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DAVID.

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Nearly 3000 years ago, the Israelites, whom God had led out of Egypt into Canaan, and had there placed under the government of Judges, became dissatisfied with that government, and asked the Lord for a King. Although Jehovah pronounced this request wicked, and told his people, through the prophet Samuel, how a King would oppress them by taking and using, at his will, their property, and even their sons and daughters; yet he yielded to their desire. They hoped the vigor of a monarch might rescue them from the Philistines, who had, at this time, degraded them by depriving them of their weapons, and even of the smiths, who might have repaired or replaced them.

Accordingly, Samuel, by divine direction, anointed Saul, the son of Kish, as the first King of Israel. He was a man of uncommon stature, towering "head and shoulders" above his fellows, and seems to have been a brave warrior and good commander. At first, too, he appeared to have "another heart," and performed his royal duties well.

span high, the staff of whose spear was like a weaver's beam, and who was clad in complete armor, challenged the Israelites, in these words: "Choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. If he be able to fight with me and to kill me, then will we be your servants; but if I prevail against him and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us." For forty days, confident in his vast size, and strength, and impenetrable armor, he thus defied Israel. "And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were sore afraid." In the midst of this disgraceful scene, David came into the camp, not as a warrior, but as bearer of provisions from his old father, who was pining for news from his three sons in the army. When the young man learned the state of things, he cried "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" His eldest brother Eliab, actuated by a mean jealousy, charged him with pride and naughtiness, and with having left his few sheep in the wilderness, to see the battle. But David did not heed this undeserved reproof, but continued to speak in the same bold strain until his words reached the ears of Saül.

The King, who does not seem to have recognized his favorite armor-bearer and musician, tried to deter him from so unequal a combat with one who had been "a man of war from his youth." The reply of David displays, in the most striking light, his simple heroism, and unwavering trust in the God of battles. "And David said unto Saul: Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock. And I went out after him and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth; and, when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him.

Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God. David said, moreover, the Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." And Saul said unto David, "Go, and the Lord be with thee." The King also furnished him with a suit of armor and weapons. David, however, not having proved them, and not feeling at home in equipments, to which he was unaccustomed, laid them all aside, and boldly advanced to the combat, unprotected by mail, and with no other weapons than his shepherd's staff and sling. His gigantic adversary looked, with a mixture of amazement and contempt, on what he regarded as this boy's fool-hardy exposure to certain death, and threatened to "give his flesh unto the fowls of the air and unto the beasts of the field." David replied with like threats, for, in those barbarous days, it was common to refuse burial to dead enemies, and said. "All this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's and he will give you into our hands."

With one of the smooth stones from the brook which he had put into his sling, he struck the giant in his forehead, which seems to have been unprotected, with such force as to bury it deep in his head, and kill him on the spot.

The death of Goliath was immediately followed by the complete defeat and rout of the whole Philistine army, which had no thought of carrying out its champion's proposition, by making all the Philistines servants of the Israelites. Throughout the whole affair David apparently acted from no wish to display his own strength, skill, or

valor, but entirely from a high sense of duty to his country and his God.

Cutting off Goliath's head, according to the savage custom of those days, he brought it to Saul, who must have surprised him by asking his father's name. Saul's son Jonathan, who had before shown heroic daring in attacking the Philistines, and had then escaped his father's vengeance for disregarding a prohibition he did not hear, only by the interference of the people, who loved him, was drawn towards the young victor with all the enthusiasm of his own noble nature. "His soul was knit with the soul of David, and he loved him as his own soul." At first Saul, too, appears to have liked him, and employed him in affairs wherein he conducted himself wisely.

But, when, on his return, he heard the women sing "Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands," the poison of envy entered into his soul, and never ceased to corrode it, while he lived. Such has been too often the wretched effect of military jealousy, for Saul did not yet suspect David's claim to the kingdom, which afterwards raised his malice to a still higher pitch.

He, at once formed a design on the young man's life, which he pursued as long as his own lasted.

Sometimes he tried to pin the object of his hatred to the wall with his lance, at the very moment when he was soothing him with his harp. When those attempts failed, he successively offered him each of his daughters in marriage, if he would expose his life by attacking the Philistines. He won the younger, Michal, who loved him, by bringing 200 foreskins of the Philistines, an exploit, which, like Indian scalping, shocks our notions of humanity and decency, and can only be excused by the customs of that period.

Jonathan was disgusted with this conduct of his father,

and urged him with remonstrances, that, now and then, had a temporary effect. But Saul's thirst for David's blood soon returned, and exhibited itself in some new and equally unjustifiable attempt at his murder. David was, at last, compelled to flee for safety, and, at first, sought an asylum with the prophet Samuel. Jonathan remained his faithful friend, gave him timely warning of his father's designs, thereby exciting Saul's wrath against himself. The passionate father did not hesitate to hurl his javelin at his noble son for no other reason, than his eagerness to save him from the commission of a great crime.

In the straits to which he was now reduced, David felt himself justified in using various deceptions, and, passing over into the Philistine country, escaped unpleasant notice at Gath by feigning madness. Leaving that city, he gathered about the cave of Adullam "every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented," and commended his father and mother, who had also joined him, to the king of Moab, recollecting, perhaps, his own descent from Ruth the Moabitess. In this step, he showed his belief that Saul would not have spared the innocent and feeble old pair. He might well have believed it of a man who had slain the priests, who had given food and Goliath's sword to David, at a time when they did not suspect that he had incurred the King's displeasure.

Twice, while Saul was pursuing David, the latter had him completely in his power. The first time, the King unwittingly slept in the cave, where the fugitive lay concealed. Instead of killing his enemy, David had such reverence for the Lord's anointed, that he hesitated to cut off his robe, and, by showing it to him afterwards,

convincing him, how near he had been to him in sleep, and how magnanimously he had spared his life. In the second instance, he went into Saul's camp, and in like manner, carried away the spear and cruse which were at his side.

On both occasions, the king could not but be momentarily touched, and promised to abstain from farther persecution, saying, on the first, "Thou art more righteous than I," and, on the second, "And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thy hand." But, if he relented at all, it was only for the moment, and he certainly very soon resumed his attempts at David's destruction. It is not strange that, in this wandering life, and, while commanding a band of outlaws, David should have been occasionally betrayed into unjustifiable deeds and purposes. Among the latter was his design of killing the churlish Nabal for refusing provisions which he had no right to demand, and, among the former, his somewhat indecent haste in marrying Nabal's beautiful widow, Abigail. Yet he confidently appealed to Nabal to say, whether he had not restrained his desperate and perhaps starving followers from injuring the churl's property; and it may be, that his union with Abigail, under the circumstances, was not forbidden by any notions of propriety, then prevalent.

When dwelling among the Philistines, he not justifiably, although excusably, eluded their suspicions by pretending to be making war on his native Judah, while, in fact, making incursions into another region.

At last, the restless and malicious spirit of Saul was laid to rest in the grave. He and his son Jonathan fell in battle against the Philistines. David overlooked his offences more than posterity can, saying that "Saul and

Jonathan were lovely in their lives, and in their death they were not divided." This beautiful lament is an everlasting monument of his genius and his generosity.

He not only mourned the murderous and perjured Saul, but slew the man who killed him at his own request, and rewarded the men of Jabesh Gilead, who buried him.

He was now publicly anointed king of Judah at Hebron, where he resided for seven years and a half, reigning over that single tribe. Ishbosheth, son of Saul, supported by his general Abner, governed the other tribes. But Abner, the ablest general of Saul, and main reliance of his son, after a short time, deserted to David, around whom the whole nation then rallied. But Abner, who had, when pursued by Joab's brother Asahel, slain him in self-defence, was, in revenge, "smitten under the fifth rib" by Joab, a brave and skillful but cruel and unscrupulous officer, who, several times, provoked the anger of his master in the same way, yet without punishment. David either could not dispense with his services, was attached to him for his fidelity, or feared to execute so great a criminal. He frankly admitted that "the sons of Zeruah," i. e. Joab and his brothers, were "too many for him." His infliction of death on Saul's murderer, if one who killed him at his own request could be so called, and now on the murderers of his son Ishbosheth, showed that he was not always too soft-hearted for due severity.

When he became King of the whole nation, he removed from Hebron to Jerusalem which he took, and where he established himself on Mount Zion. He was now great and prosperous.

As his wealth and power increased, he abused the license, which, for reasons unknown to us, God allowed the men of that time, by taking many wives and concubines.

Indeed, the sensual habits, which he thus formed, probably led him to the commission of his greatest sin.

Among the wars, which he waged with almost uniform success, in person and by his generals, was one against the Ammonites who had causelessly and outrageously insulted ambassadors that he had sent them with the most peaceable and grateful intentions. While Joab was gone with the army to this war, David, looking from his palace, caught sight of Bathsheba, the beautiful wife of Uriah the Hittite, and conceived a strong passion for her. Not content with gratifying this passion by adultery, he was tempted by it into one of the basest and most cowardly murders on record. He who feared not the lion nor Goliath, who generously spared the life of his implacable foe, Saul, and wept over his fate, deliberately planned the death of a faithful and unoffending servant. Uriah, husband of Bathsheba, was sent from the army, with a message from Joab to the King. On his arrival, he considered it his duty to remain on guard near the King, without visiting his wife, whose dishonor, however, he does not appear to have suspected. Yet on his return, he bore a letter from David to Joab, directing that the unsuspecting soldier should be placed in "the fore-front of the battle," that he might be killed by the Ammonites. This infamous order was too well obeyed, and the removal of poor Uriah enabled David to marry his widow. This is a melancholy proof that the unrestrained indulgence of any one unlawful desire may lead the best men to great crime, while it should prevent us from forming a decided opinion of any man's character from a single act. David, in this dreadful instance a murderer and an adulterer, was, in the main, governed by the love and fear of God.

He was soon brought to the most pungent conscious-

ness of his sin. The prophet Nathan, by God's direction, told him of a man who had taken from another his only pet lamb, who "lay in his bosom," and asked David, what ought to be done with so cruel a robber. The King, with natural indignation, not only pronounced sentence on the offender, but seemed eager to execute it. Having thus drawn him on unconsciously to his own condemnation, Nathan said unto David "Thou art the man," Bathsheba was the lamb.

David was deeply humbled, and truly penitent. Yet God took from him his first child by Bathsheba, a loss which affected him very much. Yet he was consoled by the reflection that he could go to the child, which had thus passed into another state, and soon after by the birth of another, Solomon, who became the wisest of men, and had the honor of building the temple, which God denied to David's request.

Sin, however, continued to disturb his family. Amnon, one of his sons, committed a rape on his half sister Tamar, and was, in revenge, assassinated by her own brother, the beautiful Absalom. For this, David banished Absalom, but, after some years, at the intercession of Joab, allowed him to return. But, not enjoying the favor and power, to which he considered himself entitled, he conspired against his father, and drove him from Jerusalem. The son, by his popular arts, aided, no doubt, by his beautiful person seemed likely to carry the whole nation with him, while the poor old man retired weeping from his palace, and bearing the insults of the base time-servers, who met him on his way. But David managed to prevent Absalom from following the wise counsel of Ahithophel, who was with him, and collected an army, with which Joab gave the insurgents battle, and obtained a victory. It was strictly

enjoined on the general to spare Absalom's life; but he paid no attention to the injunction. For, when the young man, in his flight, was caught by his remarkably long hair in the bough of an oak tree, and there held suspended, Joab came up and thrust him through with his darts, for he pierced him thrice, to make sure of his death. Even then, ten of his followers mutilated the dead body with repeated wounds.

The unhappy father "sat between the two gates of a city beyond Jordan, and anxiously awaited the result of the battle. When the fatal tidings reached him, "he was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept; and, as he wept, thus he said, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would to God I had died for thee. O Absalom, my son, my son!"

In this mood, he readily pardoned Shimei, who had cursed him, and others who had taken part against him, and liberally rewarded those who had shown him kindness in his hour of trial. Mercy and gratitude were marked traits of his character.

Another formidable insurrection broke out under Sheba, which was also put down by Joab. He had coolly stabbed Amasa, who was at first appointed to the command, and thus again merited the punishment which he received only after the death of David.

In his old age, the King once went into battle against the enemies whom he had first seen in youth, the Philistines, who had endangered him in a manner which rendered his escape very difficult. He expressed his gratitude for that escape in the 18th Psalm, but prudently determined in compliance with the advice of friends, not to venture his own person again.

God sent a famine on Israel in David's reign, for the

cruel treatment of the Gibeonites by Saul, and His wrath was not appeased until a considerable number of Saul's descendants were put to death.

Afterwards, David himself provoked the Lord by numbering the people, against the advice of Joab, and "the captains of his host." From their question, "why doth my Lord the king delight in this thing?" they seemed to think that his pride in the great population and strength of Judea, was making him forgetful of his dependence on God. At any rate, when the enumeration was completed, "David's heart smote him," and he confessed that he had "done very foolishly." Through Gad, the prophet, David was given his choice between seven years of famine, fleeing three months before his enemies and three days' pestilence. The king chose the last, saying, "Let us fall now into the hand of the Lord, and let me not fall into the hand of man." "And David spoke unto the Lord, when he saw the angel that smote the people, and said, Lo, I have sinned and done wickedly, but these sheep what have they done? let thy hand be against me and against my father's house." When seventy thousand persons had perished, and the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord said, "It is enough: stay now thy hand."

After David had reigned forty years, his harp became silent, and he slept with his fathers.

His dauntless courage in defence of his country, his habitual kindness, gentleness, clemency and generosity, and, above all, his making the fear of God the guiding principle of his life, make his an example worthy of imitation.

On the other hand, the great sin into which even he

was betrayed, should warn every man to be perpetually watchful against temptation.

Amid all his wars and cares, he composed his psalms, a vast treasury of inspired poetry, in which we find gratification for the taste, delight for the imagination, pathos for the heart, consolation for affliction, the lamentations of deep woe, the strains of triumph, and, above all, and intermingled with all, the breathings of sincere and earnest piety.

PSALMS OF DAVID.

PSALM XXIII.

1 The Lord *is* my shepherd : I shall not want.

2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures : he leadeth me beside the still waters.

3 He restoreth my soul ; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil : for thou art with me ; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies : thou anointest my head with oil ; my cup runneth over.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life : and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

PSALM XLVI.

1 God *is* our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

2 Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea ;

3 *Though* the waters thereof roar *and* be troubled, *though* the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.

4 *There is* a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy *place* of the tabernacles of the Most High.

5 God *is* in the midst of her : she shall not be moved ; God shall help her, *and that* right early.

6 The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved : he uttered his voice, the earth melted.

7 The LORD of hosts *is* with us ; the God of Jacob *is* our refuge. Selah.

8 Come behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth.

9 He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth ; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder ; he burneth the chariot in the fire.

10 Be still, and know that I *am* God ; I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.

11 The LORD of hosts *is* with us : The God of Jacob *is* our refuge. Selah.

 PSALM XCI.

1 He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

2 I will say of the LORD, *He* is my refuge and my fortress : my God ; in him will I trust.

3 Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, *and* from the noisome pestilence.

4 He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust : his truth *shall be thy* shield and buckler

5 Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night ; *nor* for the arrow *that* flieth by day ;

6 *Nor* for the pestilence *that* walketh in darkness ; *nor* for the destruction *that* wasteth at noonday.

7 A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand ; *but* it shall not come nigh thee.

8 Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.

9 Because thou hast made the LORD, *which is* my refuge, *even* the Most High, thy habitation.

10 There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.

11 For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways ;

12 They shall bear thee up in *their* hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

13 Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder : the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.

14 Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him : I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.

15 He shall call upon me and I will answer him : *I will be* with him in trouble ; I will deliver him and honor him.

16 With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation.



