past errors. Untaught by experience, religious prejudice is ever heaping up fresh obstacles to oppose the progress of new truths. The obstacles will be swept away in the future as surely as they have been in the past. The eagle, it has been said, which soars through the air does not worry itself how to cross the rivers.

It is probable that no age since that of the Apostles has added so much to our knowledge of the true meaning and history of the Bible as has been added by our own. The mode of regarding Scripture has been almost revolutionised, and in consequence many books of Scripture previously misunderstood have acquired a reality and intensity of interest and instructiveness which have rendered them trebly precious. A deeper and holier reverence for all eternal truth which the Bible contains has taken the place of a meaningless letter worship. The fatal and wooden Rabbinic dogma of verbal dictation – a dogma which either destroys intelligent faith altogether, or introduces into Christian conduct some of the worst delusions

of false religion – is dead and buried in every capable and well-taught mind. Truths which had long been seen through the distorting mirage of false exegesis have now been set forth in their true aspect. We have been enabled, for the first time, to grasp the real character of events which, by being set in a wrong perspective, had been made so fantastic as to have no relation to ordinary lives. Figures which had become dim spectres moving through an unnatural atmosphere now stand out, full of grace, instructiveness and warning, in the clear light of day. The science of Biblical criticism has solved scores of enigmas which were once disastrously obscure, and has brought out the original beauty of some passages, which, even in our Authorised Version, conveyed no intelligible meaning to earnest readers. The Revised Version alone has corrected hundreds of inaccuracies which in some instances defaced the beauty of the sacred page, and in many others misrepresented and mistranslated it. Intolerance has been robbed of favourite shibboleths, used as the basis of cruel beliefs, which souls unhardened by system could only repudiate with a "God forbid!" Familiar error has ever been dearer to most men than unfamiliar truths; but truth, however slow may seem to be the beat of her pinions, always wins her way at last.

> "Thro' the heather an' howe gaed the creepin' thing,
> But abune was the waft of an angel's wing."

Can there be any doubt that mankind has everything to

gain and nothing to lose from the ascertainment of genuine truth? Are we so wholly devoid of even an elementary faith as to think that man can profit by consciously cherished illusions? Does it not show a nobler confidence in facts to correct traditional prejudices, than to rest blindly content with conventional assertions? If we do not believe that God is a God of truth, that all falsity is hateful to Him, – and religious falsity most hateful of all, because it adds the sin of hypocrisy to the love of lies, – we believe in *nothing*. If our religion is to consist in a rejection of knowledge, lest it should disturb the convictions of times of ignorance, the dicta of "the Fathers," or dogmas which arrogate to themselves the sham claim of Catholicity – if we are to give only to the Dark Ages the title of the Ages of Faith, then indeed

> "The pillared firmament is rottenness,
> And earth's base built on stubble."

"There is and will be much discussion," says Goethe, "as to the advantage or disadvantage of the popular dissemination of the Bible. To me it is clear that it will be mischievous, as it always has been, if used dogmatically and capriciously; beneficial, as it always has been, if accepted didactically (for our instruction) and with feeling." There is abundance in the Bible for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; – we shall weaken its moral and spiritual force, and gain nothing in its

place, if we turn it into an idol adorned with impossible claims which it never makes for itself, and if we support its golden image upon the brittle clay of an exegesis which is morally, critically, and historically false.

I do not see how there can be any loss in the positive results of what is called the Higher Criticism. Certainly its suggestions must never be hastily adopted. Nor is it likely that they will be. They have to fight their way through crowds of opposing prejudices. They are first held up to ridicule as absurd; then exposed to anathema as irreligious; at last they are accepted as obviously true. The very theologians who once denounced them silently ignore or readjust what they previously preached, and hasten, first to minimise the importance, then to extol the value of the new discoveries. It is quite right that they should be keenly scrutinised. All new sciences are liable to rush into extremes. Their first discoverers are misled into error by premature generalisations born of a genuine enthusiasm. They are tempted to build elaborate superstructures on inadequate foundations. But when they have established certain irrefragable principles, can the obvious deductions from those principles be other than a pure gain? Can we be the better for traditional delusions? Can mistakes and ignorance – can anything but the ascertained fact – be desirable for man, or acceptable to God?

No doubt it is with a sensation of pain that we are compelled to give up convictions which we once regarded as indubitable and sacred. That is a part of our human nature. We must say with

all gentleness to the passionate devotees of each old erroneous *mumpsimus*—

> "Disce; sed ira cadat naso rugosaque sanna
> Cum veteres avias tibi de pulmone revello."

Our blessed Lord, with His consummate tenderness, and Divine insight into the frailties of our nature, made tolerant allowance for inveterate prejudices. "No man," He said, "having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is good." But the pain of disillusionment is blessed and healing when it is incurred in the cause of sincerity. There must always be more value in results earned by heroic labour than in conventions accepted without serious inquiry. Already there has been a silent revolution. Many of the old opinions about the Bible have been greatly modified. There is scarcely a single competent scholar who does not now admit that the Hexateuch is a composite structure; that much of the Levitical legislation, which was once called Mosaic, is in reality an aftergrowth which *in its present form* is not earlier than the days of the prophet Ezekiel; that the Book of Deuteronomy belongs, in its present form, whatever older elements it may contain, to the era of Hezekiah's or Josiah's reformation; that the Books of Zechariah and Isaiah are not homogeneous, but preserve the writings of more prophets than their titles imply; that only a small section of the Psalter was the work of David; that the Book of Ecclesiastes was not the work of

King Solomon; that most of the Book of Daniel belongs to the era of Antiochus Epiphanes; and so forth. In what respect is the Bible less precious, less "inspired" in the only tenable sense of that very undefined word, in consequence of such discoveries? In what way do they touch the outermost fringe of our Christian faith? Is there anything in such results of modern criticism which militates against the most inferential expansion of a single clause in the Apostolic, the Nicene, or even the Athanasian Creed? Do they contravene one single syllable of the hundreds of propositions to which our assent is demanded in the Thirty-nine Articles? I would gladly help to mitigate the needless anxiety felt by many religious minds. When the Higher Criticism is in question I would ask them to distinguish between established premisses and the exorbitant system of inferences which a few writers have based upon them. They may rest assured that sweeping conclusions will not be hastily snatched up; that no conclusion will be regarded as proved until it has successfully run the gauntlet of many a jealous challenge. They need not fear for one moment that the Ark of their faith is in peril, and they will be guilty not only of unwisdom but of profanity if they rush forward to support it with rude and unauthorised hands. There never has been an age of deep thought and earnest inquiry which has not left its mark in the modification of some traditions or doctrines of theology. But the truths of essential Christianity are built upon a rock. They belong to things which cannot be shaken, and which remain. The intense labours of eminent scholars, English and German,

thanklessly as they have been received, have not robbed us of so much as a fraction of a single precious element of revelation. On the contrary, they have cleared the Bible of many accretions by which its meaning was spoilt, and its doctrines wrested to perdition, and they have thus rendered it more profitable than before for every purpose for which it was designed, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

When we study the Bible it is surely one of our most primary duties to beware lest any idols of the caverns or of the forum tempt us "to offer to the God of truth the unclean sacrifice of a lie."[3]

[3] Bacon.

CHAPTER II.
THE BOOKS OF KINGS

The "Two Books of Kings," as we call them, are only one book (Sepher Melakîm), and were so regarded not only in the days of Origen (*ap.* Euseb., *H. E.*, vi. 25) and of Jerome (a. d. 420), but by the Jews even down to Bomberg's Hebrew Bible of 1518. They are treated as one book in the Talmud and the Peshito. The Western Bibles followed the Alexandrian division into two books (called the third and fourth of Kings), and Jerome adopted this division in the Vulgate (*Regum*, iii. et iv.). But if this separation into two books was due to the LXX. translators, they should have made a less awkward and artificial division than the one which breaks off the first book in the middle of the brief reign of Ahaziah. Jerome's version of the Books of Samuel and Kings appeared first of his translations, and in his famous *Prologus Galeatus* he mentions these facts.

The History was intended to be a continuation of the Books of Samuel. Some critics, and among them Ewald, assign them to the same author, but closer examination of the Book of Kings renders this more than doubtful. The incessant use of the prefix "King," the extreme frequency of the description "Man of God," the references to the law, and above all the constant condemnation of high places, counterbalance the minor resemblance of style, and prove a difference of authorship.

What has the Higher Criticism, as represented in historic sequence by such writers as Vatke, de Wette, Reuss, Graf, Ewald, Kuenen, Bleek, Wellhausen, Stade, Kittel, Renan, Klostermann, Cheyne, Driver, Robertson Smith, and others, to tell us about the structure and historic credibility of the Books of Kings? Has it in any way shaken their value, while it has undoubtedly added to their intelligibility and interest?

1. It emphasises the fact that they are a compilation. In this there is nothing either new or startling, for the fact is plainly and repeatedly acknowledged in the page of the sacred narrative. The sources utilised are: —

(1) The Book of the Acts of Solomon (1 Kings xi. 41).

(2) The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah (referred to fifteen times).

(3) The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel (referred to seventeen times).[4]

By comparing the authority referred to in 1 Kings xi. 41 with those quoted in 2 Chron. ix. 29, we see that "the Book of the Acts of Solomon" must have been to a large extent identical with the annals of that king's reign contained in "the Book (R.V., Histories) of Nathan the Prophet," the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and "the story (R.V., commentary) or visions of Iddo the Seer."[5] Similarly it appears that the Acts of Rehoboam,

[4] How closely these documents are transcribed is shown by the recurrence of "*unto this day*," though the phrase had long ceased to be true when the book appeared.

[5] It is inferred from 1 Kings viii. 12, 13, which have a poetic tinge, and to which

Abijam, Jehoshaphat, Uzziah, were compiled, at any rate in part, from the histories of Shemaiah, Jehu the son of Hanani,[6] Isaiah the son of Amoz, Hozai (2 Chron. xxxiii. 18, R.V.), and other seers. In the narrative of a history of 450 years (from b. c. 1016 to 562) the writer was of course compelled to rely for his facts upon more ancient authorities. Whether he consulted the original documents in the archives of Jerusalem, or whether he utilised some outline of them which had previously been drawn up, cannot easily be determined. The work would have been impossible but for the existence of the officials known as recorders and historiographers (*Mazkirim, Sopherim*), who first make their appearance in the court of David. But the *original* documents could hardly have survived the ravages of Shalmanezer in Samaria and of Nebuchadnezzar in Jerusalem, so that Movers is probably right in the conjecture that the author's extracts were made, not immediately, but from the epitome of an earlier compiler.[7]

2. Although no direct quotations are referred to other

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the LXX. add "Behold they are written in the Book of the Song," that in this section the "Book of Jashar" has been utilised, and that the reading רשיה has been confused with רישה (Driver, p. 182).

[6] 2 Chron. xx. 34, R.V., "The history of Jehu, the son of Hanani, which *is inserted in the Book of the Kings of Israel*" (not "who is mentioned," A.V., which, however, gives in the margin the literal meaning "was made to ascend").

[7] Movers, *Krit. Untersuch.*, p. 185 (Bonn, 1836). The use of older documents explains the phrase "till this day," and the passages which speak of the Temple as still standing (1 Kings viii. 8, ix. 21, xii. 19; 2 Kings x. 27, xiii. 23). Sometimes the traces of earlier and later date are curiously juxtaposed, as in 2 Kings xvii. 18, 21 and 19, 20.

documents, it seems certain from the style, and from various minor touches, that the compiler also utilised detailed accounts of great prophets like Elijah, Elisha, and Micaiah son of Imlah, which had been drawn up by literary students in the Schools of the Prophets. The stories of prophets and men of God who are left unnamed were derived from oral traditions so old that the names had been forgotten before they had been committed to writing.[8]

3. The work of the compiler himself is easily traceable. It is seen in the constantly recurring formulæ, which come almost like the refrain of an epic poem, at the accession and close of every reign.

They run normally as follows. For the Kings of Judah: —

"And in the … year of … King of Israel reigned … over Judah." "And … years he reigned in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was … the daughter of… And … did that which was {right/ evil} in the sight of the Lord."

"And … slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the City of David his father. And … his son reigned in his stead." In the formulæ for the Kings of Israel "*slept with his fathers*" is omitted when the king was murdered; and "*was buried with his fathers*" is omitted because there was no unbroken dynasty and no royal burial-place. The prominent and frequent

[8] Difference of sources is marked by the different designations of the months, which are called sometimes by their numbers, as in the Priestly Codex (1 Kings xii. 32, 33), sometimes by the old Hebrew names Zif ("*blossom*," April, May, 1 Kings vi. 1), Ethanim ("*fruit*," Sept., Oct., 1 Kings viii. 2), and Bul ("*rain*," 1 Kings vi. 38).

mention of the queen-mother is due to the fact that as *Gebira* she held a far higher rank than the favourite wife.

4. To the compiler is also due the moral aspect given to the annals and other documents which he utilised. Something of this religious colouring he doubtless found in the prophetic histories which he consulted; and the unity of aim visible throughout the book is due to the fact that his standpoint is identical with theirs. Thus, in spite of its compilation from different sources, the book bears the impress of one hand and of one mind. Sometimes a passing touch in an earlier narrative shows the work of an editor after the Exile, as when in the story of Solomon (1 Kings iv. 20-26) we read, "And he had dominion over all the region *on the other side of the river*," *i. e.*, west of the Euphrates, exactly as in Ezra iv. 10. Here the rendering of the A.V., "on this side the river," is certainly inaccurate, and is surprisingly retained in the R.V. also.[9]

5. To this high moral purpose everything else is subordinated. Like all his Jewish contemporaries, the writer attaches small importance to accurate chronological data. He pays little attention to discrepancies, and does not care in every instance to harmonise his own authorities.[10] Some contradictions may

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[9] עֵבֶר־הַנָּהָר (compare עֵבֶר־הַנַּהֲרָה). *Lit.*, "*Beyond* the river," *i. e.*, from the Persian standpoint. It becomes a fixed geographical phrase. Traces of the editor's hand occur in 1 Kings xiii. 32 ("the cities of Samaria"); 2 Kings xiii. 23 ("as yet").

[10] Comp. 2 Kings viii. 25 with ix. 29.

be due to additions made in a later recension,[11] and some may have arisen from the introduction of marginal glosses,[12] or from corruptions of the text which (apart from a miraculous supervision such as was not exercised) might easily, and indeed would inevitably, occur in the constant transcription of numerical letters closely resembling each other. "The numbers as they have come down to us in the Book of Kings," says Canon Rawlinson, "are untrustworthy, being in part self-contradictory, in part opposed to other Scriptural notices, in part improbable, if not impossible."[13]

6. The date of the book as it stands was *after* b. c. 542, for the last event mentioned in it is the mercy extended by Evil-merodach, King of Babylon, to his unfortunate prisoner Jehoiachin (2 Kings xxv. 27) in the thirty-seventh year of his captivity. The language – later than that of Isaiah, and earlier than that of Ezra – confirms this conclusion. That the book appeared before b. c. 536 is clear from the fact that the compiler makes no allusion to Zerubbabel, Jeshua, or the first exiles who returned

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[11] See 2 Kings xv. 30 and 33, viii. 25 and ix. 29.

[12] As, perhaps, the clause "In the thirty and first year of Asa king of Judah" in 1 Kings xvi. 23; and the much more serious "in the 480th year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt," which are omitted by Origen (*comm. in Johannem*, ii. 20), and create many difficulties. The only narratives which critics have suggested as possible interpolations, from the occurrence of unusual grammatical forms, are 2 Kings viii. 1-6 and iv. 1-37 (in the story of Elisha); but these forms are perhaps northern provincialisms.

[13] *Speaker's Commentary*, ii. 475. Instances will be found in 1 Kings xiv. 21, xvi. 23, 29; 2 Kings iii. 1, xiii. 10, xv. 1, 30, 33, xiv. 23, xvi. 2, xvii. 1, xviii. 2.

to Jerusalem after the decree of Cyrus. But it is generally agreed that the book was *substantially* complete before the Exile (about b. c. 600), though some exilic additions may have been made by a later editor.[14] "The writer was already removed by at least six hundred years from the days of Samuel, a space of time as long as that which separates us from the first Parliament of Edward I."

This date of the book – which cannot but have some bearing on its historic value – is admitted by all, since the peculiarities of the language from the beginning to the end are marked by the usages of later Hebrew.[15] The chronicler lived some two centuries later "in about the same chronological relation to David as Professor Freeman stands to William Rufus."[16]

7. Criticism cannot furnish us with the name of this great compiler.[17] Jewish tradition, as preserved in the Talmud,[18] assigned the Books of Kings to the prophet Jeremiah, and in the Jewish canon they are reckoned among "the earlier prophets." This would account for the strange silence about Jeremiah in the Second Book of Kings, whereas he is prominently mentioned in the Book of Chronicles, in the Apocrypha, and in Josephus.

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[14] Stade, p. 79; Kalisch, *Exodus*, p. 495.

[15] See Keil, pp. 9, 10.

[16] R. F. Horton, *Inspiration*, p. 843.

[17] He was not the author of the Book of Samuel, for the standpoint and style are quite different. In the First and Second Books of Samuel the high places are never condemned, as they are incessantly in Kings (1 Kings iii. 2, xiii. 32, xiv. 23, xv. 14, xxii. 43, etc.).

[18] Baba Bathra, 15 a.

But unless we accept the late and worthless Jewish assertion that, after being carried to Egypt by Johanan, son of Kareah (Jer. xlii. 6, 7), Jeremiah escaped to Babylon,[19] he could not have been the author of the last section of the book (2 Kings xxv. 27-30).[20] Yet it is precisely in the closing chapters of the second book (in and after chap. xvii.) that the resemblances to the style of Jeremiah are most marked.[21] That the writer was a *contemporary* of that prophet, was closely akin to him in his religious attitude, and was filled with the same melancholy feelings, is plain; but this, as recent critics have pointed out, is due to the fact that both writers reflect the opinions and the phraseology which we find in the Book of Deuteronomy.

8. The critics who are so often charged with rash assumptions have been led to the conclusions which they adopt by intense and infinite labour, including the examination of various books of Scripture phrase by phrase, and even word by word. The sum total of their most important results as regards the Books of Kings is as follows: —

i. The books are composed of older materials, retouched, sometimes expanded, and set in a suitable framework, mostly by

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[19] *Seder Olam Rabba*, 20.

[20] Even then he would have been ninety years old.

[21] There are, however, some *differences* between 2 Kings xxv. and Jer. lii. (see Keil, p. 12), though the manner is the same, Carpzov, *Introd.*, i. 262-64 (Hävernick, *Einleit.*, ii. 171). Jer. li. (verse 64) ends with "Thus far are the words of Jeremiah," excluding him from the authorship of chap. lii. (Driver, *Introd.*, p. 109). The last chapter of Jeremiah was perhaps added to his volume by a later editor.

a single author who writes throughout in the same characteristic phraseology, and judges the actions and characters of the kings from the standpoint of later centuries. The annals which he consulted, and in part incorporated, were twofold – prophetic and political. The latter were probably drawn up for each reign by the official recorder (מַזְכִּיר), who held an important place in the courts of all the greatest kings (2 Sam. viii. 16, xx. 24; 1 Kings iv. 3; 2 Kings xviii. 18), and whose duty it was to write the "acts" or "words" of the "days" of his sovereign (דברי הימים).

ii. The compiler's work is partly of the nature of an epitome,[22] and partly consists of longer narratives, of which we can sometimes trace the Northern Israelitish origin by peculiarities of form and expression.

iii. The synchronisms which he gives between the reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah are computed by himself, or by some redactor, and only in round numbers.

iv. The speeches, prayers, and prophecies introduced are perhaps based on tradition, but, since they reflect all the peculiarities of the compiler, must owe their ultimate form to him. This accounts for the fact that the earlier prophecies recorded in these books resemble the tone and style of Jeremiah,

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[22] "The Old Testament does not furnish a history of Israel, though it supplies the materials from which such a history can be constructed. For example, the narrative of Kings gives but the merest outline of the events that preceded the fall of Samaria. To understand the inner history of the time we must fill up this outline with the aid of the prophets Amos and Hoshea." – Robertson Smith's *Preface* to translation of Wellhausen, p. vii.

but do not resemble such ancient prophecies as those of Amos and Hoshea.

v. The numbers which he adopts are sometimes so enormous as to be grossly improbable; and in these, as in some of the dates, allowance must be made for possible errors of tradition and transcription.

vi. "Deuteronomy," says Professor Driver, "is the standard by which the compiler judges both men and actions; and the history from the beginning of Solomon's reign is presented, not in a purely 'objective' form (as *e. g.* in 2 Sam. ix. – xx.), but from the point of view of the Deuteronomic code.[23]… The principles which, in his view, the history as a whole is to exemplify, are already expressed succinctly in the charge which he represents

[23] "In der Chronik," on the other hand, "ist es der Pentateuch, d.h. vor Allem der *Priestercodex*, nach dessen Muster die Geschichte des alten Israels dargestellt wird" (Wellhausen, *Prolegom.*, p. 309). It has been said that the Book of Kings reflects the political and prophetic view, and the Book of Chronicles the priestly view of Jewish history. It is about the Pentateuch, its date and composition, that the battle of the Higher Criticism chiefly rages. With that we are but indirectly concerned in considering the Book of Kings; but it is noticeable that the ablest and most competent defender of the more conservative criticism, Professor James Robertson, D.D., both in his contribution to *Book by Book* and in his *Early Religion of Israel*, makes large concessions. Thus he says, "It is particularly to be noticed that in the Book of the Pentateuch itself the Mosaic origin is not claimed" (*Book by Book*, p. 5). "The anonymous character of all the historical writings of the Old Testament would lead us to conclude that the ancient Hebrews had not the idea of literary property which we attach to authorship" (p. 8). "It is long since the composite character of the Pentateuch was observed" (p. 9). "There may remain doubts as to when the various parts of the Pentateuch were actually written down; it may be admitted that the later writers wrote in the light of the events and circumstances of their own times" (p. 16).

David as giving to his son Solomon (1 Kings ii. 3, 4); they are stated by him again in chap. iii. 14, and more distinctly in chap. ix. 1-9. Obedience to the Deuteronomic law is the qualification for an approving verdict; deviation from it is the source of ill success (1 Kings xi. 9-13, xiv. 7-11, xvi. 2; 2 Kings xvii. 7-18), and the sure prelude to condemnation. Every king of the Northern Kingdom is characterised as doing 'that which was evil in the eyes of Jehovah.' In the Southern Kingdom the exceptions are Asa, Jehoshaphat, Jehoash, Amaziah, Uzziah, Jotham, Hezekiah, Josiah – usually, however, with the limitation that 'the high places were not removed' as demanded by the Deuteronomic law.[24] The constantly recurring Deuteronomic phrases which most directly illustrate the point of view from which the history is regarded are, '*To keep the charge of Jehovah'; 'to walk in the ways of Jehovah'; 'to keep* (or execute) *His commandments, or statutes, and judgments'; 'to do that which is right in the eyes of Jehovah'; 'to provoke Jehovah to anger'; 'to cleave to Jehovah*.' If the reader will be at the pains of underlining in his text the phrases here cited" (and many others of which Professor Driver gives a list), "he will not only realise how numerous they are, but also perceive how they seldom occur indiscriminately in the narrative as such, but are generally

[24] Driver, p. 189. Comp. Professor Robertson Smith: "The most notable feature in the extant redactions of the book is the strong interest shown in the Deuteronomic law of Moses, and especially in the centralisation of worship in the Temple on Zion, as pre-supposed in Deuteronomy and enforced by Josiah. This interest did not exist in ancient Israel, and is quite foreign to the older memories incorporated in the book."

aggregated in particular passages (mostly comments on the history, or speeches) which are thereby distinguished from their context, and shown to be presumably the work of a different hand."[25]

vii. It must not be imagined that the late compilation of the book, or its subsequent recensions, or the dogmatic colouring which it may have insensibly derived from the religious systems and organisations of days subsequent to the Exile, have in the least affected the main historic veracity of the kingly annals. They may have influenced the omissions and the moral estimates, but the events themselves are in every case confirmed when we are able to compare them with any records and monuments of Phœnicia, Moab, Egypt, Assyria, or Babylon. The discovery and deciphering of the Moabite stone, and of the painted vaunts of Shishak at Karnak, and of the cuneiform inscriptions, confirm in every case the general truth, in some cases the minute details, of the sacred historian. In so passing an allusion as that in 2 Kings iii. 16, 17 the accuracy of the narrative is confirmed by the fact that (as Delitzsch has shown) the method of obtaining water is that which is to this day employed in the Wady el-Hasa at the southern end of the Dead Sea.[26]

viii. The Book of Kings consists, according to Stade,[27] of, (*a*) 1 Kings i., ii., the close of a history of David, in continuation

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[25] Driver, p. 192.

[26] Delitzsch, *Genesis*, 6th ed., p. 567.

[27] *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, i. 73.

of 1 and 2 Samuel. The continuity of the Scriptures is marked in an interesting way by the word "and," with which so many of the books begin. The Jews, devout believers in the work of a Divine Providence, saw no discontinuities in the course of national events.[28]

(*b*) 1 Kings iii. – xi., a conglomerate of notices about Solomon, grouped round chaps. vi., vii., which narrate the building of the Temple. They are arranged by the præ-exilic compiler, but not without later touches from the Deuteronomic standpoint of a later editor (*e. g.*, iii. 2, 3). Chap. viii. 14-ix. 9 also belong to the later editor.

(*c*) 1 Kings xi. -2 Kings xxiii. 29, an epitome of the entire regal period of Judah and Israel, after the three first reigns over the undivided kingdom, compiled mainly before the Exile.

(*d*) 2 Kings xxiii. 30-xxv. 30, a conclusion, added, in its present form, after the Exile.

Two positions are maintained (A) as regards the text, and (B) as regards the chronology.

A. As regards the *text* no one will maintain the old false assertion that it has come down to us in a perfect condition. There are in the history of the text three epochs: 1, The Præ-Talmudic; 2, The Talmudic-Massoretic up to the time when vowel-points were introduced; 3, The Massoretic traditions of a later period. The marginal annotations known as Q'ri, "read" (plural, *Qarjan*), consist of glosses and euphemisms which were used in the service

[28] Even the First Book of Maccabees begins with καὶ ἐγένετο.

of the synagogue in place of the written text (K'tib); the oral tradition of these variations was known as the Massora (*i. e.*, tradition). The Greek version (Septuagint, LXX.), which is of immense importance for the history of the text, was begun in Alexandria under Ptolemy Philadelphus (b. c. 283-247). It presents many additions and variations in the Books of Kings.[29]

All Hebrew manuscripts, as is well known, are of comparatively recent date, owing to the strict rule of the Jewish Schools that any manuscript which had in the slightest degree suffered from time or use was to be instantly destroyed. The oldest Hebrew manuscript is supposed to be the Codex Babylonicus at St. Petersburg (a. d. 916), unless one recently discovered by Dr. Ginsburg in the British Museum be older. Most Hebrew manuscripts are later than the twelfth century.

The variations in the Samaritan Pentateuch, and in the Septuagint version – the latter of which are often specially valuable as indications of the original text – furnish abundant proof that no miracle has been wrought to preserve the text of Scripture from the changes and corruptions which always arise in the course of constant transcriptions.

[29] Stade, pp. 32 ff. Thus, in 1 Kings viii. 14-53, verses 12, 13 are in the Septuagint placed *after* verse 53, are incomplete in the Hebrew text, and have a remarkable reading in the Targum. Professor Robertson Smith infers that a Deuteronomic insertion has misplaced them in one text, and mutilated them in another. The order of the LXX. differs in 1 Kings iv. 19-27; and it omits 1 Kings vi. 11-14; ix. 15-26. It transposes the story of Naboth, and omits the story of Ahijah and Abijah, which is added from Aquila's version to the Alexandrian MS. See Wellhausen-Bleek, *Einleitung*, §§ 114, 134.

A further and serious difficulty in the reproduction of events in their historic exactitude is introduced by the certainty that many books of the Bible, in their present form, represent the results arrived at after their recension by successive editors, some of whom lived many centuries after the events recorded. In the Books of Kings we probably see many *nuances* which were not introduced till after the epoch-making discovery of the Book of the Law (perhaps the essential parts of the Book of Deuteronomy) in the reign of Josiah, b. c. 621 (2 Kings xxii. 8-14). It is, for instance, impossible to declare with certainty what parts of the Temple service were really coæval with David and Solomon, and what parts had arisen in later days. There appear to be liturgical touches, or alterations as indicated by the variations of the text in 1 Kings viii. 4, 12, 13. In xviii. 29-36 the allusion to the *Minchah* is absent from the LXX. in verse 36, and in 2 Kings iii. 20 another reading is suggested.

B. As regards the difficult question of *Chronology* we need add but little to what has been elsewhere said.[30] Even the most conservative critics admit that (1) the numbers of the Biblical text have often become corrupt or uncertain; and (2) that the ancient Hebrews were careless on the subject of exact chronology. The Chronology of the Kings, as it now stands, is historically true in its general outlines, but in its details presents us with data which are mutually irreconcilable. It is obviously artificial, and

[30] See Appendix on the Chronology.

is dominated by slight modifications of the round number 40.[31] Thus from the Exodus to the Building of the Temple is stated at 480 years, and from that period to the fiftieth year of the Exile also at 480 years. In the Chronicles there are eleven high priests from Azariah ben-Ahimaaz to the Exile of Jozadak, which, with the Exile period, gives twelve generations of 40 years each. Again, from Rehoboam to the Fall of Samaria in the sixth year of Hezekiah, following the 40 years' reign of Saul, of David, and of Solomon, we have: —

Rehoboam, Abijah	20	years.
Asa	41	"
Jehoshaphat, Jehoram	40	"
Ahaziah, Athaliah		
Joash	40	"
Amaziah, Uzziah	81	"
Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah	38	"
After the Fall of Samaria we have: —		
Hezekiah, Manasseh, Amon	80	"

and it can hardly be a mere accident that in these lists the number 40 is only modified by slight necessary details.

The history of the Northern Kingdom seems to be roughly trisected into 80 years before Benhadad's first invasion, 80 years of Syrian war, 40 years of prosperity under Jeroboam II., and

[31] See Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, pp. 285-87; Robertson Smith, *Journ. of Philology*, x. 209-13.

40 years of decline.[32] This is probably a result of chronological system, not uninfluenced by mystical considerations. For 480 = 40 × 12. *Forty* is repeatedly used as a sacred number in connexion with epochs of penitence and punishment. *Twelve* (4 × 3) is, according to Bähr (the chief student of numerical and other symbolism), "the signature of the people of Israel" – as a whole (4), in the midst of which God (3) resides. Similarly Stade thinks that 16 is the basal number for the reigns of kings from Jehu to Hoshea, and 12 from Jeroboam to Jehu.[33]

It is possible that the synchronistic data did not proceed from the compiler of the Book of Kings, but were added by the last redactor.

Are these critical conclusions so formidable? Are they fraught with disastrous consequences? Which is really dangerous – truth laboriously sought for, or error accepted with unreasoning blindness and maintained with invincible prejudice?

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[32] *Encycl. Brit.*, s.v. Kings (W.R.S.).

[33] See Stade, i. 88-99; W. R. Smith, *l. c.*; Kreuz, *Zeitschr. f. Wiss. Theol.*, 1877, p. 404. Some of the dates, as Dr. W. R. Smith shows, are "traditional," and are probably taken from Temple records (*e. g.*, the invasion of Shishak, and the change of the revenue system in the twenty-third year of Joash). Taking these as data, we have (roughly) 160 years to the twenty-third year of Joash, + 160 to the death of Hezekiah, + 160 years to the return from the Exile = 480. He infers that "the existing scheme was obtained by setting down a few fixed dates, and filling up the intervals with figures in which 20 and 40 were the main units."

CHAPTER III.
THE HISTORIAN OF THE KINGS

> "The hearts of kings are in Thy rule and governance, and Thou dost dispose and turn them as it *seemeth best* to Thy godly wisdom."

Were we to judge the compiler or epitomator of the Book of Kings from the literary standpoint of modern historians, he would, no doubt, hold a very inferior place; but so to judge him would be to take a mistaken view of his object, and to test his merits and demerits by conditions which are entirely alien from the ideal of his contemporaries and the purpose which he had in view.

It is quite true that he does not even aim at fulfilling the requirements demanded of an ordinary secular historian. He does not attempt to present any philosophical conception of the political events and complicated interrelations of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. His method of writing the story of the Kings of Judah and Israel in so many separate paragraphs gives a certain confusedness to the general picture. It leads inevitably to the repetition of the same facts in the accounts of two reigns. Each king is judged from a single point of view, and that not the point of view by which his own age was influenced, but one arrived at in later centuries, and under changed conditions,

religious and political. There is no attempt to show that

> "God fulfils Himself in many ways,
> Lest one good custom should corrupt the world."

The military splendour or political ability of a king goes for nothing. It has so little interest for the writer that a brilliant and powerful ruler like Jeroboam II. seems to excite in him as little interest as an effeminate weakling like Ahaziah. He passes over without notice events of such capital importance as the invasion of Zerah the Ethiopian (2 Chron. xiv. 9-15, xvi. 8); the wars of Jehoshaphat against Edom, Ammon, and Moab (2 Chron. xx. 1-25); of Uzziah against the Philistines (2 Chron. xxvi. 6-8); and of the Assyrians against Manasseh (2 Chron. xxxiii. 11-13). He neither tells us that Omri subdued Moab, nor that he was defeated by Syria. He scarcely more than mentions events of such deep interest as the conquest of Jerusalem by Shishak (1 Kings xiv. 25, 26); the war between Abijam and Jeroboam (1 Kings xv. 7); of Amaziah with Edom (2 Kings xiv. 7); or even the expedition of Josiah against Pharaoh-nechoh (2 Kings xxiii. 29).[34] For these events he is content to relegate us to the best authorities which he used, with the phrase "and the rest of his acts, his wars, and all that he did." The fact that Omri was the founder of so powerful a dynasty that the Kings of Israel were known to Assyria as "the House of Omri," does not induce him

[34] *Speaker's Commentary*, ii. 477.

to give more than a passing notice to that king. It did not come within his province to record such memorable circumstances as that Ahab fought with the Aramæan host against Assyria at the battle of Karkar, or that the bloodstained Jehu had to send a large tribute to Shalmaneser II.

There is a certain monotony in the grounds given for the moral judgments passed on each successive monarch. One unchanging formula tells us of every one of the kings of Israel that "*he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord*," with exclusive reference in most cases to "the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, wherewith he made Israel to sin." The unfavourable remark about king after king of Judah that "*nevertheless the high places were not taken away; the people offered and burnt incense yet in the high places*" (1 Kings xv. 14, xxii. 43; 2 Kings xii. 3, xiv. 4) makes no allowance for the fact that high places dedicated to Jehovah had been previously used unblamed by the greatest judges and seers, and that the feeling against them had only entered into the national life in later days.

It belongs to the same essential view of history that the writer's attention is so largely occupied by the activity of the prophets, whose personality often looms far more largely on his imagination than that of the kings. If we were to remove from his pages all that he tells us of Nathan, Ahijah of Shiloh, Shemaiah, Jehu the son of Hanani, Elijah, Elisha, Micaiah, Isaiah, Huldah, Jonah, and various nameless "men of God,"[35] the

[35] 1 Kings xiii. 1-32, xx. 13-15, 28, 35, 42; 2 Kings xxi. 10-15.

residuum would be meagre indeed. The silence as to Jeremiah is a remarkable circumstance which no theory has explained; but we must remember the small extent of the compiler's canvas, and that, even as it is, we should have but a dim insight into the condition of the two kingdoms if we did not study also the extant writings of contemporary prophets. His whole aim is to exhibit the course of events as so controlled by the Divine Hand that faithfulness to God ensured blessing, and unfaithfulness brought down His displeasure and led to national decline. So far from concealing this principle he states it, again and again, in the most formal manner.[36]

These might be objections against the author if he had written his book in the spirit of an ordinary historian. They cease to have any validity when we remember that he does not profess to offer us a secular history at all. His aim and method have been described as "prophetico-didactic." He writes avowedly as one who believed in the Theocracy. His epitomes from the documents which he had before him were made with a definite religious purpose. The importance or unimportance of kings in his eyes depended on their relation to the opinions which had come home to the conscience of the nation in the still recent reformation of Josiah. He strove to solve the moral problems of God's government as they presented themselves, with much distress and perplexity, to the mind of his nation in the days of its decadence and threatened obliteration. And in virtue of his

[36] 2 Kings xvii. 7-23, 32, 41, xxiii. 26, 27.

method of dealing with such themes, he shares with the other historical writers of the Old Testament a right to be regarded as one of the *Prophetæ priores*.[37]

What were those problems?

They were the old problems respecting God's moral government of the world which always haunted the Jewish mind, complicated by the disappointment of national convictions about the promises of God to the race of Abraham and the family of David.

The Exile was already imminent – it had indeed partly begun in the deportation of Jehoiakin and many Jews to Babylon (b. c. 598) – when the book saw the light. The writer was compelled to look back with tears on "the days that were no more." The epoch of Israel's splendour and dominion seemed to have passed for ever. And yet, was not God the true Governor of His people? Had He not chosen Jacob for Himself, and Israel for His own possession? Had not Abraham received the promise that his seed should be as the sand of the sea, and that in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed? Or was it a mere illusion that "when Israel was a child I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son"? The writer clung with unquenchable faith to his convictions about the destinies of his people, and yet every year seemed to render their fulfilment more distant and more impossible.

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[37] נְבִיאִים רִאשֹׁנִים. The three greater and twelve minor prophets are called *prophetæ posteriores* (נְבִיאִים אַחֲרוֹנִים). Daniel is classed among the Hagiographa (כְּתוּבִים). This title of "former prophets" was, however, given by the Jews to the historic books from the mistaken fancy that they were all *written* by prophets.

The promise to Abraham had been renewed to Isaac, and to Jacob, and to the patriarchs; but to David and his house it had been reiterated with special emphasis and fresh details. That promise, as it stood recorded in 2 Sam. vii. 12-16, was doubtless in the writer's hands. The election of Israel as "God's people" is "a world-historic fact, the fundamental miracle which no criticism can explain away."[38] And, in addition, God had sworn in His holiness that He would not forsake David. "When thy days be fulfilled," He had said, "and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee … and will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for My name, and *I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever, I will be his father, and he shall be My son*. If he commit iniquity, I will chastise him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men. *But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul whom I put away before thee, and thy house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee; thy throne shall be established for ever.*" This promise haunted the imagination of the compiler of the Book of Kings. He repeatedly refers to it, and it is so constantly present to his mind that his whole narrative seems to be a comment, and often a perplexed and half-despairing comment, upon it.[39] Yet he resisted the assaults of

[38] Martensen, *Dogmatics*, p. 363.

[39] 2 Sam. vii. 12-16; 1 Kings xi. 36, xv. 4; 2 Kings viii. 19, xxv. 27-30. "His object evidently was," says Professor Robertson, "to exhibit the bloom and decay of the Kingdom of Israel, and to trace the influences which marked its varying destiny. He proceeds on the fixed idea that the promise given to David of a sure house remained

despair. The Lord had made a faithful oath unto David, and He would *not* depart from it.

It is this that makes him linger so lovingly on the glories of the reign of Solomon. At first they seem to inaugurate an era of overwhelming and permanent prosperity. Because Solomon was the heir of David whom God had chosen, his dominion is established without an effort in spite of a formidable conspiracy. Under his wise, pacific rule the united kingdom springs to the zenith of its greatness. The writer dwells with fond regret upon the glories of the Temple, the Empire, and the Court of the wise king. He records God's renewed promises to him that there should not be any among the kings like unto him all his days. Alas! the splendid visions had faded away like an unsubstantial pageant. Glory had led to vice and corruption. Worldly policy carried apostasy in its train. The sun of Solomon set in darkness, as the sun of David had set in decrepitude and blood. "And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, who had appeared unto him twice: … but he kept not that which the Lord commanded. Wherefore the Lord said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept My covenant, … I will surely rend the kingdom from thee… Notwithstanding in thy day I will not do it for David thy father's sake… Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son, for David My servant's sake,

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in force during all the vicissitudes of the divided kingdom, and was not even frustrated by the fall of the kingdom of Judah."

and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen."[40]

Thus at one blow the heir of "Solomon in all his glory" dwindles into the kinglet of a paltry little province not nearly so large as the smallest of English counties. So insignificant, in fact, do the fortunes of the kingdom become, that, for long periods, it has no history worth speaking of. The historian is driven to occupy himself with the northern tribes because they are the scene of the activity of two glorious though widely different prophets. From first to last we seem to hear in the prose of the annalist the cry of the troubled Psalmist, "Lord, where are Thy old loving-kindnesses which Thou swarest unto David in Thy truth? Remember, Lord, the rebukes that Thy servants have, and how I do bear in my bosom the rebukes of many people wherewith thine enemies have blasphemed Thee, and slandered the footsteps of Thine anointed." And yet, in spite of all, with invincible confidence, he adds, "Praised be the Lord for evermore. Amen and Amen."

And this is one of the great lessons which we learn alike from Scripture and from the experience of every holy and humble life. It may be briefly summed up in the words, "Put thou thy trust in God and be doing good, and He shall bring it to pass." In multitudes of forms the Bible inculcates upon us the lesson, "Have faith in God," "Fear not; only believe." The paradox of the New Testament is the existence of joy in the midst of sorrow and sighing, of exultation (ἀγαλλίασις) even amid the burning

[40] 1 Kings xi. 9-13.

fiery furnaces of anguish and persecution. The secret of both Testaments alike is the power to maintain an unquenchable faith, an unbroken peace, an indomitable trust amid every complication of disaster and apparent overthrow. The writer of the Book of Kings saw that God is patient, because He is eternal; that even the histories of nations, not individual lives only, are but as one ticking of a clock amid the eternal silence; that God's ways are not man's ways. And because this is so – because God sitteth above the water floods and remaineth a King for ever – therefore we can attain to that ultimate triumph of faith which consists in holding fast our profession, not only amid all the waves and storms of calamity, but even when we are brought face to face with that which wears the aspect of absolute and final failure. The historian says in the name of his nation what the saint has so often to say in his own, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Amos, earliest of the prophets whose written utterances have been preserved, undazzled by the magnificent revival of the Northern Kingdom under Jeroboam II., was still convinced that the future lay with the poor fallen "booth" of David's royalty: "And I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old, … saith the Lord that doeth this."[41] In many a dark age of Jewish affliction this fire of conviction has still burned amid the ashes of national hopes after it had seemed to have flickered out under white heaps of chilly dust.[42]

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[41] Amos ix. 11, 12.

[42] Psalm lxxxix. 48-50.

CHAPTER IV.
GOD IN HISTORY

"The Lord remaineth a King for ever."

Had the compiler of the Book of Kings been so incompetent and valueless an historian as some critics have represented, it would indeed have been strange that his book should have kindled so immortal an interest, or have taken its place securely in the Jewish canon among the most sacred books of the world. He could not have secured this recognition without real and abiding merits. His greatness appears by the manner in which he grapples with, and is not crushed by, the problems presented to him by the course of events to him so dismal.

1. He wrote after Israel had long been scattered among the nations. The sons of Jacob had been deported into strange lands to be hopelessly lost and absorbed amid heathen peoples. The district which had been assigned to the Ten Tribes after the conquest of Joshua had been given over to an alien and mongrel population. The worst anticipations of northern prophets like Amos and Hoshea had been terribly fulfilled. The glory of Samaria had been wiped out, as when one wipeth a dish, wiping and turning it upside down. From the beginning of Israel's separate dominion the prophets saw the germ of its final ruin in what is called the "calf-worship" of Jeroboam, which prepared

the way for the Baal-worship introduced by the House of Omri. In the two and a half centuries of Samaria's existence the compiler of this history finds nothing of eternal interest except the activity of God's great messengers. In the history of Judah the better reigns of a Jehoshaphat, of a Hezekiah, of a Josiah, had shed a sunset gleam over the waning fortunes of the remnant of God's people. Hezekiah and Josiah, with whatever deflections, had both ruled in the theocratic spirit. They had both inaugurated reforms. The reformation achieved by the latter was so sweeping and thorough as to kindle the hope that the deep wound inflicted on the nation by the manifold crimes of Manasseh had been healed. But it was not so. The records of these two best kings end, nevertheless, in prophecies of doom.[43] The results of their reforming efforts proved to be partial and unsatisfactory. A race of vassal weaklings succeeded. Jehoahaz was taken captive by the Egyptians, who set up Jehoiakim as their puppet. He submits to Nebuchadnezzar, attempts a weak revolt, and is punished. In the short reign of Jehoiachin the captivity begins, and the futile rebellion of Zedekiah leads to the deportation of his people, the burning of the Holy City, and the desecration of the Temple. It seemed as though the ruin of the olden hopes could not have been more absolute. Yet the historian will not abandon them. Clinging to God's promises with desperate and pathetic tenacity he gilds his last page, as with one faint sunbeam struggling out of the stormy darkness of the exile, by narrating how Evil-merodach

[43] 2 Kings xx. 16-18, xxii. 16-20.

released Jehoiachin from his long captivity, and treated him with kindness, and advanced him to the first rank among the vassal kings in the court of Babylon. If the ruler of Judah must be a hopeless prisoner, let him at least occupy among his fellow-prisoners a sad pre-eminence!

2. The historian has been blamed for the perpetual gloom which enwraps his narrative. Surely the criticism is unjust. He did not invent his story. He is no whit more gloomy than Thucydides, who had to record how the brief gleam of Athenian glory sank in the Bay of Syracuse into a sea of blood. He is not half so gloomy as Tacitus, who is forced to apologise for the "hues of earthquake and eclipse" which darken his every page. The gloom lay in the events of which he desired to be the faithful recorder. He certainly did not love gloom. He lingers at disproportionate length over the grandeur of the reign of Solomon, dilating fondly upon every element of his magnificence, and unwilling to tear himself away from the one period which realised his ideal expectations. After that period his spirits sink. He cared less to deal with a divided kingdom of which only the smallest fragment was even approximately faithful. There could be nothing but gloom in the record of shortlived, sanguinary, and idolatrous dynasties, which succeeded each other like the scenes of a grim phantasmagoria in Samaria and Jezreel. There could be nothing but gloom in the story of that northern kingdom in which king after king was dogged to ruin by the politic unfaithfulness of the rebel by whom it had been founded. Nor could there be

much real brightness in the story of humiliated Judah. There also many kings preferred a diplomatic worldliness to reliance on their true source of strength. Even in Judah there were kings who defiled God's own temple with heathen abominations; and a saint like Hezekiah had been followed by an apostate like Manasseh. Had Judah been content to dwell in the defence of the Most High and abide under the shadow of the Almighty, she would have been defended under His wings and been safe beneath His feathers; His righteousness and truth would have been her shield and buckler. He who protected her in the awful crisis of Sennacherib's invasion had proved that He never faileth them that trust Him. But her kings had preferred to lean on such a bruised reed as Egypt, which broke under the weight, and pierced the hand of all who relied on her assistance. "But ye said, Nay, but we will flee upon horses; therefore shall ye flee: and, We will ride upon the swift; therefore shall they that pursue you be swift."[44]

3. And has not gloom been the normal characteristic of many a long period of human history? It is with the life of nations as with the life of men. With nations, too, there is "a perpetual fading of all beauty into darkness, and of all strength into dust." Humanity advances, but it advances over the ruins of peoples and the wrecks of institutions. Truth forces its way into acceptance, but its progress is "from scaffold to scaffold, and from stake to stake." All who have generalised on the course of history have

[44] Isa. xxx. 16.

been forced to recognise its agonies and disappointments. There, says Byron,

> "There is the moral of all human tales;
> 'Tis but the same rehearsal of the past;
> First Freedom, and then Glory – when that fails,
> Wealth, Vice, Corruption – Barbarism at last.
> And History, with all her volumes vast,
> Hath but one page: 'tis better written here
> Where gorgeous tyranny hath thus amassed
> All treasures, all delights that eye or ear,
> Heart, soul could seek, tongue ask."

Mr. J. R. Lowell, looking at the question from another side, sings: —

> "Careless seems the Great Avenger; History's pages but record
> One death-grapple in the darkness 'twixt all systems and the Word;
> Truth for ever on the scaffold, Wrong for ever on the throne —
> Yet that scaffold sways the Future, and behind the dim unknown
> Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above His own."

Mr. W. H. Lecky, again, considering the facts of national

story from the point of view of heredity, and the permanent consequences of wrong-doing, sings: —

> "The voice of the afflicted is rising to the sun,
> The thousands who have perished for the selfishness of one;
> The judgment-seat polluted, the altar overthrown,
> The sighing of the exile, the tortured captive's groan,
> The many crushed and plundered to gratify the few,
> The hounds of hate pursuing the noble and the true."

Or, if we desire a prose authority, can we deny this painful estimate of Mr. Ruskin? – "Truly it seems to me as I gather in my mind the evidence of insane religion, degraded art, merciless war, sullen toil, detestable pleasure, and vain or vile hope in which the nations of the world have lived since first they could bear record of themselves, it seems to me, I say, as if the race itself were still half serpent, not extricated yet from its clay; a lacertine brood of bitterness, the glory of it emaciate with cruel hunger and blotted with venomous stain, and the track of it on the leaf a glittering slime, and in the sand a useless furrow."[45]

Dark as is the story which the author of the Book of Kings has to record, and hopeless as might seem to be the conclusion of the tragedy, he is responsible for neither. He can but tell the things that were, and tell them as they were; the picture is, after all, far less gloomy than that presented in many a great historic record. Consider the features of such an age as that

[45] *Queen of the Air*, p. 87.

recorded by Tacitus, with the "Iliad of woes" of which he was the annalist.[46] Does Jewish history offer us nothing but this horrible monotony of delations and suicides? Consider the long ages of darkness and retrogression in the fifth and following centuries; or the unutterable miseries inflicted on the seaboard of Europe by the invasions of the Norsemen – the mere thought of which drove Charlemagne to tears; or the long complicated agony produced by hundreds of petty feudal wars, and the cruel tyranny of marauding barons; or the condition of England in the middle of the fourteenth century when the Black Death swept away half of her population; or the extreme misery of the masses after the Thirty Years' War; or the desolating horror of the wars of Napoleon which filled Germany with homeless and starving orphans. The annals of the Hebrew monarchy are less grim than these; yet the House of Israel might also seem to have been chosen out for a pre-eminence of sorrow which ended in making Jerusalem "a rendezvous for the extermination of the race." When once the Jewish wars began —

> "Vengeance! thy fiery wing their race pursued,
> Thy thirsty poniard blushed with infant blood!
> Roused at thy call and panting still for game
> The bird of war, the Latin eagle came.
> Then Judah raged, by ruffian discord led,
> Drunk with the steamy carnage of the dead;

[46] Tac., *Hist.*, 1, 2: "Opus aggredior opimum casibus, atrox prœliis, discors seditionibus, ipsa etiam pace sævum."

He saw his sons by dubious slaughter fall,
And war without, and death within the wall."

Probably no calamity since time began exceeded in horror and anguish the carnage and cannibalism and demoniac outbreak of every vile and furious passion which marked the siege of Jerusalem; and, in the dreary ages which followed, the world has heard rising from the Jewish people the groan of myriads of broken hearts.

"The fruits of the earth have lost their savour," wrote one poor Rabbi, the son of Gamaliel, "and no dew falls."

In the crowded Ghettos of mediæval cities, during the foul tyranny of the Inquisition in Spain, and many a time throughout Europe, amid the iron oppression of ignorant and armed brutality, the hapless Jews have been forced to cry aloud to the God of their fathers: "Thou feedest Thy people with the bread of tears, and givest them plenteousness of tears to drink!" "Thou sellest Thy people for nought, and givest no money for them."

When the eccentric Frederic William I. of Prussia ordered his Court chaplain to give him in one sentence a proof of Christianity, the chaplain answered without a moment's hesitation: "The Jews, your Majesty." Truly it might seem that the fortunes of that strange people had been designed for a special lesson, not to them only, but to the whole human race; and the general outlines of that lesson have never been more clearly and

forcibly indicated than in the Book of Kings.

CHAPTER V.
HISTORY WITH A PURPOSE

> "History, as distinguished from chronicles or annals, must always contain a theory whether confessed by the writer or not. A sound theory is simply a general conception which co-ordinates a multitude of facts. Without this, facts cease to have interest except to the antiquarian." – Laurie.

The prejudice against history written with a purpose is a groundless prejudice. Herodotus, Thucydides, Livy, Sallust, had each his guiding principle, no less than Ammianus Marcellinus, St. Augustine, Orosius, Bossuet, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Kant, Turgot, Condorcet, Hegel, Fichte, and every modern historian worthy the name. They have all, as Mr. Morley says, felt the intellectual necessity for showing "those secret dispositions of events which prepared the way for great changes, as well as the momentous conjunctures which more immediately brought them to pass." Orosius, founding his epitome on the hint given by St. Augustine in his *De Civitate Dei*, begins with the famous words, "*Divina providentia agitur mundus et homo.*" Other serious writers may vary the formula, but in all their annals the lesson is essentially the same. "The foundation upon which, at all periods, Israel's sense of its national unity rested was religious in its character." "The history of Israel," says Stade, "is essentially a

history of religious ideas."[47]

Of course the history is rendered valueless if, in pursuing his purpose, the writer either falsifies events or intentionally manipulates them in such a way that they lead to false issues. But the man who is not inspired by his subject, the man to whom the history which he is narrating has no particular significance, must be a man of dull imagination or cold affections. No such man can write a true history at all. For history is the record of what has happened to men in nations, and its events are swayed by human passions, and palpitate with human emotions. There is no great historian who may not be charged with having been in some respects a partisan. The ebb and flow of his narrative, the "to-and-fro-conflicting waves" of the struggles which he records, must be to him as idle as a dance of puppets if he feels no special interest in the chief actors, and has not formed a distinct judgment of the sweep of the great unseen tidal forces by which they are determined and controlled.

The greatness of the sacred historian of the Kings consists in his firm grasp of the principle that God is the controlling power and sin the disturbing force in the entire history of men and nations.

Surely he does not stand alone in either conviction. Both propositions are confirmed by all experience. In all life, individual and national, sin is weakness; and human life without

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[47] Wellhausen, *History of Israel*, p. 432; Stade, *Gesch. des Volkes Israel*, i., p. 12; Robinson, *Ancient History of Israel*, p. 15.

God, whether isolated or corporate, is no better than

"A trouble of ants 'mid a million million of suns."

"Why do the heathen so furiously rage together," sang the Psalmist, "and why do the people imagine a vain thing?.. He that dwelleth in the heavens shall laugh them to scorn; the Lord shall have them in derision." Even the oldest of the Greek poets, in the first lines of the *Iliad*, declares that amid those scenes of carnage, and the tragic fate of heroes, Διὸς δ' ἐτέλειετο βουλή: —

"Achilles' wrath, to Greece the direful spring
Of woes unnumbered, Heavenly Goddess sing;
That wrath which hurled to Pluto's gloomy reign
The souls of countless chiefs untimely slain;
Whose limbs, unburied on the naked shore,
Devouring dogs and hungry vultures tore:
Since great Achilles and Atreides strove,
Such was the sovereign doom, and such the will of Jove!"

In the *Odyssey* the same conviction is repeated, where Odysseus says that "it is the fate-fraught decree of Zeus which stands by as arbiter, when it is meant that miserable men should suffer many woes."[48] The heathen, too, saw clearly that,

"Though the mills of God grind slowly,
Yet they grind exceeding small;"

[48] *Od.*, ix. 51, 52.

and that, alike for Trojans and Danaans, the chariot-wheels of Heaven roll onward to their destined goal.

Such words express a belief in the hearts of pagans identical with that in the hearts of the early disciples when they exclaimed: "Of a truth in this city against Thy holy Servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, were gathered together, *to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel foreordained to come to pass*."[49]

The ever-present intensity of these convictions leads the historian of the Kings to many shorter or longer "homiletic excursuses," in which he develops his main theme. And if he inculcates his high faith in the form of speeches and other insertions which perhaps express his own views more distinctly than they could have been expressed by the earlier prophets and kings of Judah, he adopts a method which was common in past ages and has always been conceded to the greatest and most trustworthy of ancient historians.

[49] Acts iv. 27, 28.

CHAPTER VI.
LESSONS OF THE HISTORY

> "Great men are the inspired texts of that Divine Book of Revelation of which a chapter is completed from epoch to epoch, and by some named History." – Carlyle.

Thus history becomes one of the most precious books of God. To speak vaguely of "a stream of tendency not ourselves which makes for righteousness," is to endow "a stream of tendency" with a moral sense. Philosophers may talk of "dass unbekannte höhere Wesen das wir ahnen"; but the great majority, alike of the wisest and the humblest of mankind, will give to that moral "Not-ourselves" the name of God. The truth was more simply and more religiously expressed by the American orator when he said that "One with God is always in a majority," and "God is the only final public opinion." Only thus can we account for the fact that events apparently the most trivial have repeatedly been overruled to produce the most stupendous issues, and opposition apparently the most overwhelming has been made to further the very ends which it most fiercely resisted. "The fierceness of man shall turn to Thy praise, and the fierceness of them shalt Thou restrain."

St. Paul expresses his sense of this fact when he says, "Not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are

called: but God chose the foolish things of the world, and the weak things of the world, and the base things of the world, and the things that are despised did God choose, and the things that are not, that He might bring to nought the things that are":[50] and that "because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."[51]

The most conspicuous instance of these laws in history is furnished by the victories of Christianity. It was against all probability that a faith not only despised but execrated – a faith whose crucified Messiah kindled unmitigated contempt, and its doctrine of the Resurrection unmingled derision – a faith confined originally to a handful of ignorant peasants drawn from the dregs of a tenth-rate and subjugated people – should prevail over all the philosophy, and genius, and ridicule, and authority of the world, supported by the diadems of all-powerful Cæsars and the swords of thirty legions. It was against all probability that a faith which, in the world's judgment, was so abject, should in so short a space of time achieve so complete a triumph, not by aggressive force, but by meek non-resistance, and that it should win its way through armed antagonism by the sole powers of innocence and of martyrdom – "not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts."

But though the thoughtful Israelite had no such glorious spectacle as this before him, he saw something analogous to

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[50] 1 Cor. i. 26-28.

[51] *Id.*, v. 25.

it. The prophets had been careful to point out that no merit or superiority of its own had caused the people to be chosen by God from among the nations for the mighty functions for which it was destined, and which it had already in part fulfilled. "And thou shalt answer before the Lord thy God, and say, A Syrian ready to perish was my father; he went down to Egypt, and sojourned there, few in number."[52] The chosen people could boast of no loftier ancestry than that they sprang from a fugitive from the land of Ur, whose descendants had sunk into a horde of miserable slaves in the hot valley of Egypt. Yet from that degraded and sensuous serfdom God had led them into the wilderness "through parted seas and thundering battles," and had spoken to them at Sinai in a voice so mighty that its echoes have rolled among the nations for evermore. If through their sins and shortcomings they had once more been reduced to the rank of captive strangers in a strange land, the historian knew that even then their lot was not so abject as it once had been. They had at least heroic memories and an imperishable past. He believed that though God's face was darkened to them, the light of it was neither utterly nor finally withdrawn. Nothing could henceforth shake his trust that, even when Israel walked in the valley of the shadow of death, God would still be with His people; that "He would *love* their souls out of the pit of destruction."[53] The vain-glorious efforts of the heathen were foredoomed to final impotence, for God ruled the

[52] Deut. xxvi. 5.

[53] Isa. xxxviii. 17 (Heb.).

raging of the sea, the noise of his waves, and the madness of the people.

If this high faith seemed so often to lead only to frustrate hopes, the historian saw the reason. His philosophy of history reduced itself to the one rule that "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is the reproach of any people." It is a sublime philosophy, and no other is possible. It might be written as the comment on every history in the world. The prophets write it large, and again and again, as in letters of blood and fire. Upon their pages, even from the days of Balaam,

> "In outline dim and vast
> Their mighty shadows cast
> The giant forms of Empires on their way
> To ruin: one by one
> They tower, and they are gone!"

Balaam had uttered his denunciation on Moab and Amalek and the Kenite. Amos hurled defiance on Moab, Ammon, and the Philistines. Isaiah taunted Egypt with her splendid impotence, and had said of Babylon: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!" As the sphere of national life enlarged, Nahum had poured forth his exultant dirge over the falling greatness of Assyria; and Ezekiel had painted the desolation which should come on glorious Tyre. These great prophets had read upon the palace-walls of the mightiest kingdoms the burning messages of doom, because they

knew that (to quote the words of a living historian) "for every false word and unrighteous deed, for cruelty and oppression, for lust and vanity, the price has to be paid at last… Justice and truth alone endure and live. Injustice and falsehood may be long-lived, but doomsday comes to them at last."

Has the course of ages at all altered the incidence of these eternal laws? Do modern kingdoms offer any exceptions to the universal experience of the past? Look at Spain. Corrupted by her own vast wealth, by the confusion of religion with the indolent acceptance of lies which paraded themselves as catholic orthodoxy, and by the fatal disseverance of religion from the moral law, she has sunk into decrepitude. Read in the utter collapse and ruin of her great Armada the inevitable Nemesis on greed, indolence, and superstition. Look at modern France. When the inflated bubble of her arrogance collapsed at Sedan as with a touch, two of her own writers, certainly not prejudiced in favour of Christian conclusions – Ernest Renan and Alexandre Dumas, *fils*– pointed independently to the causes of her ruin, and found them in her irreligion and her debauchery. The warnings which they addressed to their countrymen in that hour of humiliation, on the sanctity of family life and the eternal obligations of national righteousness, were identical with those addressed to the Israelites of old by Amos or Isaiah. The only difference was that the form in which they were uttered was modern and came with incomparably less of impassioned force.

The historian who, six hundred years before Christ, saw so

clearly, and illustrated with such striking conciseness, the laws of God's moral governance of the world stands far above the casual censure of those who judge him by a mistaken standard. We owe him a debt of the deepest gratitude, not only because he has preserved for us the national records which might otherwise have perished, but far more because he has seen and pointed out their true significance. Imagine an English writer trying to give a sketch of English history since the death of Henry VI. in a thin volume of sixty or seventy octavo pages! Is it conceivable that even the most gifted and brilliant of our historians could in so short a space have rendered such a service as this sacred historian has rendered to all mankind? Do we owe nothing to the vivid insight which enabled him to set so many characters clearly before us with a few strokes of the pen? It is true that it is the *history* which is inspired rather than the *record* of the history; but the record itself is of quite exceptional value. It is true that the prophetic historian and the scientific historian must be judged by wholly different canons of criticism; but may not the prophetic historian be much the greater of the two? By the light of his histories we can read all histories, and see the common lesson taught us by the life of nations, as by the life of individuals – which is, that obedience to God's law is the only path of safety, the only condition of permanence. To fear God and keep His commandments is the end of the matter, and is the whole duty of man. To one who follows the guiding clue of these convictions history becomes "Providence made visible."

Bossuet, like St. Augustine, found the key to all events in a Divine Will controlling and overruling the course of human destinies by a constant exercise of superhuman power. Even Comte "ascribed a hardly less resistible power to a Providence of his own construction, directing present events along a groove cut ever more and more deeply for them by the past." And Mr. John Morley admits that "whether you accept Bossuet's theory or Comte's – whether men be their own Providence, or no more than instruments or secondary agents in other hands – this classification of either Providence equally deserves study and meditation."

Thus, though the Jews were a small and insignificant people – though their kings were mere local sheykhs in comparison with the Pharaohs, or the kings of Assyria and Babylon; though they had none of that sense of beauty which gave immortality to the arts of Greece; though their temple was an altogether trivial structure when compared with the Parthenon or the Serapeum; though they had no drama which can be distantly compared with the Oresteia of Æschylus, and no epic which can be put beside the Iliad or the Nibelungen; though they had nothing which can be dignified with the name of a system of Philosophy – yet their influence on the human race – rendered permanent by their literature, or by that fragment of it which we call "The Books" as though there were none other in the world worth speaking of – has been more powerful than that of all nations upon the development of humanity. Millions have known the

names of David or Isaiah, who never so much as heard of Sesostris or of Plato. The influence of the Hebrew race upon mankind has been a moral and a religious influence. Leaving Christianity out of sight – though Christianity itself was nursed in the cradle of Judaism, and was the fulfilment of the Messianic idea which was the most characteristic element in the ancient religion of the Hebrews – the history of Israel is more widely known a million-fold than any history of any people. Professor Huxley is an unsuspected witness to this truth. He has declared that he knows of no other work in the world by the study of which children could be so much humanised, and made to feel that each figure in that vast historical procession fills, like themselves, but a momentary space in the interval between the two eternities. What other nation has contributed to the treasure of human thought elements so immeasurably important as the idea of monotheism, and the Ten Commandments, and the high spiritual teaching by which the prophets brought home to the consciousness of our race the nearness, the holiness, and the love of God? We do not underrate the value of Eternal Inspiration in the "richly-variegated wisdom" which "multifariously and fragmentarily" the Creator has vouchsafed to man; but the Jews will ever be the most interesting of nations, chiefly because to them were entrusted the oracles of God.[54]

[54] See Stade, i. 1-8.

BOOK II.
DAVID AND SOLOMON

CHAPTER VII.
DAVID'S DECREPITUDE

1 Kings i. 1-4

"Praise a fair day at night."

The old age of good men is often a beautiful spectacle. They show us the example of a mellower wisdom, a larger tolerance, a sweeter temper, a more unselfish sympathy, a clearer faith. The setting sun of their bright day tinges even the clouds which gather round it with softer and more lovely hues.

We cannot say this of David's age. After the oppressive splendour of his heroic youth and manhood there was no dewy twilight of honoured peace. We see him in a somewhat pitiable decrepitude. He was not really old; the expression of our Authorised Version, "stricken in years," is literally "entered

into days," but the Book of Chronicles calls him "old and full of days."[55] Josephus says that when he died he was only seventy years old. He had reigned seven years and a half in Hebron and thirty-three years in Jerusalem.[56] At the age of seventy many men are still in full vigour of strength and intellect, but the conditions of that day were not favourable to longevity. Solomon does not seem to have survived his sixtieth year; and it is doubtful whether any one of the kings of Israel or Judah – excepting, strange to say, the wicked Manasseh – attained even that moderate age. Threescore years and ten have always been the allotted space of human life, and few who long survive that age find that their strength then is anything but labour and sorrow.

But the decrepitude of David was exceptional. He was drained of all his vital force. He took to his bed, but though they heaped clothes upon him he could get no warmth. "He remained cold amid the torrid heat of Jerusalem." Then his physicians recommended the only remedy they knew, to give heat to his chilled and withered frame. It was the primitive and not ineffectual remedy – which was suggested twenty-two centuries later to the great Frederic Barbarossa – of contact with the warmth of a youthful frame.[57] So they sought out the fairest

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[55] 1 Chron. xxiii. 1.

[56] 2 Sam. v. 5.

[57] It is mentioned by Galen, vii.; Valesius, *De Sacr. Philos.*, xxix., p. 187; Bacon, *Hist. Vitæ et Mortis*, ix. 25; Reinhard, *Bibel-Krankheiten*, p. 171. See Josephus, *Antt.*, VII. xv. 3.

virgin in all the coasts of Israel to act as the king's nurse, and their choice fell on Abishag, a maiden of Shunem in Issachar.[58] There was no question of his taking another wife. He had already many wives and concubines, and what the bed-ridden invalid required was a strong and youthful nurse to cherish him. We are surprised at such total failure of life's forces. But David had lived through a youth of toil and exposure, of fight and hardship, in the days when his only home had been the dark and dripping limestone caves, and he had been hunted like a partridge on the mountains by the furious jealousy of Saul. The sun had smitten him by day and the moon by night, and the chill dews had fallen on him in the midnight bivouacs among the crags of Engedi. Then had followed the burdens and cares of royalty with guilty anxieties and deeds which shook his pulses with wrath and fear. Coincident with these were the demoralising luxuries and domestic sensualism of a polygamous palace. Worst of all, he had sinned against God, and against light, and against his own conscience. For a time his moral sense had slumbered, and retribution had been delayed. But when he awoke from his sensual dream, the belated punishment burst over him in thunder and his conscience with outstretched finger and tones of menace must often have repeated to the murderous adulterer the doom of Nathan and the stern sentence, "Thou art the man!" Many a

[58] Now Solam, near *Zerin* (Jezreel), five miles south of Tabor (Robinson, *Researches*, iii. 462), on the south-west of Jebel el-Duhy (Little Hermon), Josh. xix. 18; 1 Sam. xxviii. 4.

vulgar Eastern tyrant would hardly have regarded David's sin as a sin at all; but when such a man as David sins, the fact that he has been admitted into a holier sanctuary adds deadliness to the guilt of his sacrilege. True he was forgiven, but he must have found it terribly hard to forgive himself. God gave back to him the clean heart, and renewed a right spirit within him; but the sense of forgiveness differs from the sweetness of innocence, and the remission of his sins did not bring with it the remission of their consequences. From that disastrous day David was a changed man. It might be said of him as of the Fallen Spirit: —

> "His face
> Deep scars of thunder had entrenched, and care
> Sat on his faded cheek."

The Nemesis of sin's normal consequences pursued him to the end. Dark spirits walked in his house. Joab knew his guilty secrets, and Joab became the tyrannous master of his destiny. Those guilty secrets leaked out, and he lost his charm, his influence, his popularity among his subjects. He was haunted by an ever-present sense of shame and humiliation. Joab was a murderer, and went unpunished; but was not he too an unpunished murderer? If his enemies cursed him, he sometimes felt with a sense of despair, "Let them curse. God hath said unto them, Curse David." His past carried with it the inevitable deterioration of his present. In the overwhelming shame and horror which rent his heart during the rebellion of Absalom, he must often have felt tempted to the fatalism of desperation, like

that guilty king of Greek tragedy who, burdened with the curse of his race, was forced to exclaim, —

"Ἔπει τὸ πρᾶγμα καρτ' ἐπισπέρχει θεός
Ἴτω κατ' οὖρον, κῦμα Κωκυτοῦ λαχόν,
Θεῷ στυγηθὲν πᾶν το Λαΐου γένος."[59]

Curses in his family, a curse upon his daughter, a curse upon his sons, a curse upon himself, a curse upon his people, – there was scarcely one ingredient in the cup of human woe which, in consequence of his own crimes, this unhappy king had not been forced to taste. Scourges of war, famine, and pestilence – of a three years' famine, of a three years' flight before his enemies, of a three days' pestilence – he had known them all. He had suffered with the sufferings of his subjects, whose trials had been aggravated by his own transgressions. He had seen his sons following his own fatal example, and he had felt the worst of all sufferings in the serpent's tooth of filial ingratitude agonising a troubled heart and a weakened will. It is no wonder that David became decrepit before his time.

Yet what a picture does he present of the vanity of human wishes, of the emptiness of all that men desire, of the truth which Solon impressed on the Lydian king that we can call no man happy before his death! David's youth had been a pastoral idyll; his manhood an epic of war and chivalry; his premature

[59] Æsch., *Sept. c. Theb.*, 690.

age becomes the chronicle of a nursery. What different pictures are presented to us by David in his sweet youth and glowing bloom, and David in his unloved and disgraced decline! We have seen him a beautiful ruddy boy, summoned from his sheepfolds, with the wind of the desert on his cheek and its sunlight in his hair, to kneel before the aged prophet and feel the hands of consecration laid upon his head. Swift and strong, his feet like hart's feet, his arms able to bend a bow of steel, he fights like a good shepherd for his flock, and single-handed smites the lion and the bear. His harp and song drive the evil spirit from the tortured soul of the demoniac king. With a sling and a stone the boy slays the giant champion, and the maidens of Israel praise their deliverer with songs and dances. He becomes the armour-bearer of the king, the beloved comrade of the king's son, the husband of the king's daughter. Then indeed he is driven into imperilled outlawry by the king's envy, and becomes the captain of a band of freebooters; but his influence over them, as in our English legends of Robin Hood, gives something of beneficence to his lawlessness, and even these wandering years of brigandage are brightened by tales of his splendid magnanimity. The young chieftain who had mingled a loyal tenderness and genial humour with all his wild adventures – who had so generously and almost playfully spared the life of Saul his enemy – who had protected the flocks and fields of the churlish Nabal – who, with the chivalry of a Sydney, had poured on the ground the bright drops of water from the Well of Bethlehem for which he had thirsted,

because they had been won by imperilled lives – sprang naturally into the idolised hero and poet of his people. Then God had taken him from the sheepfolds, from following the ewes great with young ones, that he might lead Jacob His people and Israel His inheritance. Generous to the sad memories of Saul and Jonathan, generous to the princely Abner, generous to the weak Ishbosheth, generous to poor lame Mephibosheth, he had knit all hearts like the heart of one man to himself, and in successful war had carried all before him, north and south, and east and west. He enlarged the borders of his kingdom, captured the City of Waters, and placed the Moloch-crown of Rabbah on his head. Then in the mid-flush of his prosperity, in his pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness, "the tempting opportunity met the susceptible disposition," and David forgat God who had done so great things for him.

The people must have felt how deep was the debt of gratitude which they owed to him. He had given them a consciousness of power yet undeveloped; a sense of the unity of their national life perpetuated by the possession of a capital which has been famous to all succeeding ages. To David the nation owed the conquest of the stronghold of Jebus, and they would feel that "as the hills stand about Jerusalem so standeth the Lord round about them that fear Him."[60] The king who associates his name with a national capital – as Nebuchadnezzar built great Babylon, or Constantine chose Byzantium – secures the strongest claim

[60] See Psalm cxxii. 3-5.

to immortality. But the choice made by David for his capital showed an intuition as keen as that which has immortalised the fame of the Macedonian conqueror in the name of Alexandria. Jerusalem is a city which belongs to all time, and even under the curse of Turkish rule it has not lost its undying interest. But David had rendered a still higher service in giving stability to the national religion. The prestige of the Ark had been destroyed in the overwhelming defeat of Israel by the Philistines at Aphek, when it fell into the hands of the uncircumcised. After that it had been neglected and half forgotten until David brought it with songs and dances to God's holy hill of Zion. Since then every pious Israelite might rejoice that, as in the Tabernacle of old, God was once more in the midst of His people. The merely superstitious might only regard the Ark as a fetish – the fated Palladium of the national existence. But to all thoughtful men the presence of the Ark had a deeper meaning, for it enshrined the Tables of the Moral Law; and those broken Tables, and the bending Cherubim which gazed down upon them, and the blood-sprinkled gold of the Mercy-Seat were a vivid emblem that God's Will is the Rule of Righteousness, and that if it be broken the soul must be reconciled to Him by repentance and forgiveness. That meaning is beautifully brought out in the Psalm which says, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, or who shall rise up into the holy place? Even he that hath clean hands and a pure heart: who hath not lifted up his mind unto vanity, nor sworn to deceive his neighbour."

To David more than to any man that conviction of the supremacy of righteousness must have been keenly present, and for this reason his sin was the less pardonable. It "tore down the altar of confidence" in many hearts. It caused the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, and was therefore worthy of a sorer punishment. And God in His mercy smote, and did not spare.

He sinned: then came earthquake and eclipse. His earthly life was shipwrecked in that place where two seas meet – where the sea of calamity meets the sea of crime.[61] Then followed the death of his infant child; the outrage of Amnon; the blood of the brutal ravisher shed by his brother's hands; the flight of Absalom; his insolence, his rebellion, his deadly insult to his father's household; the long day of flight and shame and weeping and curses, as David ascended the slope of Olivet and went down into the Valley of Jordan; the sanguinary battle; the cruel murder of the beloved rebel; the insolence of Joab; the heartrending cry, "O Absalom, my son, my son Absalom; would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

Not even then had David's trials ended. He had to endure the fierce quarrel between Israel and Judah; the rebellion of Sheba; the murder of Amasa, which he dared not punish. He had to sink into the further sin of pride in numbering the people, and to see the Angel of the Plague standing with drawn sword over the threshing-floor of Araunah, while his people – those sheep who had not offended – died around him by thousands. After

[61] See Kittel, ii. 147.

such a life he was made to feel that it was not for blood-stained hands like his to rear the Temple, though he had said, "I will not suffer mine eyes to sleep nor mine eyelids to slumber, neither the temples of my head to take any rest till I find a place for the tabernacle of the Lord, a habitation for the mighty God of Jacob." And now we see him surrounded by intrigues; alienated from the friends and advisers of his youth; shivering in his sick-room; attended by his nurse; feeble, apathetic, the ghost and wreck of all that he held been, with little left him of his life but its "glimmerings and decays."

It is an oft-repeated story. Even so we see great Darius

> "Deserted at his utmost need
> By those his former bounty fed;
> On the bare ground exposed he lies
> Without a friend to close his eyes."

So we see glorious Alexander the Great, dying as a fool dieth, remorseful, drunken, disappointed, at Babylon. So we see our great Plantagenet: —

> "Mighty victor, mighty lord,
> Low on his funeral couch he lies!
> No pitying heart, no eye afford
> A tear to grace his obsequies."

So we see Louis XIV., *le grand monarque*, peevish, *ennuyé*,

fortunate no longer, an old man of seventy-seven left in his vast lonely palace with his great-grandson, a frivolous child of five, and saying to him, "*J'ai trop aime la guerre; ne m'imitez point.*" So we see the last great conqueror of modern times, embittering his dishonoured island-exile by miserable disputes with Sir Hudson Lowe about etiquette and champagne. But among all the "sad stories of the deaths of kings" none ends a purer glory with a more pitiful decline than the poet-king of Israel, whose songs have been to so many thousands their delight in the house of their pilgrimage. Truly David's experience no less than his own may have added bitterness to the traditional epitaph of his son on all human glory: "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity."

CHAPTER VIII.
AN EASTERN COURT AND HOME

1 Kings i

> "Pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness." – Ezek. xvi. 49.

A man does not choose his own destiny; it is ordained for higher ends than his own personal happiness. If David could have made his choice, he might, indeed, have been dazzled by the glittering lure of royalty; yet he would have been in all probability happier and nobler had he never risen above the simple life of his forefathers. Our saintly king in Shakespeare's tragedy says: —

> "My crown is in my heart, not on my head;
> Not decked with diamonds and Indian stones,
> Nor to be seen. My crown is called Content;
> And crown it is which seldom kings enjoy."

David assuredly did not enjoy that crown. After his establishment at Jerusalem it is doubtful whether he could count more happy days than Abderrahman the Magnificent, who recorded that amid a life honoured in peace and victorious in war

he could not number more than fourteen.

We admire the generous freebooter more than we admire the powerful king. As time went on he showed a certain deterioration of character, the inevitable result of the unnatural conditions to which he had succumbed. Saul was a king of a very simple type. No pompous ceremonials separated him from the simple intercourse of natural kindliness. He did not tower over the friends of his youth like a Colossus, and look down on his superiors from the artificial elevation of his inch-high dignity. "In himself was all his state," and there was something kinglier in his simple majesty when he stood under his pomegranate at Migron, with his huge javelin in his hand, than in

> "The tedious pomp which waits
> On princes, when their rich retinue long
> Of horses led, and grooms besmeared with gold
> Dazzles the crowd, and sets them all agape."

We should not have assumed beforehand that there was anything in David's character which rendered external pomp and ceremony attractive to him. But the inherent flunkeyism of Eastern servility made his courtiers feed him with adulation, and approach him with genuflexions. Apparently he could not rise superior to the slowly corrupting influences of autocracy which gradually assimilated the court of the once simple warrior to that of his vulgar compeers on the neighbouring thrones. There is something startling to see what a chasm royalty has cleft between

him and the comrades of his adversity, and even the partner of his guilt who had become his favourite queen. We see it throughout the story of the last scenes in which he plays a part. He can only be addressed with periphrases and in the third person. "Let there be sought for *my lord the king* a young virgin; and let her stand before *the king*, and let her lie in thy bosom, that *my lord the king* may get heat." Bathsheba can only speak to him in such terms as, "Didst not thou, my lord, O king, swear unto thy handmaid?" and even she, when she enters the sick-chamber of his decrepitude, prostrates herself and does obeisance. Every other word of her speech is interlarded with "my lord the king," and "my lord, O king"; and when she leaves "the presence" she again bows herself with her face to the earth, and does reverence to the king[62] with the words, "May my lord, King David, live for ever." The anointed dignity of the prophet who had once so boldly rebuked David's worst crime does not exempt him from the same ceremonial, and he too goes into the inner chamber bowing his face before the king to the earth.

Insensibly David must have come to require it all, and to like it. Yet the unsophisticated instincts of his more natural youth would surely have revolted from it. He would have deprecated it as sternly as the Greek conqueror in the mighty tragedy who hates to walk to his throne on purple tapestries, and says to his

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[62] The same word is rendered "worship" in Psalm xlv. 11. Comp. 2 Sam. ix. 6; Esth. iii. 2-5. In 1 Chron. xxix. 20 we are told that the people "*worshipped*" the Lord and the king.

queen: —

> "Ope not the mouth to me, nor cry amain
> As at the footstool of a man of the East,
> Prone on the ground: so stoop not thou to me;"

or, as another has more literally rendered it: —

> "Nor like some barbarous man
> Gape thou upon me an earth-grovelling howl."[63]

But the royal position of David brought with it a surer curse than that which follows the extreme exaltation of a man above his fellows. It brought with it the permitted luxury of imaginary necessity for polygamy, and the man-enervating, woman-degrading paraphernalia of an Eastern harem. Jesse and Boaz, in their paternal fields at Bethlehem, had been content with one wife, and had known the true joys of love and home. But monogamy was thought unsuitable to the new grandeur of a despot, and under the curse of polygamy the joy of love, the peace of home, are inevitably blighted. In that condition man gives up the sweetest sources of earthly blessing for the meanest gratifications of animal sensuousness. Love, when it is pure and true, gilds the life of man with a joy of heaven, and fills it with a breath of Paradise. It renders life more perfect and more

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[63] "Μηδὲ βαρβάρου φωτὸς δίκηνΧαμαιπετὲς βόαμα προσχανῇς ἐμοί."Æsch., Agam., 887.

noble by the union of two souls, and fulfils the original purpose of creation. A home, blessed by life's most natural sanctities, becomes a saving ark in days of storm.

> "Here Love his golden shafts employs, here lights
> His constant lamp, and waves his purple wings,
> Reigns here and revels."

But in a polygamous household a home is exchanged for a troubled establishment, and love is carnalised into a jaded appetite. The Eastern king becomes the slave of every wandering fancy, and can hardly fail to be a despiser of womanhood, which he sees only on its ignoblest side. His home is liable to be torn by mutual jealousies and subterranean intrigues, and many a foul and midnight murder has marked, and still marks, the secret history of Eastern seraglios. The women – idle, ignorant, uneducated, degraded, intriguing – with nothing to think of but gossip, scandal, spite, and animal passion; hating each other worst of all, and each engaged in the fierce attempt to reign supreme in the affection which she cannot monopolise – spend wasted lives of *ennui* and slavish degradation. Eunuchs, the vilest products of the most corrupted civilisation, soon make their loathly appearance in such courts, and add the element of morbid and rancorous effeminacy to the general ferment of corruption. Polygamy, as it is a contravention of God's original design, enfeebles the man, degrades the woman, corrupts the slave, and destroys the home. David introduced it into the Southern

Kingdom, and Ahab into the Northern; – both with the most calamitous effects.

Polygamy produces results worse than all the others upon the children born in such families. Murderous rivalry often reigns between them, and fraternal affection is almost unknown. The children inherit the blood of deteriorated mothers, and the sons of different wives burn with the mutual animosities of the harem, under whose shadowing influence they have been brought up. When Napoleon was asked the greatest need of France, he answered in the one laconic word, "*Mothers*"; and when he was asked the best training ground for recruits, he said, "*The nurseries, of course.*" Much of the manhood of the East shows the taint and blight which it has inherited from such mothers and such nurseries as seraglios alone can form.

The darkest elements of a polygamous household showed themselves in the unhappy family of David. The children of the various wives and concubines saw but little of their father during their childish years. David could only give them a scanty and much-divided attention when they were brought to him to display their beauty. They grew up as children, the spoiled and petted playthings of women and debased attendants, with nothing to curb their rebellious passions or check their imperious wills. The little influence over them which David exercised was unhappily not for good. He was a man of tender affections. He repeated the errors of which he might have been warned by the effects of foolish indulgence on Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli,

and even on the sons of the guide of his youth, the prophet Samuel. The wild careers of David's elder sons show that they had inherited his strong passions and eager ambition, and that in their case, as well as Adonijah's, he had not displeased them at any time in saying, "Why hast thou done so?"

The consequences which followed had been frightful beyond precedent. David must have learnt by experience the truth of the exhortation, "Desire not a multitude of unprofitable children, neither delight in ungodly sons. Though they multiply, rejoice not in them, except the fear of the Lord be with them: for one that is just is better than a thousand; and better it is to die without children, than to have those that are ungodly."[64]

David's eldest son was Amnon, the son of Ahinoam of Jezreel; his second Daniel or Chileab, son of Abigail, the wife of Nabal of Carmel; the third Absalom, son of Maacah, daughter of Talmai, King of Geshur; the fourth Adonijah, the son of Haggith. Shephatiah and Ithream were the sons of two other wives, and these six sons were born to David in Hebron. When he became king in Jerusalem he had four sons by Bathsheba, born after the one that died in his infancy, and at least nine other sons by various wives, besides his daughter Tamar, sister of Absalom. He had other sons by his concubines. Most of these sons are unknown to fame. Some of them probably died in childhood. He provided

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[64] Ecclus. xvi. 1-3. He must have had at least twenty sons, and at least one daughter (2 Sam. iii. 1-5, v. 14-16; 1 Chron. iii. 1-9, xiv. 3-7). Josephus again (*Antt.*, VII. iii. 3) has a different list.

for others by making them priests.[65] His line, down to the days of Jeconiah, was continued in the descendants of Solomon, and afterwards in those of the otherwise unknown Nathan. The elder sons, born to him in the days of his more fervent youth, became the authors of the tragedies which laid waste his house. They were youths of splendid beauty, and, as they bore the proud title of "the king's sons," they were from their earliest years encircled by luxury and adulation.[66]

Amnon regarded himself as the heir to the throne, and his fierce passions brought the first infamy into the family of David. By the aid of his cousin Jonadab, the wily son of Shimmeah, the king's brother, he brutally dishonoured his half-sister Tamar, and then as brutally drove the unhappy princess from his presence. It was David's duty to inflict punishment on his shameless heir, but he weakly condoned the crime. Absalom dissembled his vengeance for two whole years, and spoke to his brother neither good nor evil. At the end of that time he invited David and all the princes to a joyous sheep-shearing festival at Baal Hazor. David, as he anticipated, declined the invitation, on the plea that

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[65] *Kohanim.*

[66] From the fact that his son Eliada (2 Sam. v. 16) is called Beeliada (*i. e.*, "Baal knows") in 1 Chron. xiv. 7, it is surely a precarious inference that "now and then he paid his homage to some Baal, perhaps to please one of his foreign wives" (Van Oort, *Bible for Young People*, iii. 84). The true explanation seems to be that at one time Baal, "Lord," was not regarded as an unauthorised title for Jehovah. The fact that David once had *teraphim* in his house (1 Sam. xix. 13, 16) shows that his advance in knowledge was gradual.

his presence would burden his son with needless expense. Then Absalom asked that, as the king could not honour his festival, at least his brother Amnon, as the heir to the throne, might be present. David's heart misgave him, but he could refuse nothing to the youth whose magnificent and faultless beauty filled him with an almost doting pride, and Amnon and all the princes went to the feast. No sooner was Amnon's heart inflamed with wine, than, at a preconcerted signal, Absalom's servants fell on him and murdered him. The feast broke up in tumultuous horror, and in the wild cry and rumour which arose, the heart of David was torn with the intelligence that Absalom had murdered all his brothers. He rent his clothes, and lay weeping in the dust surrounded by his weeping servants. But Jonadab assured him that only Amnon had been murdered in revenge for his unpunished outrage, and a rush of people along the road, among whom the princes were visible riding on their mules, confirmed his words. But the deed was still black enough. Bathed in tears, and raising the wild cries of Eastern grief, the band of youthful princes stood round the father whose incestuous firstborn had thus fallen by a brother's hand, and the king also and all his servants "wept greatly with a great weeping."

Absalom fled to his grandfather the King of Geshur; but his purpose had been doubly accomplished. He had avenged the shame of his sister, and he was now himself the eldest son and heir to the throne.[67] His claim was strengthened by the superb

[67] Chileab was either dead, or was of no significance.

physique and beautiful hair of which he was so proud, and which won the hearts both of king and people. Capable, ambitious, secure of ultimate pardon, the son and the grandson of a king, he lived for three years at the court of his grandfather. Then Joab, perceiving that David was consoled for the death of Amnon, and that his heart was yearning for his favourite son,[68] obtained the intercession of the wise woman of Tekoah, and got permission for Absalom to return. But his offence had been terrible, and to his extreme mortification the king refused to admit him. Joab, though he had manœuvred for his return, did not come near him, and twice refused to visit him when summoned to do so. With characteristic insolence the young man obtained an interview by ordering his servants to set fire to Joab's field of barley. By Joab's request the king once more saw Absalom, and, as the youth felt sure would be the case, raised him from the ground, kissed, forgave, and restored him to favour.

For the favour of his weakly-fond father he cared little; what he wanted was the throne. His proud beauty, his royal descent on both sides, fired his ambition. Eastern peoples are always ready to concede pre-eminence to splendid men. This had helped to win the kingdom for stately Saul and ruddy David; for the Jews, like the Greeks, thought that "loveliness of person involves the blossoming promises of future excellence, and is, as it were, a prelude of riper beauty."[69] It seemed intolerable to this prince

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[68] 2 Sam. xiii. 39. "The soul of king David longed to go forth unto Absalom."

[69] Max. Tyr., *Dissert.*, 9 (Keil, *ad loc.*).

in the zenith of glorious life that he should be kept out of his royal inheritance by one whom he described as a useless dotard. By his personal fascination, and by base intrigues against David, founded on the king's imperfect fulfilment of his duties as judge, "he stole the hearts of the children of Israel." After four years[70] everything was ripe for revolt. He found that for some unexplained reason the tribe of Judah and the old capital of Hebron were disaffected to David's rule. He got leave to visit Hebron in pretended fulfilment of a vow, and so successfully raised the standard of revolt that David, his family, and his followers had to fly hurriedly from Jerusalem with bare feet and cheeks bathed in tears along the road of the Perfumers. Of that long day of misery – to the description of which more space is given in Scripture than to that of any other day except that of the Crucifixion – we need not speak, nor of the defeat of the rebellion. David was saved by the adhesion of his warrior-corps (the *Gibborim*) and his mercenaries (the Krêthi and Plêthi). Absalom's host was routed. He was in some strange way entangled in the branches of a tree as he fled on his mule through the forest of Rephaim.[71] As he hung helpless there, Joab, with needless cruelty, drove three wooden staves through his body in revenge for his past insolence, leaving his armour-bearer

[70] In 2 Sam. xv. 7 we should certainly alter "forty" into four.

[71] Rephaim seems a more probable reading than Ephraim in 2 Sam. xviii. 6; see Josh. xvii. 15, 18. Yet the name "Ephraim" may have been given to this transjordanic wood. The notion that he *hung by his hair* is only a conjecture, and not a probable one.

to despatch the miserable fugitive. To this day every Jewish child flings a contumelious stone at the pillar in the King's Dale, which bears the traditional name of David's Son, the beautiful and bad.[72]

The days which followed were thickly strewn with calamities for the rapidly ageing and heart-broken king. His helpless decline was yet to be shaken by the attempted usurpation of another bad son.

[72] His three sons had pre-deceased him; his beautiful daughter Tamar (2 Sam. xiv. 27) became the wife of Rehoboam. She is called Maachah in 1 Kings xv. 2, and the LXX. addition to 2 Sam. xiv. 27 says that she bore both names. The so-called tomb of Absalom in the Valley of Hebron is of Asmonæan and Herodian origin.

CHAPTER IX.
ADONIJAH'S REBELLION

1 Kings i. 5-53

"The king's word hath power; and who may say unto him, What doest thou?" – Eccles. viii. 4.

The fate of Amnon and of Absalom might have warned the son who was now the eldest, and who had succeeded to their claims.

Adonijah was the son of Haggith, "the dancer." His father had piously given him the name, which means "Jehovah is my Lord." He, too, was "a very goodly man," treated by David with foolish indulgence, and humoured in all his wishes. Although the rights of primogeniture were ill-defined, a king's eldest son, endowed as Adonijah was, would naturally be looked on as the heir; and Adonijah was impatient for the great prize. Following the example of Absalom "he exalted himself, saying, I will be king," and, as an unmistakable sign of his intentions, prepared for himself fifty runners with chariots and horsemen.[73] David, unwarned by the past, or perhaps too ill and secluded to be aware

[73] Morier tells us that in Persia "runners" before the king's horses are an indispensable adjunct of his state.

of what was going on, put no obstacle in his way. The people in general were tired of David, though the spell of his name was still great. Adonijah's cause seemed safe when he had won over Joab, the commander of the forces, and Abiathar, the chief priest. But the young man's precipitancy spoiled everything. David lingered on. It was perhaps a palace-secret that a strong court-party was in favour of Solomon, and that David was inclined to leave his kingdom to this younger son by his favourite wife. So Adonijah, once more imitating the tactics of Absalom, prepared a great feast at the Dragon-stone by the Fullers' Well, in the valley below Jerusalem.[74] He sacrificed sheep and fat oxen and cattle, and invited all the king's fifteen sons, omitting Solomon, from whom alone he had any rivalry to fear. To this feast he also invited Joab and Abiathar, and all the men of Judah, the king's servants, by which are probably intended "all the captains of the host" who formed the nucleus of the militia forces.[75] At this feast Adonijah threw off the mask. In open rebellion against David, his followers shouted, "God save king Adonijah!"

The watchful eye of one man – the old prophet-statesman, Nathan – saw the danger. Adonijah was thirty-five; Solomon was comparatively a child. "Solomon, my son," says David, "is

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[74] The Stone of Zoheleth, probably a sacred stone – one of the numerous isolated rocks of Palestine; is not mentioned elsewhere. The Fuller's Fountain is mentioned in Josh. xv. 7, xviii. 16; 2 Sam. xvii. 17. It was south-east of Jerusalem, and is perhaps identical with "Job's Fountain," where the wadies of Kedron and Hinnom meet (*Palestine Exploration Fund*, 1874, p. 80).

[75] Comp. 1 Kings i. 9-25.

young and tender."[76] What his age was at the date of Adonijah's rebellion we do not know. Josephus says that he was only twelve, and this would well accord with the fact that he seems to have taken no step on his own behalf, while Nathan and Bathsheba act for him. It accords less well with the calm magnanimity and regal decisiveness which he displayed from the first day that he was seated on the throne. The Greek proverb says, Ἀρχὴ ἄνδρα δείκνυσιν, "Power shows the man." Perhaps Solomon, hitherto concealed in the seclusion of the harem, was, up to this time, ignorant of himself as well as unknown to the people. Being unaware of the boy's capacity, many were taken in by the more showy gifts of the handsome Adonijah, whose age might seem to promise greater stability to the kingdom.

But Solomon from his birth upwards had been Nathan's special charge.[77] No sooner had he been born than David had entrusted the infant to the care of the man who had awakened his slumbering conscience to the heinousness of his offence, and had prophesied his punishment in the death of the child of adultery. An oracle had forbidden him to build the Temple because his

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[76] The same phrase is used of Rehoboam (2 Chron. xii. 13, xiii. 7) when he was twenty-one, reading אב for אמ, forty-one.

[77] 2 Sam. xii. 25: "And he sent by the hand of Nathan, the prophet; he called his name Jedidiah, because of the Lord" (A.V.). The verse is somewhat obscure. It either means that David sent the child to Nathan to be brought up under his guardianship, or sent Nathan to ask of the oracle the favour of some well-omened name (Ewald, iii. 168). Nathan was perhaps akin to David. The Rabbis absurdly identify him with Jonathan (1 Chron. xxvii. 32; 2 Sam. xxi. 21), nephew of David, son of Shimmeah.

hands were stained with blood, but had promised him a son who should be a man of rest, and in whose days Israel should have peace and quietness.[78] Long before, in Hebron, David, yearning for peace, had called his eldest son Absalom ("the father of peace"). To the second son of Bathsheba, whom he regarded as the heir of oracular promise, he gave the sounding name of Shelōmoh ("the Peaceful").[79] But Nathan, perhaps with reference to David's own name of "the Beloved," had called the child Jedidiah ("the beloved of Jehovah").

The secret of his destiny was probably known to few, though it was evidently suspected by Adonijah. To have proclaimed it in a crowded harem would have been to expose the child to the perils of poison, and to have doomed him to certain death if one of his unruly brothers succeeded in seizing the royal authority. The oath to Bathsheba that her son should succeed must have been a secret known at the time to Nathan only. It is evident that David had never taken any step to secure its fulfilment.

The crisis was one of extreme peril. Nathan was now old. He had perhaps sunk into the courtly complaisance which, content with one bold rebuke, ceased to deal faithfully with David. He had at any rate left it to Gad the Seer to reprove him for numbering the people. Now, however, he rose to the occasion,

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[78] 1 Chron. xxii. 6-9.

[79] LXX., Σαλωμών, and in Ecclus. xlvii. 13. Comp. Shelōmith (Lev. xxiv. 11), Shelōmi (Num. xxxiv. 27). But it became Σαλόμων in the New Testament, Josephus, the Sibylline verses, etc. The long vowel is retained in Salōme and in the Arabic Sūleyman, etc.

and by a prompt *coup d'état* caused the instant collapse of Adonijah's conspiracy.

Adonijah had counted on the jealousy of the tribe of Judah, on the king's seclusion and waning popularity, on the support of "all the captains of the host," on the acquiescence of all the other princes, and above all on the favour of the ecclesiastical and military power of the kingdom as represented by Abiathar and Joab. To Solomon himself, as yet a shadowy figure and so much younger, he attached no importance. He treated his aged father as a cipher, and Nathan as of no particular account.[80] He overlooked the influence of Bathsheba, the prestige which attached to the nomination of a reigning king, and above all the resistance of the body-guard of mercenaries and their captain Benaiah.

Nathan had no sooner received tidings of what was going on at Adonijah's feast than he shook off his lethargy and hurried to Bathsheba. She seems to have retained the same sort of influence over David that Madame de Maintenon exercised over the aged Louis XIV. "Had she heard," asked Nathan, "that Adonijah's coronation was going on at that moment? Let her hurry to King David, and inquire whether he had given any sanction to

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[80] Among Solomon's adherents are mentioned "Shimei and Rei" (1 Kings i. 8), whom Ewald supposes to stand for two of David's brothers, Shimma and Raddai, and Stade to be two officers of the Gibborim. Thenius adopts a reading partly suggested by Josephus, "Hushai, the friend of David." Others identify Rei with Ira; a Shimei, the son of Elah, is mentioned among Solomon's governors (*Nitzabim*, 1 Kings iv. 18); and there was a Shimei of Ramah over David's vineyards (1 Chron. xxvii. 27). The name was common, and meant "famous."

proceedings which contravened the oath which he had given her that her son Solomon should be his heir." As soon as she had broken the intelligence to the king, he would come and confirm her words.[81]

Bathsheba did not lose a moment. She knew that if Adonijah's conspiracy succeeded her own life and that of her son might not be worth a day's purchase. The helplessness of David's condition is shown by the fact that she had to make her way into "the inner chamber" to visit him. In violation of the immemorial etiquette of an Eastern household, she spoke to him without being summoned, and in the presence of another woman, Abishag, his fair young nurse. With profound obeisances she entered, and told the poor old hero that Adonijah had practically usurped the throne, but that the eyes of all Israel were awaiting his decision as to who should be his successor. She asked whether he was really indifferent to the peril of herself and of Solomon, for Adonijah's success would mean their doom.[82]

While she yet spoke Nathan was announced, as had been

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[81] Duncker, Meyer, Wellhausen, Stade, regard Solomon's accession as due to a mere palace intrigue of Nathan and Bathsheba, and David's dying injunctions as only intended to excuse Solomon. They treat 1 Kings ii. 1-12 as a Deuteronomic interpolation. Dillmann, Kittel, Kuenen, Budde, rightly reject this view. Stade says, "Nach menschlichen Gefühl, ein Unrecht war die Salbung Salomos." He thinks that "the aged David was over-influenced by the intrigues of the harem and the court" (i. 292).

[82] She said that they would be counted as "offenders" (*chattaim*) Comp. 1 Kings i. 12, where Nathan assumes that they will both be put to death. Thus Cassander put to death Roxana, the widow of Alexander the Great, and her son Alexander (Justin., xv. 2).

concerted between them, and he repeated the story of what was going on at Adonijah's feast. It is remarkable that he says nothing to David either about consulting the Urim, or in any way ascertaining the will of God. He and Bathsheba rely exclusively on four motives – David's rights of nomination, his promise, the danger to Solomon, and the contempt shown in Adonijah's proceedings. "The whole incident," says Reuss, "is swayed by the ordinary movements of passion and interest."[83] The news woke in David a flash of his old energy. With instant decision he summoned Bathsheba, who, as custom required, had left the chamber when Nathan entered. Using his strong and favourite adjuration, "As the Lord liveth, that hath redeemed my soul out of all distress,"[84] he pledged himself to carry out that very day the oath that Solomon should be his heir. She bowed her face to the earth in adoration with the words, "Let my lord, King David, live for ever." He then summoned Zadok, the second priest, Nathan, and Benaiah, and told them what to do. They were to take the body-guard[85] which was under Benaiah's command, to place Solomon on the king's own she-mule[86] (which was regarded as the highest honour of all honours), to conduct him down the Valley of Jehoshaphat to Gihon,[87] where the pool would furnish

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[83] Reuss, *Hist. des Israelites*, i. 409.

[84] Comp. 2 Sam. iv. 9; Psalm xix. 14.

[85] "The servants of your Lord." Comp. 2 Sam. xx. 6, 7.

[86] Comp. Gen. xli. 43; 1 Kings i. 33; Esth. vi. 8.

[87] 2 Chron. xxxii. 30, xxxiii. 14. It was apparently "the Virgin's Fountain," east of

the water for the customary ablutions, to anoint him king, and then to blow the consecrated ram's horn (*shophar*)[88] with the shout, "God save King Solomon!" After this the boy was to be seated on the throne, and proclaimed ruler over Israel and Judah.

Benaiah was one of David's twelve chosen captains, who was placed at the head of one of the monthly courses of 24,000 soldiers in the third month. The chronicler calls him a priest.[89] His available forces made him master of the situation, and he joyfully accepted the commission with, "Amen! So may Jehovah say!" and with the prayer that the throne of Solomon might be even greater than the throne of David. Joab was commander-in-chief of the army, but his forces had not been summoned or mobilised. Accustomed to a bygone state of things he had failed to observe that Benaiah's palace-regiment of six hundred picked men could strike a blow long before he was ready for action. These guards were the Krêthi and Plêthi,[90] "executioners and

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Jerusalem, in the Valley of Jehoshaphat.

[88] Comp. 2 Kings ix. 13.

[89] 1 Chron. xxvii. 5, where the true rendering is not "Benaiah the chief priest," as in A.V., nor "principal officer," as in the margin: but "Benaiah the priest, as chief."

[90] 1 Sam. xxx. 14; Josephus, σωματοφύλακες. The Targum calls them "archers and slingers" (which is unlikely), or "nobles and common soldiers." This body-guard is also said to be composed of Gittites (2 Sam. xv. 18, xviii. 2); but some suppose that they were so called not by nationality, but because they had served under David at Gath. The question is further complicated by the appearance of "Carians" (A.V., captains) in 2 Kings xi. 4, 15, and also in 2 Sam. xx. 23 (Heb.). The Carians were universal mercenaries (Herod., ii. 152; Liv., xxxvii. 40). That there was an early intercourse between Palestine and the West is shown by the fact that such words as peribolory,

runners," perhaps an alien body of faithful mercenaries originally composed of Cretans and Philistines. They formed a compact body of defenders, always prepared for action. They resemble the Germans of the Roman Emperors, the Turkish Janissaries, the Egyptian Mamelukes, the Byzantian Varangians, or the Swiss Guard of the Bourbons. Their one duty was to be ready at a moment's notice to carry out the king's behests. Such a picked regiment has often held in its hands the prerogative of Empire. They were, originally at any rate, identical with the *Gibborim*,[91] and had been at first commanded by men who had earned rank by personal prowess. But for their intervention on this occasion Adonijah would have become king.

While Adonijah's followers were wasting time over their turbulent banquet, the younger court-party were carrying out the unexpectedly vigorous suggestions of the aged king. While the eastern hills echoed with "Long live King Adonijah!" the western hills resounded with shouts of "Long live King Solomon!" The young Solomon had been ceremoniously mounted on the king's mule, and the procession had gone down to Gihon. There, with the solemnity which is only mentioned in cases of disputed

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machaera, macaina, lesche, pellex, have found their way into Hebrew (see Renan, *Hist. du Peuple Israel*, ii. 33).

[91] 2 Sam. xxiii. 8-39; 1 Chron. xi. 10-47; 1 Kings i. 8. The Gibborim are by some supposed to be a different body from the Krêthi and Plêthi (2 Sam. xv. 18, xx. 7); but from 1 Kings i. 8, 10, 38 they seem to be the same (Stade, i. 275). The thirty heroes at their head furnish, as Renan says, the first germ of a sort of "Legion of Honour."

succession,[92] Nathan the prophet and Zadok as priest anointed the son of Bathsheba with the horn of perfumed oil which the latter had taken from the sacred tent at Zion.[93] These measures had been neglected by Adonijah's party in the precipitation of their plot, and they were regarded as of the utmost importance, as they are in Persia to this day.[94] Then the trumpets blew, and the vast crowd which had assembled shouted, "God save King Solomon!" The people broke into acclamations, and danced, and played on pipes, and the earth rang again with the mighty sound.[95] Adonijah had fancied, and he subsequently asserted, that "all Israel set their faces on me that I should reign." But his vanity had misled him. Many of the people may have seen through his shallow character, and may have dreaded the rule of such a king. Others were still attached to David, and were prepared to accept his choice. Others were struck with the grave bearing and the youthful beauty of the son of Bathsheba. The multitude were probably opportunists ready to shout with the winner whoever he might be.

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[92] Saul (1 Sam. x. 1), David (1 Sam. xvi. 13, and twice afterwards, 2 Sam. ii. 4, v. 3), Jehu (1 Kings xix. 16), Joash (2 Chron. xxiii. 11).

[93] 1 Kings i. 39. "Tent," not "tabernacle," as in A.V. It has generally been supposed that Zadok took it from the tabernacle at Gibeon (1 Chron. xvi. 39), but there would have been no time to send so far. Zadok is called a "Seer" in the A.V. (2 Sam. xv. 27); but the true version may be "Seeth thou?" The LXX. and Vulgate omit the words.

[94] Morier, quoted by Stanley, p. 172, says that the Mustched, or chief priest, and the Munajem, or prophet, are always present at a Persian coronation.

[95] LXX., ἐῤῥάγη, ἤχησεν; Vulg., insonuit. Comp. Josephus, *Antt.*, VII. xiv. 3, 5.

The old warrior Joab, perhaps less dazed with wine and enthusiasm than the other guests of Adonijah, was the first to catch the sound of the trumpet blasts and of the general rejoicing, and to portend its significance. As he started up in surprise the guests caught sight of Jonathan, son of Abiathar, a swift-footed priest who had acted as a spy for David in Jerusalem at Absalom's rebellion,[96] but who now, like his father Abiathar and so many of his betters, had gone over to Adonijah. The prince welcomed him as a "man of worth," one who was sure to bring tidings of good omen;[97] but Jonathan burst out with, "Nay, but our Lord king David hath made Solomon king." He does not seem to have been in a hurry to bring this fatal intelligence; for he had not only waited until the entire ceremony at Gihon was over, but to the close of the enthronisation of Solomon in Jerusalem.[98] He had seen the young king seated on the throne of state in the midst of the jubilant people. David had been carried out upon his couch, and, bowing his head in worship before the multitude, had said, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which hath given one to sit on my throne this day, mine eyes even seeing it."

This intelligence fell like a thunderbolt among Adonijah's unprepared adherents. A general flight took place, each man being only eager to save himself. The straw fire of their

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[96] 2 Sam. xv. 27, xvii. 17.

[97] 2 Sam. xviii. 27. Heb., אִישׁ־חַיִל; LXX., ἀνὴρ δυνάμεως; Vulg., vir fortis. It is rather "virtuous," as in Prov. xii. 4.

[98] It is true that Solomon's adherents had wasted no time over a feast.

enthusiasm had already flared itself away. Deserted by every one, and fearing to pay the forfeit of his life, Adonijah fled to the nearest sanctuary, where the Ark stood on Mount Zion under the care of his supporter the high priest Abiathar.[99] There he caught hold of the horns of the altar – wooden projections at each of its corners, overlaid with brass. When a sacrifice was offered the animal was tied to these horns of the altar,[100] and they were smeared with the victim's blood just as in after days the propitiatory was sprinkled with the blood of the bull and the goat on the Great Day of Atonement. The mercy-seat thus became a symbol of atonement, and an appeal to God that He would forgive the sinful priest and the sinful nation who came before Him with the blood of expiation. The mercy-seat would have furnished an inviolable sanctuary had it not been enclosed in the Holiest Place, unapproachable by any feet but that of the high priest once a year. The horns of the altar were, however, available for refuge to any offender, and their protection involved an appeal to the mercy of man as to the mercy of God.[101]

There in wretched plight clung the fallen prince, hurled down in one day from the summit of his ambition. He refused to leave the spot unless King Solomon would first of all swear that he would not slay his servant with the sword.[102] Adonijah saw that

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[99] 1 Kings i. 50.

[100] Psalm cxviii. 27, and Exod. xxvii. 2 ff., xxix. 12, xxx. 10. Comp. Exod. xxi. 14.

[101] Exod. xxi. 14. It protected the homicide, but not the wilful murderer.

[102] 1 Kings i. 51. The words "this day" should be "first of all," *i. e.*, before I leave the

all was over with his cause. "God," says the Portuguese proverb, "can write straight on crooked lines;" and as is so often the case, the crisis which brought about His will was the immediate result of an endeavour to defeat it.

Solomon was not one of those Eastern princes who

"Bear like the Turk no brother near the throne."

Many an Eastern king has begun his reign as Baasha, Jehu, and Athaliah did, by the exile, imprisonment, or execution of every possible rival. Adonijah, caught red-handed in an attempt at rebellion, might have been left with some show of justice to starve at the horns of the altar, or to leave his refuge and face the penalty due to crime. But Solomon, unregarded and unknown as he had hitherto been, rose at once to the requirements of his new position, and magnanimously promised his brother a complete amnesty[103] so long as he remained faithful to his allegiance. Adonijah descended the steps of the altar, and having made sacred obeisance to his new sovereign[104] was dismissed with the laconic order, "Go to thine house." If, as some have conjectured, Adonijah had once urged on his father the condign punishment of Absalom, he might well congratulate himself on receiving

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sanctuary. Many must have been reminded of this scene when Eutropius, the eunuch-minister of Arcadius, under the protection of St. Chrysostom, cowered in front of the high altar at Constantinople.

[103] "There shall not a hair of him fall." Comp. 1 Sam. xiv. 45; 2 Sam. xiv. 11.

[104] "Bowed himself." Comp. 1 Kings i. 47.

pardon.[105]

[105] Grätz, i. 138 (E. T.).

CHAPTER X.
DAVID'S DEATH-BED

1 Kings ii. 1-11

"Omnibus idem exitus est, sed et idem domicilium." – Petron., *Satyr.*

In the Book of Samuel we have the last words of David in the form of a brief and vivid psalm, of which the leading principle is, "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God." A king's justice must be shown alike in his gracious influence upon the good and his stern justice to the wicked. The worthless sons of Belial are, he says, "to be beaten down like thorns with spear-shafts and iron."[106]

The same principle dominates in the charge which he gave to Solomon, perhaps after the magnificent public inauguration of his reign described in 1 Chron. xxviii., xxix. He bade his young son to show himself a man, and be rigidly faithful to the law of Moses, earning thereby the prosperity which would never fail to

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[106] 2 Sam. xxiii. 1-7. It is no part of my duty here to enter into the extent of David's share in the Psalms; but I think that it is an exaggerated inference (of Wellhausen and others) from Amos vi. 5, 6 to suppose that he only wrote festal and warlike songs.

attend true righteousness.[107] Thus would the promise to David – "There shall not fail thee a man on the throne of Israel" – be continued in the time of Solomon.

With our Western and Christian views of morality we should have rejoiced if David's charge to his son had ended there. It is painful to us to read that his last injunctions bore upon the punishment of Joab who had so long fought for him, and of Shimei whom he had publicly pardoned. Between these two stern injunctions came the request that he would show kindness to the sons of Barzillai,[108] the old Gileadite sheykh who had extended such conspicuous hospitality to himself and his weary followers when they crossed the Jordan in their flight from Absalom. But the last words of David, as here recorded, are: "his (Shimei's) hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood."[109]

In these avenging behests there was nothing which was regarded as unnatural, nothing that would have shocked the conscience of the age. The fact that they are recorded without blame by an admiring historiographer shows that we are reading

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[107] Apparently an allusion to Deut. xvii. 18-20. We read of no such exhortation having been addressed to Saul, or to David.

[108] Chimham accompanied David to Jerusalem (2 Sam. xvii. 27, xix. 37-40), and perhaps inherited his property at Bethlehem, where he founded the Khan (Jer. xli. 17), in the cavern stable of which it may be that Christ was born.

[109] Wellhausen, Stade, and others venture on the conjecture that David never gave these injunctions at all, but that they were invented afterwards to excuse Solomon for his acts of severity towards Adonijah's conspirators. I cannot see any valid ground for such arbitrary re-writing of the history. Shimei had taken no part in Adonijah's rebellion.

the annals of times of ignorance which God "winked at." They belong to the era of imperfect moral development, when it was said to them of old time, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy," and men had not fully learnt the lesson, "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." We must discriminate between the *vitia temporis* and the *vitia hominis*. David was trained in the old traditions of the "avenger of blood"; and we cannot be astonished, though we may greatly regret, that his standard was indefinitely below that of the Sermon on the Mount. He may have been concerned for the safety of his son, but to us it must remain a proof of his imperfect moral attainments that he bade Solomon look out for pretexts to "smite the hoary head of inveterate wickedness," and use his wisdom not to let the two offenders go down to the grave in peace.

The character of Joab furnishes us with a singular study. He, Abishai, and Asahel were the brave, impetuous sons of Zeruiah, the sister or half-sister of David. They were about his own age, and it is not impossible that they were the grandsons of Nahash, King of Ammon.[110] In the days of Saul they had embraced the cause of David, heart and soul. They had endured all the hardships and fought through all the struggles of his freebooting days. Asahel, the youngest, had been in the front rank of his *Gibborim*, and his foot was fleet as that of a gazelle upon the

[110] Zeruiah was "a sister of the sons of Jesse" (1 Chron. ii. 16), and was therefore a sister of Abigail, mother of Amasa; but she is called "the daughter of *Nahash*" (2 Sam. xvii. 25).

mountain. Abishai had been one of the three who, with jeopardy of their lives, had burst their way to Bethlehem when David longed to drink of the water of its well beside the gate. He had also, on one occasion, saved David's life from the giant Ishbi of Gath, and had slain three hundred Philistines with his spear. His zeal was always ready to flash into action in his uncle's cause. Joab had been David's commander-in-chief for forty years. It was Joab who had conquered the Ammonites and Moabites and stormed the City of Waters. It was Joab who, at David's bare request, had brought about the murder of Uriah. It was Joab who, after wise but fruitless remonstrance, had been forced to number the people. But David had never liked these rough imperious soldiers, whose ways were not his ways. From the first he was unable to cope with them, or keep them in order. In the early days they had treated him with rude familiarity, though in late years they, too, were obliged to approach him with all the forms of Eastern servility. But ever since the murder of Uriah, Joab knew that David's reputation and David's throne were in his hand. Joab himself had been guilty of two wild acts of vengeance for which he would have offered some defence, and of one atrocious crime. His murder of the princely Abner, the son of Ner, might have been excused as the duty of an avenger of blood, for Abner, with one back-thrust of his mighty spear, had killed the young Asahel, after the vain warning to desist from pursuing him. Abner had only killed Asahel in self-defence; but, jealous of Abner's power as the cousin of King Saul, the

husband of Rizpah, and the commander of the northern army, Joab, after bluntly rebuking David for receiving him, had without hesitation deluded Abner back to Hebron by a false message and treacherously murdered him. Even at that early period of his reign David was either unable or unwilling to punish the outrage, though he ostentatiously deplored it.

Doubtless in slaying Absalom, in spite of the king's entreaty, Joab had inflicted an agonising wound on the pride and tenderness of his master. But Absalom was in open rebellion, and Joab may have held that David's probable pardon of the beautiful rebel would be both weak and fatal. This death was inflicted in a manner needlessly cruel, but might have been excused as a death inflicted on the battle-field, though probably Joab had many an old grudge to pay off besides the burning of his barley field. After Absalom's rebellion David foolishly and unjustly offered the commandership of the army to his nephew Amasa. Amasa was the son of his sister Abigail by an Ishmaelite father, named Jether.[111] Joab simply would not tolerate being superseded in the command which he had earned by lifelong and perilous services. With deadly treachery, in which men have seen the antitype of the world's worst crime, Joab invited his kinsman to embrace him, and drove his sword into his bowels. David had heard, or perhaps had seen, the revolting spectacle which Joab

[111] 1 Chron. ii. 17. "Jether (*i. e.*, Jethro, 'pre-eminence') the Ishmaelite" has been altered in 2 Sam. xvii. 25 into Ithra, an *Israelite* (see 2 Sam. xix. 13). The way in which names have been tampered with is an interesting study, and often conceals Masoretic secrets.

presented, with the blood of war shed in peace, dyeing his girdle and streaming down to his shoes with its horrible crimson. Yet, even by that act, Joab had once more saved David's tottering throne. The Benjamite Sheba, son of Bichri, was making head in a terrible revolt, in which he had largely enlisted the sympathy of the northern tribes, offended by the overbearing fierceness of the men of Judah. Amasa had been either incompetent or half-hearted in suppressing this dangerous rising. It had only collapsed when the army welcomed back the strong hand of Joab. But whatever had been the crimes of Joab they had been condoned. David, on more than one occasion, had helplessly cried, "What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah?" "I am this day weak though anointed king, and these men, the sons of Zeruiah, are too hard for me." But he had done nothing, and, whether with or against his will, they continued to hold their offices near his person. David did not remind Solomon of the murder of Absalom, nor of the words of menace – words as bold as any subject ever uttered to his sovereign – with which Joab had imperiously hushed his wail over his worthless son. Those words had openly warned the king that, if he did not alter his line of conduct, he should be king no more. They were an insult which no king could pardon, even if he were powerless to avenge. But Joab, like David himself, was now an old man. The events of the last few days had shown that his power and influence were gone. He may have had something to fear from Bathsheba as the wife of Uriah and the granddaughter of Ahithophel; but his adhesion to

the cause of Adonijah had doubtless been chiefly due to jealousy of the ever-growing influence of the priestly soldier Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, who had so evidently superseded him in his master's favour. However that may be, the historian faithfully records that David, on his death-bed, neither forgot nor forgave; and all that we can say is, that it would be unfair to judge him by modern or by Christian principles of conduct.

The other victim whose doom was bequeathed to the new king was Shimei, the son of Gera. He had cursed David at Bahurim on the day of his flight, and in the hour of his extremest humiliation. He had walked on the opposite side of the valley, flinging stones and dust at David,[112] cursing him with a grievous curse as a man of Belial and a man of blood, and telling him that the loss of his kingdom was the retribution which had fallen upon him for the blood of the House of Saul which he had shed. So grievous was the trial of these insults that the place where the king and his people rested that night received the pathetic name of *Ayephim*, "the place of the weary."[113] For this conduct Shimei might have pleaded the pent-up animosities of the House of Saul, which had been stripped by David of all its honours, and of which poor lame Mephibosheth was the only scion left, after David had impaled Saul's seven sons and grandsons in human sacrifice at the demand

[112] David's enemies thought but little of the fact that David had spared Mephibosheth. They may have supposed that David spared him, not only because he was the son of the beloved Jonathan, but because being lame he could never become king. David's relations to him do not seem to have been very cordial.

[113] 2 Sam. xvi. 14 (Heb.). For Bahurim, see 2 Sam. xvi. 5, xvii. 18.

of the Gibeonites. Abishai, indignant at Shimei's conduct, had said, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king?" and had offered, then and there, to cross the valley and take his head. But David rebuked his generous wrath, and when Shimei came out to meet him on his return with expressions of penitence, David not only promised but swore that he should not die. No further danger surely could be anticipated from the ruined and humiliated House of Saul; yet David bade Solomon to find some excuse for putting Shimei to death.

How are we to deal with sins which are recorded of God's olden saints on the sacred page, and recorded without a word of blame?

Clearly we must avoid two errors – the one of injustice, the other of dishonesty.

1. On the one hand, as we have said, we must not judge Abraham, or Jacob, or Gideon, or Jael, or David, as though they were nineteenth-century Christians. Christ Himself taught us that some things inherently undesirable were yet permitted in old days because of the hardness of men's hearts; and that the moral standards of the days of ignorance were tolerated in all their imperfection until men were able to judge of their own deeds in a purer light. "The times of ignorance God overlooked," says St. Paul, "but now He commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent."[114] "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But *I say unto you,*

[114] Acts xvii. 30.

Love your enemies," said our Lord.[115] When Bayle and Tindal and many others declaim against "the immorality of the Bible" they are unfair in a high degree. They pass judgment on men who had been trained from infancy in opinions and customs wholly unlike our own, and whose conscience would not be wounded by many things which we have been rightly taught to regard as evil. They apply the enlightenment of two millenniums of Christianity to criticise the more rudimentary conditions of life a millennium before Christ. The wild justice inflicted by an avenger of blood, the rude atrocity of the *lex talionis*, are rightly abhorrent to us in days of civilisation and settled law: they were the only available means of restraining crime in unsettled times and half-civilised communities. In his final injunctions about his enemies, whom he might have dreaded as enemies too formidable for his son to keep in subjection, David may have followed the view of his day that his former condonations had only been co-extensive with his own life, and that the claims of justice *ought* to be satisfied.[116]

2. But while we admit every palliation, and endeavour to judge justly, we must not fall into the conventionality of representing David's unforgiving severity as otherwise than reprehensible *in itself*. Attempts to gloss over moral wrong-doing, to represent it as blameless, to invent supposed Divine sanctions and intuitions

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[115] Matt. v. 43, 44.

[116] There is something analogous to protection *granted only for a lifetime* in the fact that the homicide at a refuge city could not be slain there while the high priest lived. See Num. xxxv. 28.

in defence of it, can but weaken the eternal claims of the law of righteousness. The rule of right is inflexible: it is not a leaden rule which can be twisted into any shape we like. A crime is none the less a crime though a saint commits it; and imperfect conceptions of the high claims of the moral law, as Christ expounded its Divine significance, do not cease to be imperfect though they may be sometimes recorded without comment on the page of Scripture. No religious opinion can be more fatal to true religion than that wrong can, under any circumstances, become right, or that we may do evil that good may come. Because an act is relatively pardonable, it does not follow that it is not absolutely wrong. If it be dangerous to judge the essential morality of any earlier passage of Scripture by the ultimate laws which Scripture itself has taught us, it is infinitely more dangerous, and essentially Jesuitical, to explain away misdeeds as though, under any circumstances, they could be pleasing to God or worthy of a saint. The total omission of David's injunctions and of the sanguinary episodes of their fulfilment by the author of the Books of Chronicles, indicates that, in later days, they were thought derogatory to the pure fame both of the warrior-king and of his peaceful son.

David slept with his fathers, and passed before that bar where all is judged of truly. His life is an April day, half sunshine and half gloom. His sins were great, but his penitence was deep, lifelong, and sincere. He gave occasion for the enemies of God to blaspheme, but he also taught all who love God to praise and

pray. If his record contains some dark passages, and his character shows many inconsistencies, we can never forget his courage, his flashes of nobleness, his intense spirituality whenever he was true to his better self. His name is a beacon-light of warning against the glamour and strength of evil passions. But he showed us also what repentance can do, and we are sure that his sins were forgiven him because he turned away from his wickedness. "The sacrifices of God are a troubled spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." "I go the way of all the earth," said David. "In life," says Calmet, "each one has his particular route: one applies to one thing, another to another. But in the way to death they are all re-united. They go to the tomb by one path."[117]

David was buried in his own city – the stronghold of Zion; and his sepulchre – on the south part of Ophel, near the pool of Siloam – was still pointed out a thousand years later in the days of Christ.[118] As a poet who had given to the people splendid specimens of lyric songs; as a warrior who had inspired their youth with dauntless courage; as a king who had made Israel a united nation with an impregnable capital, and had uplifted it from insignificance into importance; as the man in whose family the distinctive Messianic hopes of the Hebrews were centred,

[117] Comp. Josh. xxiii. 14; Keil, *ad loc.*

[118] Acts ii. 29. Josephus says that both Hyrcanus and Herod opened it to find the treasures which legend asserted to have been buried there (*Antt.*, VII. xv. 3. Comp. XIII. viii. 4, XVI. vii.). The kings alone were buried in Jerusalem; but legend says that an exception was made in favour of Huldah the prophetess.

he must remain to the end of time the most remarkable and interesting figure in the long annals of the Old Dispensation.

CHAPTER XI.
AVENGING JUSTICE

1 Kings ii. 13-46

"The wrath of a king is as messengers of death." – Prov. xvi. 14.

The reign of Solomon began with a threefold deed of blood. An Eastern king, surrounded by the many princes of a polygamous family, and liable to endless jealousies and plots, is always in a condition of unstable equilibrium; the *death* of a rival is regarded as his only safe imprisonment.[119] On the other hand, it must be remembered that Solomon allowed his other brethren and kinsmen to live; and, in point of fact, his younger brother Nathan became the ancestor of the Divine Messiah of his race.[120]

It was the restless ambition of Adonijah which again brought down an avalanche of ruin. He and his adherents were necessarily under the cold shadow of royal disfavour, and they must have

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[119] These events – like almost everything derogatory to David and Solomon – are omitted by the chronicler.

[120] Luke iii. 31. Salathiel, son of Neri (Luke iii. 27), of Nathan's house, was probably adopted by Jeconiah, who was childless; or if he had a son Assir (captive), the son had died. 1 Chron. iii. 17; Isa. xxii. 3.

known that they had sinned too deeply to be forgiven. They felt the position intolerable. "In the light of the king's countenance is life, and his favour is as a cloud of the latter rain"; but Adonijah, in the prime of strength and the heyday of passion, beautiful and strong, and once the favourite of his father, could not forget the banquet at which all the princes and nobles and soldiers had shouted, "Long live King Adonijah!" That the royalty of one delirious day should be succeeded by the dull and suspected obscurity of dreary years was more than he could endure, if, by any possible subtlety or force, he could avert a doom so unlike his former golden dreams. Was not Solomon at least ten or fifteen years younger than himself? Was not his seat on the throne of his kingdom still insecure? Were not his own followers powerful and numerous?

Perhaps one of those followers – the experienced Joab, or Jonathan, son of Abiathar – whispered to him that he need not yet acquiesce in the ruin of his hopes, and suggested a subtle method of strengthening his cause, and keeping his claim before the eyes of the people.

Every one knew that Abishag, the fair damsel of Shunem, the ideal of Hebrew maidenhood, was the loveliest virgin who could be found throughout all the land of Israel. Had she been in the strict sense David's wife or concubine, it would have been regarded as a deadly contravention of the Mosaic law that she should be wedded to one of her stepsons. But as she had only been David's nurse, what could be more suitable than that so

bright a maiden should be united to the handsome prince?

It was understood in all Eastern monarchies that the harem of a predecessor belonged to the succeeding sovereign. The first thing that a rival or a usurper aimed at was to win the prestige of possessing the wives of the royal house. Nathan reminds David that the Lord had given his master's wives into his bosom.[121] Ishbosheth, weak as he was, had been stung into indignation against his general and great-uncle the mighty Abner, because Abner had taken Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah, Saul's concubine, to wife, which looked like a dangerously ambitious encroachment upon the royal prerogative. Absalom, by the vile counsel of Ahithophel, had openly taken possession of the ten concubines whom his father, in his flight from Jerusalem, had left in charge of the palace. The pseudo-Smerdis, when he revolted against the absent Cambyses, at once seized his seraglio.[122] It is noted even in our English history that the relations between the Earl of Mortimer and Queen Isabella involved danger to the kingdom; and when Admiral Seymour married Queen Catharine Parr, widow of Henry VIII., he at once entered into treasonable conspiracies. Adonijah knew well that he would powerfully further his ulterior purpose if he could secure the hand of the lovely Shunamite.

Yet he feared to make the request to Solomon, who had

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[121] 2 Sam. xii. 8. Comp. 1 Kings xx. 7; 2 Kings xxiv. 15. We only know, however, of one wife of Saul, and one concubine.

[122] Herod., iii. 68; Justin., x. 2.

already inspired him with wholesome awe. With pretended simplicity he sought the intercession of the *Gebira* Bathsheba, who, being the queen-mother, exercised great influence as the first lady of the land.[123] She it was who had placed the jewelled bridal crown with her own hand on the head of her young son.[124]

Alarmed at his visit she asked, "Comest thou peaceably?" He came, he humbly assured her, to ask a favour. Might she not think of his case with a little pity? He was the elder son; the kingdom by right of primogeniture was his; all Israel, so he flattered himself, had wished for his accession. But it had all been in vain, Jehovah had given the kingdom to his brother. Might he not be allowed some small consolation, some little accession to his dignity? at least some little source of happiness in his home?

Flattered by his humility and his appeal, Bathsheba encouraged him to proceed, and he begged that, as Solomon would refuse no request to his mother, would she ask that Abishag might be his wife?

With extraordinary lack of insight, Bathsheba, ambitious as she was, failed to see the subtle significance of the request, and promised to present his petition.

She went to Solomon, who immediately rose to meet her, and seated her with all honour on a throne at his right hand.[125] She

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[123] Comp. 1 Kings xv. 13; 2 Kings xi. 1. The queen-mother, like the Sultana Walidé, is always more powerful than even the favourite wife.

[124] Cant. iii. 11.

[125] Psalm xlv. 9. Some little mystery evidently hangs over the name of Bathsheba.

had only come, she said, to ask "a small petition."

"Ask on, my mother," said the king tenderly, "for I will not say thee nay."

But no sooner had she mentioned the "small petition" than Solomon burst into a flame of fury. "Why did she not ask for the kingdom for Adonijah at once? He was the elder. He had the chief priest and the chief captain with him. They must be privy to this new plot. But by the God who had given him his father's kingdom, and established him a house, Adonijah had made the request to his own cost, and should die that day."

The command was instantly given to Benaiah, who, as captain of the body-guard, was also chief executioner. He slew Adonijah that same hour, and so the third of David's splendid sons died in his youth a death of violence.

We pause to ask whether the sudden and vehement outburst of King Solomon's indignation was only due to political causes? If, as seems almost certain, Abishag is indeed the fair Shulamite of the Song of Songs, there can be little doubt that Solomon himself loved her,[126] and that she was "the jewel of his seraglio."[127]

In 2 Sam. xi. 3 she is called "Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite"; but in 1 Chron. iii. 5 she is called "*Bathshua*, the daughter of *Ammiel*." Now Shua was a Canaanite name (Gen. xxxviii. 12; 1 Chron. ii. 3), and it is at least remarkable that Bathsheba should be married to a Hittite. Further, the chronicler disguises "Ahithophel the Gilonite (the father of Eliam) into Ahijah the Pelonite," who is one of David's Gibborim in 1 Chron. xi. 36. Pelonite means *nescio qius*; in Spanish, Don Fulano, – Signor So-and-so. And how are we to account for the strange name Ahithophel ("brother of foolishness?")?

[126] Comp. Cant. vii. 1. It has been assumed that Solomon had already married

The true meaning of Canticles is not difficult to read, however much it may lend itself to mystical and allegorical applications. It represents a rustic maiden, faithful to her shepherd lover, resisting all the allurements of a king's court, and all the blandishments of a king's affection. It is the one book of Scripture which is exclusively devoted to sing the glory of a pure love. The king is magnanimous; he does not force the beautiful maiden to accept his addresses. Exercising her freedom, and true to the dictates of her heart, she rejoicingly leaves the perfumed atmosphere of the harem of Jerusalem for the sweet and vernal air of her country home under the shadow of its northern hills. Solomon's impetuous wrath would not be so unaccountable if an unrequited affection added the sting of jealousy to the wrath of offended power. The scene is the more interesting because it is one of the very few personal touches in the story of Solomon, which is chiefly composed of external details, both in Scripture and in such fragments as have been preserved of the pagan historian Dios, Eupolemos, Nicolas Polyhistor, and those referred to by Josephus, Eusebius, and Clemens of Alexandria.

The fall of Adonijah involved his chief votaries in ruin. Abiathar had been a friend and follower of David from his youthful days. When Doeg, the treacherous Edomite, had informed Saul that the priests of Nob had shown kindness to

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Naamah the Ammonitess, and that Rehoboam was already born (see 1 Kings xiv. 21), but this is uncertain. Rehoboam, if he had reached the age of forty-one, could hardly have been called "young and tender-hearted" (2 Chron. xiii. 7).

[127] Shunem (Sulem, Euseb., *Jer.*) is now *Solam* (Robinson, *Researches*, iii. 402).

David in his hunger and distress, the demoniac king had not shrunk from employing the Edomite herdsman to massacre all on whom he could lay his hands. From this slaughter of eighty-five priests who wore linen ephods, Abiathar had fled to David, who alone could protect him from the king's pursuit.[128] In the days when the outlaw lived in dens and caves, the priest had been constantly with him, and had been afflicted in all wherein he was afflicted, and had inquired of God for him. David had recognised how vast was his debt of gratitude to one whose father and all his family had been sacrificed for an act of kindness done to himself. Abiathar had been chief priest for all the forty years of David's reign. In Absalom's rebellion he had still been faithful to the king. His son Jonathan had been David's scout in the city. Abiathar had helped Zadok to carry the Ark to the last house by the ascent to the Mount of Olives, and there he had stood under the olive tree by the wilderness[129] till all the people had passed by. If his loyalty had been less ardent than that of his brother-priest Zadok, who had evidently taken the lead in the matter, he had given no ground for suspicion. But, perhaps secretly jealous of the growing influence of his younger rival, the old man, after some fifty years of unswerving allegiance, had joined his lifelong friend Joab in supporting the conspiracy of Adonijah, and had not even now heartily accepted the rule of Solomon. Assuming his complicity in Adonijah's request, Solomon sent for him, and

[128] 1 Sam. xxii. 23.

[129] 2 Sam. xv. 18 (LXX.).

sternly told him that he was "a man of death," *i. e.*, that death was his desert. But it would have been outrageous to slay an aged priest, the sole survivor of a family slaughtered for David's sake, and one who had so long stood at the head of the whole religious organisation, wearing the Urim and carrying the Ark. He was therefore summarily deposed from his functions, and dismissed to his paternal fields at Anathoth, a priestly town about six miles from Jerusalem.[130] We hear no more of him; but Solomon's warning, "I will not *at this time* put thee to death," was sufficient to show him that, if he mixed himself with court intrigues again, he would ultimately pay the forfeit with his life. Solomon, like Saul, paid very little regard to "benefit of the clergy."[131]

The doom fell next on the arch-offender Joab, the white-haired hero of a hundred fights, "the Douglas of the House of David." He had, if the reading of the ancient versions be correct, "turned after Adonijah, and *had not turned after Solomon*." Solomon could hardly have felt at ease when a general so powerful and so popular was disaffected to his rule, and Joab read his own sentence in the execution of Adonijah. On hearing the news the old hero fled up Mount Zion, and clung to the horns of the altar. But Abiathar, who might have asserted the sacredness of the asylum, was in disgrace, and Joab was not to escape. "What

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[130] *Anata*, Robinson, *Researches*, ii, 319; Josh. xxi. 18; 1 Chron. vi. 60. It was the native town of Jeremiah (Jer. i. 1).

[131] It should be remembered that, as Ewald points out, imprisonment for life was a thing unknown.

has happened to thee that thou hast fled to the altar?" was the message sent to him by the king. "Because," he answered, "I was afraid of thee, and fled unto the Lord."[132] It was Solomon's habit to give his autocratic orders with laconic brevity. "Go, fall upon him," he said to Benaiah.

The scene which ensued was very tragic.

The two rivals were face to face. On the one side the aged general, who had placed on David's head the crown of Rabbah, who had saved him from the rebellions of Absalom and of Sheba, and had been the pillar of his military glory and dominion for so many years; on the other the brave soldier-priest, who had won a chief place among the *Gibborim* by slaying a lion in a pit on a snowy day, and "two lion-like men of Moab,"[133] and a gigantic Egyptian whom he had attacked with only a staff, and out of whose hand he had plucked a spear like a weaver's beam and killed him with his own spear. As David lost confidence in Joab he had reposed more and more confidence in this hero. He had placed him over the body-guards, whom he trusted more than the native militia.

The Levite-soldier had no hesitation about acting as executioner, but he did not like to slay any man, and above all such a man, in a place so sacred,[134]– in a place where his blood

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[132] This interesting addition is found in the Septuagint version.

[133] 2 Sam. xxiii. 20. Ewald, Thenius, and most other critics, followed by the R.V., adopt the LXX. reading, "Slew the two sons of Ariel of Moab."

[134] Comp. 2 Kings xi. 15.

would be mingled with that of the sacrifices with which the horns of the altar were besmeared.

"The king bids thee come forth," he said.

"Nay," said Joab, "but I will die here."

Perhaps he thought that he might be protected by the asylum, as Adonijah had been; perhaps he hoped that in any case his blood might cry to God for vengeance, if he was slain in the sanctuary of Mount Zion, and on the very altar of burnt offering.

Benaiah naturally scrupled under such circumstances to carry out Solomon's order, and went back to him for instruction. Solomon had no such scruples, and perhaps held that this act was meritorious.[135] "Slay him," he said, "where he stands! He is a twofold murderer; let his blood be on his head." Then Benaiah went back and killed him, and was promoted to his vacant office. Such was the dismal end of so much valour and so much glory! He had taken the sword, and he perished by the sword. And the Jews believed that the curse of David clung to his house for ever, and that among his descendants there never lacked one that was a leper, or a lame man, or a suicide, or a pauper.[136]

Shimei's turn came next. A watchful eye was fixed implacably on this last indignant representative of the ruined House of Saul. Solomon had sent and ordered him to leave his estate at Bahurim, and build a house at Jerusalem, forbidding him to go

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[135] See Deut. xix. 13.

[136] 2 Sam. iii. 28, 29.

"any whither,"[137] and telling him that if on any pretence he passed the wady of Kidron he should be put to death. As he could not visit Bahurim, or any of his Benjamite connexions, without passing the Kidron, all danger of further intrigues seemed to be obviated.[138] To these terms the dangerous man had sworn, and for three years he kept them faithfully. At the end of that time two of his slaves fled from him to Achish, son of Maachah, King of Gath.[139] When informed of their whereabouts, Shimei, apparently with no thought of evil, saddled his mule and went to demand their restoration. As he had not crossed the Kidron, and had merely gone to Gath on private business, he thought that Solomon would never hear of it, or would at any rate treat the matter as harmless. Solomon, however, regarded his conduct as a proof of retributive dementation. He sent for him, bitterly upbraided him, and ordered Benaiah to slay him. So perished the last of Solomon's enemies; but Shimei had two illustrious descendants in the persons of Mordecai and Queen Esther.[140]

Solomon perhaps conceived himself to be only acting up to the true kingly ideal. "A king that sitteth on the throne of judgment

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[137] הֲנָאֹו הֵנָּא (1 Kings ii. 36).

[138] It should be remembered that when Shimei came to meet David on his return, he managed to muster one thousand of his Benjamite kinsmen. Such local influence might prove troublesome.

[139] Achish seems to have been the dynastic name of the kings of Gath (1 Sam. xxi. 10, xxvii. 2). If this was the Achish, son of Maoch, with whom David had taken refuge fifty years before, he must now have been a very old man.

[140] Esth. ii. 5.

scattereth away all evil with his eyes." "A wise king scattereth the wicked, and bringeth the wheel over them." "An evil man seeketh only rebellion; therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him." "The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion, whoso provoketh him to anger endangereth his own soul."[141] On the other hand, he continued hereditary kindness to Chimham, son of the old chief Barzillai the Gileadite, who became the founder of the Khan at Bethlehem in which a thousand years later Christ was born.[142]

The elevation of Zadok to the high priesthood vacated by the disgrace of Abiathar restored the priestly succession to the elder line of the House of Aaron. Aaron had been the father of four sons: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. The two eldest had perished childless in the wilderness, apparently for the profanation of serving the tabernacle while in a state of intoxication and offering "strange fire" upon the altar.[143] The son of Eleazar was the fierce priestly avenger Phinehas. The order of succession was as follows: —

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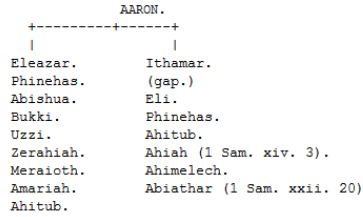
[141] Prov. xix. 11, xx. 2, 8, 26.

[142] 1 Kings ii. 7; Jer. xli. 17.

[143] Lev. x. 1-20; Num. iii. 4, xxvi. 61. This has been not unnaturally inferred from the prohibition to the priests to drink wine while serving the tabernacle lest they die, which occurs immediately after the catastrophe of the two priests (Lev. x. 9-11).



1 Chron. vii. 4-15. In David's time there were only eight descendants of Ithamar, but sixteen of Eleazar (1 Chron. xxiv. 4). For full discussion of these priestly genealogies, see Lord A. Hervey, *On the Genealogies*, pp. 277-306. It is true that they are not free from elements of difficulty, but I am unable to find any valid ground for the suspicion of some critics that Zadok was not even a priest, or of the priestly house at all. All the evidence we have points in the opposite direction.

The question naturally arises how the line of succession came to be disturbed, since to Eleazar, and his seed after him, had been promised "the covenant of an everlasting priesthood."[144] As the elder line continued unbroken, how was it that, for five generations at least, from Eli to Abiathar, we find the *younger* line of Ithamar in secure and lineal possession of the high priesthood? The answer belongs to the many strange reserves of Jewish history. It is clear from the silence of the Book of Chronicles that the intrusion, however caused, was an unpleasant

[144] Num. xxv. 13.

recollection. Jewish tradition has perhaps revealed the secret, and a very curious one it is. We are told that Phinehas was high priest when Jephthah made his rash vow, and that his was the hand which carried out the human sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter. But the inborn feelings of humanity in the hearts of the people were stronger than the terrors of superstition, and arising in indignation against the high priest who could thus imbrue his hands in an innocent maiden's blood, they drove him from his office and appointed a son of Ithamar in his place. The story then offers a curious analogy to that told of the Homeric hero Idomeneus, King of Crete. Caught in a terrible storm on his return from Troy, he too vowed that if his life were saved he would offer up in sacrifice the first living thing that met him. His eldest son came forth with gladness to meet him. Idomeneus fulfilled his vow, but the Cretans rose in revolt against the ruthless father, and a civil war ensued, in which a hundred cities were destroyed and the king was driven into exile. The Jewish tradition is one which could hardly have been invented. It is certain that Jephthah's daughter *was* offered up in sacrifice, in accordance with his rash vow. This could hardly have been done by any but a priest, and the ferocious zeal of Phinehas would not perhaps have shrunk from the horrible consummation. Revolting, even abhorrent, as is such a notion from our views of God, and decisively as human sacrifice is condemned by all the highest teaching of Scripture, the traces of this horrible tendency of human guilt and human fear are evident in the history of Israel

as of all other early nations. Some thought akin to it must have lain under the temptation of Abraham to offer up his son Isaac. Twelve centuries later Manasseh "made his son pass through the fire," and kindled the furnaces of Moloch at Tophet in Gehenna, the valley of the sons of Hinnom.[145] His grandfather Ahaz had done the same before him, offering sacrifice and burning his children in the fire.[146] Surrounded by kindred tribes, to which this worship was familiar, the Israelites, in their ignorance and backsliding, were not exempt from its fatal fascination. Solomon himself "went after," and built a high place for Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites, on the right hand of "the hill that is before Jerusalem," which from this desecration got the name of "The Mount of Corruption." These high places continued, and it must be supposed, had their votaries on "that opprobrious hill," until good Josiah dismantled and defiled them about the year 639, some three centuries after they had been built.

But whether this legend about Phinehas be tenable or not, it is certain that the House of Ithamar fell into deadly disrepute and abject misery. In this the people saw the fulfilment of an old traditional curse, pronounced by some unknown "man of God" on the House of Eli, that there should be no old man in his house for ever; that his descendants should die in the flower of their age; and that they should come cringing to the descendants of the priest whom God would raise up in his stead, to get some humble

[145] 2 Chron. xxxiii. 6; 2 Kings xxi. 6. "His children."

[146] 2 Chron. xxviii. 3; 2 Kings xvi. 3. "His son."

place about the priesthood for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread.[147]

The prolongation of the curse in the House of Joab and of Eli furnishes an illustration of the menacing appendix to the second commandment – "For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me, and showing mercy unto thousands (of generations) of them that love Me and keep My commandments."

There is in families, as in communities, a solidarity alike of blessing and curse. No man perishes alone in his iniquity, whether he be an offender like Achan or an offender like Joab. Families have their inheritance of character, their prerogative examples of misdoing, their influence of the guilty past flowing like a tide of calamity over the present and the future! The physical consequences of transgression remain long after the sins which caused them have ended. Three things, however, are observable in this, as in every faithfully recorded history. One is that mercy boasteth over justice, and the area of beneficent consequence is more permanent and more continuous than that of the entailed curse, as right is always more permanent than wrong. A second is that, though man at all times is liable to troubles and disabilities, no innocent person who suffers temporal afflictions from the sins of his forefathers shall suffer

[147] 1 Sam. ii. 27-36. For eight centuries there was no other instance of a high priest's deposition.

one element of unjust depression in the eternal interests of life. A third is that the ultimate prosperity of the children, alike of the righteous and of sinners, is in their own control; each soul shall perish, and shall only perish, for its own sin. In this sense, though the fathers have eaten sour grapes, the teeth of the children shall *not* be set on edge. In the long generations the line of David no less than the line of Joab, the line of Zadok no less than that of Abiathar, was destined to feel the Nemesis of evil-doing, and to experience that, of whatever parentage men are born, the law remains true – "Say ye of the righteous, that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him."[148]

[148] Isa. iii. 10.

CHAPTER XII.
THE BOY-KING'S WISDOM

1 Kings iii. 1-28

"An oracle is upon the lips of a king." – Prov. xvi. 10 (Heb.).

"A king that sitteth on the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eye." – Prov. xx. 8.

"Ch' ei fu Rè, che chiese senno
Acciochè Rè sufficiente fosse."

Dante, Parad., xiii. 95.

"Deos ipsos precor ut mihi ad finem usque vitæ quietam et intelligentem humani divinique juris mentem duint." – Tac., *Ann.*, iv. 38.

It would have thrown an interesting light on the character and development of Solomon, if we had been able to conjecture with any certainty what was his age when the death of David made him the unquestioned king. The pagan historian Eupolemos, quoted by Eusebius, says that he was twelve; Josephus asserts that he was fifteen. If Rehoboam was indeed as old as forty-one when he

came to the throne (1 Kings xiv. 21), Solomon can hardly have been less than twenty at his accession, for in that case he must have been married before David's death (1 Kings xi. 42). But the reading "forty-one" in 1 Kings xiv. 21 is altered by some into "twenty-one," and we are left in complete uncertainty. Solomon is called "a child" (1 Kings iii. 7), "young and tender" (1 Chron. xxix. 1); but his acts show the full vigour and decision of a man.[149]

The composite character of the Books of Kings leads to some disturbance of the order of events, and 1 Kings iii. 1-4 is perhaps inserted to explain Solomon's sacrifice at the high place of Gibeon,[150] where stood the brazen altar of the old Tabernacle.[151] But no apology is needed for that act.[152] The use of high places, even when they were consecrated to the worship of Jehovah, was regarded in later days as involving principles of danger, and became a grave offence in the eyes of all who took the Deuteronomic standpoint. But high places to Jehovah,

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[149] See 1 Sam. xxi. 6, compared with 1 Chron. xvi. 39, 40; 2 Chron. i. 3.

[150] An old Hivite capital (Josh. xviii. 21-25), now El Jib. Josephus alters it to "Hebron."

[151] See 1 Chron. xvi. 39, 40, xxi. 29; 2 Chron. i. 3. The annals of Solomon fall into three divisions: first, his secure establishment upon the throne (1 Kings i, ii.); next, his wisdom, wealth, glory, and great buildings, especially the building of the Temple (iii. – x.); lastly, his fall and death (xi.).

[152] It was sufficiently sanctioned by Exod. xx. 24, and Jerusalem was not yet chosen (Deut. xii. 13, 14). See Judg. vi. 24, xiii. 19; 1 Sam. ix. 12, etc. This seems to have been the last great sacrifice there. In 1 Kings iii. 5-15 the sacrifice is regarded with approval; in verses 2, 3 it is condemned, but excused by circumstances; in the verses inserted by the chronicler (2 Chron. i. 3-6) it is said that the Tabernacle was there.

as distinct from those dedicated to idols, were not condemned by the earlier prophets, and the resort to them was never regarded as blameworthy before the establishment of the central sanctuary.

After the frightful massacre of the descendants of Aaron at Nob, the old "Tabernacle of the congregation" and the great brazen altar of burnt offerings had been removed to Gibeon from a city defiled by the blood of priests.[153] Gibeon stood on a commanding elevation within easy distance of Jerusalem, and was henceforth regarded as "the great high place," until the Temple on Mount Zion was finished. Thither Solomon went in that imposing civil, religious, and military procession of which the tradition may be preserved in the name of Wady Suleiman still given to the adjoining valley. There, with Oriental magnificence, like Xerxes at Troy, he offered what the Greeks called a *chiliombe*, that is, a tenfold hecatomb of burnt offerings.[154] This "thousandfold holocaust," as the Septuagint terms it, must have been a stately and long-continued function, and in approval of his sacrifice Jehovah granted a vision to the youthful king. Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams and ten thousands of rivers of oil, when all the beasts of the forest are His, and the cattle upon a thousand hills? "Thinkest thou," He asked, in the words of the Psalmist, "that I will eat bull's flesh or drink the blood of goats?" No; but God always

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[153] See 1 Sam. xxii. 17-19.

[154] Herod., vii. 43. Xerxes offered one thousand at Troy, and Crœsus three thousand at Delphi (*Id.*, i. 50).

accepts a willing sacrifice in accordance with the purpose and sincerity of the giver. In reward for the pure intention of the king He appeared to Solomon in a dream, and said, "Ask what I shall give thee."

The Jews recognised three modes of Divine communication – by dreams; by Urim, and by prophets. The highest and most immediate illumination was the prophetic. The revelation by means of the primitive Urim and Thummin, the oracle and jewelled breastplate of the high priest, was the poorest, the most elementary, the most liable to abuse. It was analogous to the method used by the Egyptian chief priests, who wore round their necks a sapphire ornament called Thmei, or "truth," for purposes of divination.[155] After the death of David the Urim and Thummin fell into such absolute desuetude, as a survival of primitive times, that we do not read of its being consulted again in a single instance. It is not so much as mentioned during the five centuries of the history of the kings, and we do not hear of it afterwards. Solomon never once inquired of the priests as David did repeatedly. In the reign of Solomon the voice of prophecy, too, was silent, until disasters began to cloud its close. Times of material prosperity and autocratic splendour are unfavourable to the prophet's function, and sometimes, as in the days of Ahab, the prophets themselves "philippised" in Jehovah's name. But

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[155] Hence, perhaps, the LXX. rendering of Δήλωσις καὶ Ἀλήθεια. This view is accepted by Hengstenberg (*Egypt and the Five Books of Moses*, chap. vi.), and Kalisch (on Exod. xxviii. 31).

revelation by dreams occurs in all ages. In his prophecy of the great future, Joel says, "Your old men shall see visions, your young men shall dream dreams." It is true that dreams must always have a subjective element, yet, as Aristotle says, "The visions of the noble are better than those of common men."[156] The dreams of night are reflections of the thoughts of day. "Solomon worships God by day; God appears to Solomon by night. Well may we look to enjoy God, when we have served Him."[157] Full of the thoughts inspired by an intense devotion, and a yearning desire to rule aright, the sleeping soul of Solomon became bright with eyes,[158] and in his dream he made a worthy answer to the appeal of God.

"Ask what I shall give thee!" That blessed and most loving offer is made to every human soul. To the meanest of us all God flings open the treasuries of heaven. The reason why we fatally lose them is because we are blinded by the glamour of temptation, and snatch instead at glittering bubbles or Dead Sea fruits. We fail to attain the best gifts, because so few of us earnestly desire them, and so many disbelieve the offer that is made of them. Yet there is no living soul to which God has not given the choice of good and evil. "He hath set fire and water before thee: stretch forth thy hand unto whether thou wilt. Before

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[156] Arist., *Eth. Nic.*, i. 13: "βελτίω τὰ φαντάσματα τῶν ἐπιεικῶν ἢ τῶν τυχόντων."

[157] Bishop Hall.

[158] "Εὕδουσα γὰρ φρὴν ὄμμασιν λαμπρύνεται." – Æsch., *Eum.*, 104.

man is life and death; and whether him liketh shall be given him."[159] Even when our choice is not evil it is often desperately frivolous, and it is only too late that we rue the folly of having rejected the better and chosen the worse.

> "Damsels of Time the hypocritic days,
> Muffled and dumb like barefoot dervishes,
> And marching single in an endless file,
> Bring diadems and fagots in their hands.
> To each they offer gifts after his will, —
> Bread, kingdoms, stars, and sky that holds them all.
> I, in my pleachèd garden, watched the pomp,
> Forgot my morning wishes; hastily
> Took a few herbs and apples, and the Day
> Turned and departed silent. I, too late,
> Under her solemn fillet saw the scorn."[160]

But Solomon made the wise choice. In his dream he thanked God for His mercifully fulfilled promise to David his father, and with the touching humble confession, "I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in,"[161] he begged for an understanding heart to judge between right and wrong in guiding

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[159] Ecclus. xv. 16, 17.

[160] Emerson.

[161] The phrase "a little child" (comp. Jer. i. 6) hardly bears on his actual age. See Gen. xliii. 8; Exod. xxxiii. 11. It is proverbial like the subsequent phrase, for which see Deut. xxviii. 6; Psalm cxxi. 8, etc.

his great and countless people.[162]

God was pleased with the noble, unselfish request. The youthful king might have besought the boon of "many days," which was so highly valued before Christ had brought life and immortality to light; or for riches, or for victory over his enemies. Instead of this he had asked for "understanding, to discern judgment," and the lesser gifts were freely accorded him. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."[163] God promised him that he should be a king of unprecedented greatness. He freely gave him riches and honour, and, conditionally on his continued faithfulness, a long life. The condition was broken, and Solomon was not more than sixty years old when he was called before the God whom he forsook.[164]

"And Solomon awoke, and behold it was a dream." But he knew well that it was also more than a dream, and that "God giveth to His beloved even sleeping."[165]

In reverential gratitude he offered a second sacrifice of burnt offerings before the ark on Mount Zion, and added to them peace offerings, with which he made a great feast to all his servants. Twice again did God appear to Solomon; but the second time it

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[162] Heb., "A hearing heart." LXX., "A heart to hear and judge Thy people in righteousness." In 2 Chron. i. 10, "Wisdom and knowledge."

[163] Matt. vi. 33.

[164] Josephus (*Antt.*, VIII. vii. 8) makes him die at ninety-four, and become king at fourteen. Perhaps he mistook μ' for π' in the LXX.

[165] Psalm cxxvii. 2 (uncertain).

was to warn, and the third time to condemn.

In the parallel account given by the chronicler, Solomon says, "Give me now wisdom and knowledge," and God replies, "Wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee." There is a wide difference between the two things. Knowledge may come while wisdom still lingers, and wisdom may exist in Divine abundance where knowledge is but scant and superficial. The wise may be as ignorant as St. Antony, or St. Francis of Assisi; the masters of those who know may show as little 'wisdom for a man's self' as Abélard, or as Francis Bacon. "Among the Jews one set of terms does service to express both intellectual and moral wisdom. The 'wise' man means the righteous man; the 'fool' is one who is godless. Intellectual terms that describe knowledge are also moral terms describing life." No doubt in the ultimate senses of the words there can be no true knowledge, as there can be no perfect wisdom, without goodness. This was a truth with which Solomon himself became deeply impressed. "The fear of the Lord," he said, "is the beginning of wisdom, but fools despise knowledge and understanding." The lineaments of "a fool" are drawn in the Book of Proverbs, and they bear the impress of moral baseness and moral aberrations.

To Solomon both boons were given, "wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore." Of his many forms of intellectual eminence I will speak later on. What he longed for most was evidently moral insight and practical sagacity. He felt

that "through justice shall the throne be established."

Practical wisdom was eminently needed for the office of a judge.[166] Judgeship was a main function of Eastern royalty, and rulers were called *Shophetim* or judges.[167] The reality of the gift which Solomon had received from God was speedily to be tested.[168] Two harlots came before him.[169] One had overlaid her child in the night, and stealing the living child of the other she put her dead child in its place. There was no evidence to be had. It was simply the bare word of one disreputable woman against the bare word of the other. With instant decision, and a flash of insight into the springs of human actions, Solomon gave the apparently childish order to cut the children in two, and divide them between the claimants. The people laughed,[170] and the delinquent accepted the horrible decision; but the mother of the living child yearned for her babe, and she cried out, "O my lord, give her the living babe,[171] and in no wise slay it." "*Give her the living babe, and in no wise slay it*," murmured the king to himself, repeating the mother's words; and then he burst out

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[166] 1 Sam. viii. 6, 20; 2 Sam. xv. 4. "To rule was with the ancients the synonym of to judge." Artemidorus, *Oneirocr.*, ii. 14. (Bähr, *ad loc.*).

[167] Compare the Phœnician's *Suffetes* (Liv.).

[168] As instances of the lower sense in which the term "wisdom" was applied, see 2 Sam. xiii. 3 (Jonadab); xiv. 2 (the woman of Tekoa); xx. 16 (the woman of Abel of Beth-maachah).

[169] The Rabbis call them "innkeepers," as they call Rahab.

[170] I follow the not improbable additional details given by Josephus from tradition.

[171] יֶלֶד. LXX., παιδίον.

with the triumphant verdict, "Give *her* the living child! *she* is the mother thereof!"[172]

The story has several parallels. It is said by Diodorus Siculus that when three youths came before Ariopharnes, King of Thrace, each claiming to be the only son of the King of the Cimmerians, he ordered them each to hurl a javelin at their father's corpse. Two obeyed, one refused, and Ariopharnes at once proclaimed him to be the true son.[173] Similarly an Indian story tells that a woman, before she bathed, left her child on the bank of the pool, and a female demon carried it off. The goddess, before whom each claimed the child, ordered them to pull it in two between them, and consigned it to the mother who shuddered at the test.[174] A judgment similarly founded on filial instinct is attributed to the Emperor Claudius. A mother refused to acknowledge her son; and as there were no proofs Claudius ordered her to marry the youth, whereupon she was obliged to acknowledge that he was her son.[175]

Modern critics, wise after the event, express themselves

[172] So the Greek version, which represents the clause rightly. Tradition narrates a yet earlier specimen of Solomon's wisdom. Some sheep had strayed into a pasture. The owner of the land demanded reparation. David said that to repay his loss he might keep the sheep. "No," said Solomon, who was but eleven years old, "let him keep them only till their wool, milk, and lambs have repaid the damage; then let him restore them to their owner." David admitted that this was the more equitable judgment, and he adopted it. See The Qur'an, *Sura* xxi. 79 (Palmer's Qur'an, ii. 52).

[173] The parallel is adduced by Grotius.

[174] Quoted by Bähr.

[175] Suet., *Claud.*, 15.

very slightingly of the amount of intelligence required for the decision; but the people saw the value of the presence of mind and rapid intuition which settled the question by bringing an individual dilemma under the immediate arbitrament of a general law. They rejoiced to recognise the practical wisdom which God had given to their young king. The word *Chokhmah*, which is represented by one large section of Jewish literature, implied the practical intelligence derived from insight or experience, the power to govern oneself and others. Its conclusions were expressed chiefly in a gnomic form, and they pass through various stages in the Sapiential Books of the Old Testament. The chief books of the *Chokhmah* are the Books of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes, followed by such books as Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus. On the Divine side Wisdom is the Spirit of God, regarded by man under the form of Providence (Wisdom i. 4, 7, vii. 7, 22, ix. 17); and on the human side it is trustworthy knowledge of the things that are (*id.* vii. 17). It is, in fact, "a knowledge of Divine and human things, and of their causes" (4 Macc. ii. 16). This branch of wisdom could be repeatedly shown by Solomon at the city gate and in the hall of judgment.

2. His varied *intellectual* wisdom created deeper astonishment. He spake, we are told, "of trees from the cedar which is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts and fowl and of creeping things and of fishes." This knowledge has been misunderstood and

exaggerated by later tradition. It is expanded in the Book of Wisdom (viii. 17) into a perfect knowledge of kosmogony, astronomy, the alterations of solstices, the cycles of years, the natures of wild beasts, the forces of spirits, the reasonings of men, the diversities of plants. Solomon became to Eastern legend

> "The warrior-sage, whose restless mind
> Through nature's mazes wandered unconfined,
> Who every bird, and beast, and insect knew,
> And spake of every plant that quaffs the dew."

His knowledge, however, does not seem to have been even empirically scientific. It consisted in the moral and religious illustration of truth by emblems derived from nature.[176] He surpassed, we are told, the ethnic gnomic wisdom of all the children of the East – the Arabians and Chaldæans, and all the vaunted scientific and mystic wisdom of Egypt.[177] Ethan and Heman were Levitic poets and musicians;[178] Chalcol and Darda[179] were "sons of the choir," *i. e.*, poets (Luther), or

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[176] For references to animals, etc., see Prov. vi. 6, xxiv. 30-34, xxx. 15-19, 24-31; Josephus, *Antt.*, VIII. ii. 5; Ecclus. xlvii. 17.

[177] See Isa. xix. 11, xxxi. 2; Acts vii. 22; Herod., ii. 160; Josephus, *Antt.*, VIII. ii. 5 (Keil).

[178] See 1 Chron. ii. 6, vi. 44, xv. 17, 19, xxv. 5. Titles of Psalms xviii., lxxxviii., lxxxix. "Ezrahite," perhaps, is a transposition of Zerahite.

[179] 1 Chron. ii. 6. In *Seder Olam* they are called "prophets who prophesied in Egypt."

sacred singers;[180] and all four were famed for wisdom; but Solomon excelled them all. Of his one thousand and five songs, the majority were probably secular. Only two psalms are even traditionally assigned to him.[181] Of his three thousand proverbs not more than two hundred survive, even if all in the Book of Proverbs be his. Tradition adds that he was a master of "riddles" or "dark sayings," by which he won largely in fines from Hiram, whom he challenged for their solution, until the Tyrian king defeated him by the aid of a sharp youth named Abdemon.[182] Specimens of these riddles with their answers may be found in the Book of Proverbs,[183] for the Hebrew word "proverb" (*Mashal*) probably means originally, an illustration. This book also contains various ambiguous hard sayings of which the skilful construction awoke admiration and stimulated thought.[184] The Queen of Sheba is said to have tested Solomon by riddles.[185] The tradition gradually spread in the East that Solomon was also skilled in magic arts, that he knew the language of the

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[180] "Sons of Mahol" (comp. Eccles. xii. 4).

[181] Psalms lxxii., cxxvii. The so-called "Psalms of Solomon," fifteen in number, are of the Maccabean age; Josephus calls his songs βίβλια περὶ ὠδῶν καὶ μελῶν, and his proverbs βίβλους παραβολῶν καὶ εἰκόνων.

[182] See Euseb., *Præp. Evang.*, ix. 34, § 19.

[183] Prov. xi. 22, xxiv. 30-34, xxv. 25, xxvi. 8, xxx. 15.

[184] *E.g.*, Prov. vi. 10.

[185] 1 Kings x. 1; LXX., ἐν αἰνίγμασι. See Wünsche, *Die Räthselweisheit*, 1883; Grätz, *Hist. of the Jews*, i. 162. For specimens of her traditional puzzles see the author's *Solomon*, p. 135 (Men of the Bible).

birds,[186] and possessed a seal which gave him mastery over the genii. In the Book of Wisdom he is made to say, "All such things as are either secret or manifest, them I know." Josephus attributes to him the formulæ and spells of exorcism, and in Eccles. ii. 8 the words rendered "musical instruments" (shiddah and shiddoth; R.V., "concubines very many") were understood by the Rabbis to mean that he was the lord over male and female demons.[187]

3. Far more precious than practical or intellectual ability is the gift of *moral* wisdom, which Solomon so greatly appreciated but so imperfectly attained. Yet he felt that "wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom." The world gives that name to many higher and lower manifestations of capacity and attainment, but wisdom is in Scripture the one law of all true life. In that magnificent outburst of Semitic poetry, the twenty-eighth chapter of the Book of Job, after pointing out that there is such a thing as natural knowledge – that there is a vein for the silver, and ore of gold, and a place of sapphires, and reservoirs of subterranean fire – the writer asks: "But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding?" After showing with marvellous power that it is beyond man's

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[186] "And Solomon was David's heir, and said, Ye folk! we have been taught the speech of birds, and we have been given everything: verily this is a Divine grace" (Qur'an, *Sura* xxvii. 15). For the legend of Solomon and the hoopoes, see *Sura* 27.

[187] According to Suidas (s.v., Ἐζεκίας) Hezekiah found his (magic?) formulæ for the cure of diseases engraved on the posts of the Temple. See Targum on Esth. i. 2; Eccles. ii. 8.

unaided search – that the depths and the seas say, "It is not in us," and destruction and death have but heard the fame thereof with their ears – he adds with one great crash of concluding music, "God understandeth the way thereof, and He knoweth the place thereof… And unto man He said, *Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding*."[188] And again we read, "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge*."[189] The sated cynic of the Book of the Ecclesiastes, or one who had studied, not without dissatisfaction, his sad experience, adds, "*Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man*." And in answer to the question "*Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you?*" St. James, the Lord's brother, who had evidently been a deep student of the Sapiential literature, does not answer, "He who understands all mysteries," or, "He who speaks with the tongue of men or of angels," but, "Let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom." Men whom the world has deemed wise have often fallen into utter infatuation, as it is written, "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness"; but heavenly wisdom may belong to the most ignorant and simplehearted. It is "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, without partiality and without hypocrisy."

We should observe, however, that the *Chokhmah*, or wisdom-literature of the Jews, while it incessantly exalts morality, and

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[188] Job xxviii. 23, 28.

[189] Prov. i. 7.

sometimes almost attains to a perception of the spiritual life, was neither prophetic nor priestly in its character. It bears the same relation to the teaching of the prophets on the one hand, and the priests on the other, as morality does to religion and to externalism. Its teaching is loftier and truer than the petty insistence of Pharisaism on meats and drinks and divers washings, in that it deals with the weightier matters of the law; but it does not attain to the passionate spirituality of the greater Hebrew seers. It cares next to nothing for ritual, and therefore rises above the developed Judaism of the post-exilic epoch. It is lofty and true inasmuch as it breathes the spirit of the Ten Commandments, but it has not learnt the freedom of love and the beatitudes of perfect union with God. In one word, it finds its culmination in Proverbs and Ecclesiasticus, rather than in the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount and the Gospel of St. John.

We cannot better conclude this chapter than with the eulogy of the son of Sirach: "Solomon reigned in a peaceable time and was honoured; for God made all quiet round about him, that he might build a house in His name and prepare His sanctuary for ever. How wise wast thou in thy youth, and, as a flood, filled with understanding! Thy soul covered the whole earth, and thou filledst it with dark parables. Thy name went far unto the islands, and for thy peace thou wast beloved. The countries marvelled at thee for thy songs, and proverbs, and parables, and interpretations. By the name of the Lord God, who is called the Lord God of Israel, thou didst gather gold as tin, and didst

multiply silver as lead."[190]

[190] Ecclus. xlvii. 13-18.

CHAPTER XIII.
SOLOMON'S COURT AND KINGDOM

1 Kings iv. 1-34

"But what more oft in nations grown corrupt
And by their vices brought to servitude,
Than to love bondage more than liberty,
Bondage with ease than strenuous liberty?"

Samson Agonistes.

When David was dead, and Solomon was established on his throne, his first thoughts were turned to the consolidation of his kingdom. He was probably quite a youth.[191] He was not, nor did he ever desire to be, a warlike prince; but he was compelled to make himself secure from two enemies – Hadad and Rezon – who began almost at once to threaten his frontiers. Of these, however, we shall speak later on, since it is only towards the close of Solomon's reign that they seem to have given serious trouble. If the second psalm is by Solomon it may point to some early disturbances among heathen neighbours which he had

[191] Josephus, *Antt.*, VIII. vii. 8. According to one tradition he lived to fifty-three (Ewald, iii. 208), and was only twelve when he succeeded David.

successfully put down.

The only actual expedition which Solomon ever made was one against a certain Hamath-Zobah, to which, however, very little importance can be attached. It is simply mentioned in one line in the Book of Chronicles, and it is hard to believe – considering that Rezon had possession of Damascus – that Solomon was master of the *great* Hamath.[192] He made a material alteration in the military organisation of his kingdom by establishing a standing army of fourteen hundred war-chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen, whom he dispersed in various cities and barracks, keeping some of them at Jerusalem.[193]

In order to save his kingdom from attack Solomon expended vast sums on the fortification of frontier towns. In the north he fortified Hazor; in the north-west Megiddo. The passes to Jerusalem on the west were rendered safe by the fortresses at Upper and Nether Bethhoron. The southern districts were overawed by the building of Baalath and Tamar, "the palm-city," which is described as "in the wilderness in the land," – perhaps in the desolate tract on the road from Hebron to Elath.[194] Movers

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[192] 2 Chron. viii. 3. Ewald thinks it is confirmed by 2 Kings xiv. 28, where, however, the Hebrew is obscure.

[193] 1 Kings x. 26.

[194] 1 Kings ix. 18. Here the "Q'rî," the marginal, or "read" text, has Tadmor (*i. e.*, Palmyra), as also in 2 Chron. viii. 4. But this Tamar (Ezek. xlvii. 19, xlviii. 28) is "*in the land*" on the south border. In the Chronicles Tadmor is the right reading, for the chronicler is speaking of Hamath-Zobah and the north. It is not at all unlikely that Solomon also built Tadmor (Josephus, *Antt.*, VIII. vi. 1) to protect his commerce on

thinks that Hazezon-Tamar or Engedi is meant, as this town is called Tamar in Ezek. xlvii. 19.

As the king grew more and more in power he gave full reins to his innate love of magnificence. We can best estimate the sudden leap of the kingdom into luxurious civilisation if we contrast the royalty of Saul with that of Solomon. Saul was little more than a peasant-prince, a local emîr, and such state as he had was of the humblest description. But Solomon vied with the gorgeous secular dynasts of historic empires.

His position had become much more splendid owing to his alliance with the King of Egypt – an alliance of which his humbler predecessors would scarcely have dreamed. We are not told the name of his Egyptian bride, but she must have been the daughter of one of the last kings of the twenty-first Tanite dynasty – either Psinaces, or Psusennes II.[195] The dynasty had been founded at Tanis (Zoan) about b. c. 1100 by an ambitious priest named Hir-hor. It only lasted for five generations. Whatever other dower Solomon received with this Egyptian princess, his father-in-law rendered him one signal service. He advanced from Egypt with an army against the

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the route to the Euphrates.

[195] The forty-fifth psalm is supposed by old interpreters to have been an epithalamium on this occasion, but was probably much later. Perhaps notices like 1 Kings iii. 1-3 (the Egyptian alliance), the admonition in 1 Kings ix. 1-9 and the luxury described in x. 14-29, are meant as warning notes of what follows in xi. 1-8 (the apostasy), 9-13 (the prophecy of disruption), and 14-43 (the concluding disaster).

Canaanite town of Gezer, which he conquered and destroyed.[196] Solomon rebuilt it as an outpost of defence for Jerusalem. Further than this the Egyptian alliance did not prove to be of much use. The last king of this weak twenty-first dynasty was succeeded b. c. 990 by the founder of a new Bubastite dynasty, the great Shishak I. (Shesonk, Σεσόνχωσις), the protector of Jeroboam and the plunderer of Jerusalem and its Temple. Ker'amat, niece of the last king of the dynasty, married Shishak, the founder of the new dynasty, and was the mother of U-Sark-on I. (Zerah the Ethiopian).

It has been a matter of dispute among the Rabbis whether Solomon was commendable or blameworthy for contracting this foreign alliance. If we judge him simply from the secular standpoint, nothing could be more obviously politic than the course he took. Nor did he break any law in marrying Pharaoh's daughter. Moses had not forbidden the union with an Egyptian woman. Still, from the religious point of view, it was inevitable that such a connexion would involve consequences little in accordance with the theocratic ideal. The kings of Judah must not be judged as though they were ordinary sovereigns. They were meant to be something more than mere worldly potentates. The Egyptian alliance, instead of flattering the pride, only

[196] Gezer is Abu-Shusheh, or Tell-el-Gezer, between Ramleh and Jerusalem (Oliphant, *Haifa*, p. 253), on the lower border of Ephraim. Ewald identifies it with Geshur, the town of Talmai, Absalom's grandfather. See Lenormant, *Hist. anc. de l'Orient.*, i. 337-43. The genealogy of this dynasty is thus given by Brugsch-Bey (Gen. Table iv.), *Hist. of Egypt*, vol. ii.: —

wounded the susceptibilities of the later Jews. The Rabbis had a fantastic notion that Shimei had been Solomon's teacher, and that the king did not fall into the error of wedding an alien[197] until Shimei had been driven from Jerusalem.[198] That there was some sense of doubt in Solomon's mind appears from the statement in 2 Chron. viii. 11, that he deemed it unfit for his bride to have her residence on Mount Moriah, a spot hallowed by the presence of the Ark of God.[199] That she became a proselytess has been suggested, but it is most unlikely. Had this been the case it would have been mentioned in contrast with the heathenism of the fair idolatresses who in later years beguiled the king's heart. On the other hand, the princess, who was his chief if not his earliest bride, does not seem to have asked for any shrine or chapel for the practice of her Egyptian rites. This is the more remarkable since Solomon, ashamed of the humble cedar house of David – which would look despicable to a lady who had lived in "the gigantic edifices, and labyrinthine palace of Egyptian kings"[200]– expended vast sums in building her a palace which

[197] See Deut. xxiii. 7, 8.

[198] Schwab's *Berakhoth*, p. 252; Hershon, *Treasures of the Talmud*, p. 25. In Sanhedrin, ff. 21, 22, there is another trace of the dislike with which the marriage (though not forbidden, Deut. xxiii. 7, 8) was regarded: "When Solomon married the daughter of Pharaoh, Gabriel descended and fixed a reed in the sea. A sandbank formed around it on which *Rome* was subsequently built." In Shabbath, ff. 51, 52, we are told that "the princess brought with her one thousand different kinds of musical instruments, and *taught Solomon the chants to his various idols*."

[199] No trace of any such misgiving is found in the Book of Kings.

[200] "Seine Liebhaberei sind kostbare Bauten, fremde Weiber, reiche

should seem worthy of her royal race.

From this time forward the story of Solomon becomes more the record of a passing pageant preserved for us in loosely arranged fragments. It can never be one tithe so interesting as the history of a human heart with its sufferings and passions. "Solomon in all his glory," that figure so unique, so lonely in its wearisome pomp, can never stir our sympathy or win our affection as does the natural, impetuous David, or even the fallen, unhappy Saul. "The low sun makes the colour." The bright gleams and dark shadows of David's life are more instructive than the dull monotony of Solomon's magnificence.

The large space of Scripture devoted to him in the Books of Kings and Chronicles is occupied almost exclusively with the details of architecture and display. It is only in the first and last sections of his story that we catch the least glimpse of the man himself. In the central section we see nothing of him, but are absorbed in measurements and descriptions which have a purely archæological, or, at the best, a dimly symbolic significance. The man is lost in the monarch, the monarch in the appurtenances of his royal display. His annals degenerate into the record of a sumptuous parade.

The fourth chapter of the Book of Kings gives us the constitution of his court as it was in the middle of his reign, when two of his daughters were already married. It need not detain us long.

Prachtentfaltung" (Kittel, ii. 160).

The highest officers of the kingdom were called *Sarim*, "princes," a title which in David's reign had been borne almost alone by Joab, who was *Sar-ha-zaba*, or captain of the host. The son of Zadok[201] is named first as "the priest." The two chief secretaries (*Sopherim*) were Elihoreph and Ahiah. They inherited the office of their father Shavsha (1 Chron. xviii. 16),[202] who had been the secretary of David. It was their duty to record decrees and draw up the documents of state. Jehoshaphat, the son of Ahilud, continued to hold the office of annalist or historiographer (*Mazkîr*), the officer known as the Waka Nuwish in Persian courts.[203] Azariah was over the twelve prefects (*Nitzabim*), or farmers-general, who administered the revenues.[204] His brother Zabud became "priest" and "king's friend."[205] Ahishar was "over the household" (*al-hab-Baith*); that is, he was the chamberlain, vizier, or mayor of the palace, wearing on his shoulder the key which was the symbol of his

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[201] Perhaps rather "the grandson." He was the son of Ahimaaz (comp. Gen. xxix. 5; Ezra v. 1, where *son* = *grandson*).

[202] Shisha and Shavsha are perhaps corruptions of Seraiah (2 Sam. viii. 17).

[203] Comp. Esth. vi. 1. LXX., Isa. xxxvi. 3, ὁ ὑπομνηματογράφος 2 Sam. viii. 17, ὁ ἐπὶ τῶν ὑπομνημάτων. Jerome, "*a commentariis*." Comp. Suet., *Aug.* 79, "*qui e memoria Augusti*."

[204] It is a somewhat ominous fact that *netsib* means properly an ἐπιτειχισμός, a garrison in a hostile country.

[205] The king's friend (2 Sam. xv. 37) seems to have been a sort of confidential privy councillor (Prov. xxii. 11).

authority.[206] Adoniram or Adoram, who had been tax-collector for David, still held that onerous and invidious office,[207] which subsequently, in his advanced old age, cost him his life. Benaiah succeeded to the chief-captaincy of Joab. We hear nothing more of him, but the subsequent history shows that when David gathered around him this half alien and wholly mercenary force in a country which had no standing army, he turned the sovereignty into what the Greeks would have called a tyranny. As the only armed force in the kingdom the body-guard overawed opposition, and was wholly at the disposal of the king. These troops were to Solomon at Jerusalem what the Prætorians were to Tiberius at Rome.

The chief points of interest presented by the list are these: —

1. First we mark the absence of any prophet. Neither Nathan nor Gad is even mentioned. The pure ray of Divine illumination is overpowered by the glitter of material prosperity.

2. Secondly, the priests are quite subordinate. They are only mentioned fifth in order, and Abiathar is named with Zadok, though after his deposition he was living in enforced retirement.[208] The sacerdotal authority was at this time quite overshadowed by the royal. In all the elaborate details of the pomp which attended the consecration of the Temple, Solomon is everything, the priests comparatively nothing. Zadok is not

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[206] Isa. xxii. 21.

[207] 2 Sam. xx. 24.

[208] Possibly this clause is an interpolation.

even mentioned as taking any part in the sacrifices in spite of his exalted rank. Solomon acts throughout as supreme head of the Church. Nor was this unnatural, since the two capital events in the history of the worship of Jehovah – the removal of the Ark to Mount Zion, and the suggestion, inception, and completion of the building of the Temple – were due to Solomon and David, not to Zadok or Abiathar. The priests, throughout the monarchy, suggest nothing, inaugurate nothing. They are lost in functions and formal ceremonies. They are but obedient administrative servants, and, so far from protecting religion, they acquiesce with tame indifference in every innovation and every apostasy. History has few titles which form so poor a claim to distinction as that of Levitic priest.

3. Further, we have two curious and significant phenomena. The title "the priest" is given to Azariah, who is first mentioned among the court functionaries. Solomon had not the least intention to allow either the priestly or the much loftier prophetic functions to interfere with his autocracy. He did not choose that there should be any danger of a priest usurping an exorbitant influence, as Hir-hor had done in Egypt, or Ethbaal afterwards did in the court of Tyre, or Thomas à-Becket in the court of England, or Torquemada in that of Spain. He was too much a king to submit to priestly domination. He therefore appointed one who should be "the priest" for courtly and official purposes, and should stand in immediate subordination to himself.

4. The Nathan whose two sons, Azariah and Zabud, held such

high positions, was in all probability not Nathan the Prophet, who is rarely introduced without his distinctive title, but Nathan, the younger brother of Solomon, in whose line the race of David was continued after the extinction of the elder branch in Jeconiah. Here again we note the union of *civil* with priestly functions. Zabud is called "a priest" though he is a layman, a prince of the tribe of Judah. Nor was this the first instance in which princes of the royal house had found maintenance, occupation, and high official rank by being in some sort engaged in the functions of the priesthood. Already in David's reign we find the title "priests" (*Kohanim*) given to the sons of David in the list of court officials[209]– "*and David's sons were priests*." In this we trace the possible results of Phœnician influences.

5. Incidentally it is pleasing to find that, though Solomon put Adonijah to death, he stood in close and kindly relations with his other brothers, and gave high promotions to the sons of the brothers who stood nearest to him in age, in one of whom we see

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[209] 2 Sam. viii. 18. Even "Ira the Jairite" is called "a priest" (2 Sam. xx. 26). An attempt has been made to explain the word away because it obviously clashes with Levitic ordinances; but the word "priest" could not be used in two different senses in two consecutive lines. Dogmatic considerations have tampered with the obvious meaning of the word. The LXX. omits it, and in the case of David's sons calls them αὐλάρχαι. The A.V. renders it "chief officer." The Vulgate wrongly refers it to Zadok (filius Sadoc *sacerdotis*). Movers (*Krit. Unters.*, 301 ff.) renders it "court chaplains." Already in 1 Chron. xviii. 17 we find that the title gave offence, and we read instead, "And the sons of David *were at the hand of the king*" (see Ewald, *Alterthumsk*, p. 276). Compare the title "Bishop of Osnaburg," borne by Frederick, Duke of York, son of George III.

the destined ancestor of the future Messiah.[210]

6. The growth of imposing officialism, and its accompanying gulf between the king and his people, is marked by the first appearance of "the chamberlain" as a new functionary. On him fell the arrangement of court pageants and court etiquette. The chamberlain in despotic Eastern courts becomes a personage of immense importance, because he controls the right of admission into the royal presence. Such officers, even when chosen from the lowest rank of slaves – like Eutropius the eunuch-minister of Arcadius,[211] or Olivier le Daim, the barber-minister of Louis XI. – often absorb no mean part of the influence of the sovereign with whom they are brought into daily connexion. In the court of Solomon the chamberlain stands only ninth in order; but three centuries later, in the days of Hezekiah, he has become the greatest of the officials, and "Eliakim who was over the household" is placed before Shebna, the influential scribe, and Joah, the son of Asaph the recorder.[212]

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[210] 2 Sam. v. 14; Zech. xii. 12; Luke iii. 31.

[211] The degraded and ominous apparitions of *Sarisim* (eunuchs) probably began at the court of Solomon on a large scale, though the name occurs in the days of David (1 Sam. viii. 15; 1 Chron. xxviii. 1). In the Northern Kingdom we first hear of them in the harem of the polygamous Ahab.

[212] 2 Kings xviii. 18; Isa. xxii. 15.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.