

HISTORY OF THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL.¹

FROM THE BEGINNING TO THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM.

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III. The National Kingdom.—Saul and David.

WE HAVE SEEN the messengers of the hard-pressed city of Jabesh go out through all Israel; will they bring help? King Nahash thinks not, otherwise he would not have let them go, and very likely they themselves have little hope of it; but only a few weeks before, in an obscure and quiet corner of the mountain region of Ephraim, had occurred an event which was to give a wholly new turn to the destinies of Israel.

At Ramah in the hill country of Ephraim, in the district of Zuph—not to be confused with the better-known Ramah of the tribe of Benjamin near Jerusalem—dwells a seer already high in years, Samuel by name, highly esteemed among his own people, but otherwise little known in Israel. He feels Israel's degradation more bitterly and more keenly than the rest of the people, who had already submitted with dumb indifference to what seemed inevitable. To his illumined eye the causes of the national misfortune are evident: the lamentable division alone, in spite of all the personal bravery of individuals, has made the people the almost defenceless prey of its neighbors. If the people is not to succumb utterly and be absorbed gradually by its oppressors the only remedy is the union of the divided and undisciplined forces in one strong hand,—in other words, the national kingdom. Among the enemies of Israel it is precisely and solely this organisation and centralisa-

¹ Translated from the manuscript of Prof. C. H. Cornill, by W. H. Carruth of the University of Kansas.

tion due to the kingdom which guarantees to them their superiority in the field. But whence shall come the king who with strong hand will shake off the yoke of foreign rule and lead the people to victory and freedom? Full of pious trust, Samuel lays the question before the faithful God who has always hitherto sent the right man at the right time.

In this crisis there appears before him one day a distinguished Benjaminite seeking Samuel's prophetic gift for an event of daily life: Saul the son of Kish, from Gibeah of the tribe of Benjamin. In this Gibeah a Philistine prefect held his court. This is significant. With this visible evidence of the bondage of his people constantly before his eyes, Saul could not but feel with especial keenness the humiliation of his people. Doubtless he bore the yoke of the uncircumcised with gnashing of teeth, and probably looked often in silent grief for a rescuer out of this distress. But with the childlike guilelessness of a generous and unspoiled heart he seems to have no presentiment of the powers that slumber within him. That he himself might be destined to become this ardently longed-for rescuer from distress is a thought that does not enter his head. Thus unconscious of his own worth, in the noble adornment of modesty, he appears before Samuel. The seer is struck with the chivalrous bearing and the majestic appearance of this Benjaminite who towers above the rest of the people by a head; when he catches sight of him an inner voice calls to him: This is the man for whom thou waitest; God Himself sends him to thee. By mysterious remarks he cunningly rouses in Saul's heart thoughts and feelings that till now had slumbered within him. A sacrifice, combined with a festal meal, to which Samuel takes the Benjaminite, serves to give to the developing thoughts of Saul a religious consecration, and the honorable distinction with which Samuel treats him, a stranger, at this solemn ceremony, arouses within him the presentiment of great things that await him.

When after this Samuel takes the stranger to his own house as a guest, where a familiar conversation loosens his tongue and reveals the innermost thoughts of his heart, Samuel grows ever more certain that he has found the one whom God has chosen for the liberation of his people. When Saul takes leave of his host the following morning the seer anoints his head with oil, reveals to him for what high things he is destined, and bids him bide his time and then do what his hand may find to do, for God will be with him.

Saul returns to his home, and his people notice that a change

has come over him—as our account says briefly and significantly, God had changed him into another man ; but quietly as before he tills his field, awaiting the moment when the spirit of God shall come upon him. Now the messengers from Jabesh make their appearance also in Gibeah. Everywhere they have found tearful sympathy, but no hand is lifted to help. And in Gibeah also it seemed to be the same. When Saul drives home his yoke of oxen from the field he finds the whole city in tears. In reply to his question he learns of the insolent mockery of the Ammonite. He flames out in sacred wrath, cuts his oxen in pieces and sends the bloody portions all about with the message: “Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul, so shall it be done unto his oxen.” His enthusiasm has its effect ; a considerable troop gathers around the brave leader, the enemy are surprised in the gray of morn and utterly routed ; the hard-pressed city of Jabesh is saved.

Now the scales seem to fall from their eyes : they have found the right man and they propose to keep him. Rejoicing in the first victory after long subjugation and humiliation the people bring to Gilgal in triumph the one to whom they owe the fresh victory, to deck him in this ancient sacred city with the royal diadem. Now Israel too has a king, like all the nations round about. Will the new king accomplish what they expect of him and what he needs must accomplish? Or was the ceremony at Gilgal perhaps too hasty, a mocking air-phantom of the overflowing enthusiasm of the moment?

The defeat of that troupe of Ammonite skirmishers was after all no great affair. The real test of power for the new kingdom was rather whether it would succeed in breaking the domination of the Philistines. It was possible, indeed, that a peaceful settlement would be attempted with the national enemy. Perhaps the Philistines would have recognised Saul as a feudal king or Philistine vassal if he had submitted to their authority as had been done before. But this was an impossibility for the popular king who had just been raised to the throne. Only the sword could arbitrate now. Therefore Saul keeps about him three thousand men selected from the exultant concourse at Gilgal, waiting to see what attitude the Philistines would assume in view of the new turn of affairs. But the whole situation demanded a settlement ; both sides needed a decided clearing away of uncertainties. In order to bring Israel face to face with an accomplished fact which should shut out all retreat, Jonathan, Saul's first-born son, the most ideal and purely heroic figure of the Old Testament, does a bold deed and slays the

Philistine prefect at Gibeah, and Saul has the trumpet sounded throughout all Israel and the fighting men summoned to join him at Gibeah.

To meet this open outbreak the Philistines march into the rebellious district with a strong force, and so great is Israel's fear of her longstanding oppressors, so great the dread of this victory-wonted enemy that the people about Saul flee, all save six hundred men, at the approach of the Philistine army. Again it is Jonathan who takes the lead in manful action. By a movement executed with unparalleled audacity he carries disorder into the Philistine camp; Saul takes advantage of this disorder to make an attack, and after a hot struggle the victory is his. But in the ardor of pursuit of the fleeing enemy he issues an imprudent order which makes it impossible to secure the full benefit of the victory. His glorious son Jonathan, the real hero of this memorable day, came near falling a victim to his father's indiscretion,—and thus in this very first deed of liberation there is a faint shadow which settles upon the new kingdom as an omen portentous of misfortune.

We do not know much more of Saul's reign. Saul's first measure was to put the military forces of the people upon a war footing; for he had enemies all about, first of all, the Philistines. That first victory at Michmas was only a transient achievement which had scarcely destroyed the Philistine tyranny; the struggle with this ancestral enemy, conducted with fluctuating fortunes, constitutes the chief part of Saul's reign and his life. He owed the crown to his sword and had to maintain it by the sword; his whole reign was an incessant warfare. In such a condition of affairs the need of a standing army became evident; it would not do to be forced in every separate case to summon the militia of Israel. And so Saul kept those three thousand men about his person and strove to increase the number and their efficiency: wherever he saw a brave and capable man, he attached him to himself, he himself and his son Jonathan at their head, a genuine leader of his men and supported by the enthusiastic love of his people. So much the more puzzling and incomprehensible seems the tragic turn of events which soon ensued. The oldest account gives no explanation for it but simply says: "An evil spirit from the Lord troubled him." Plainly we have to do here with severe derangements of mind and soul, an incurable melancholy which at times gave way to fits of madness. And if we examine more closely, we shall easily find the psychological reasons for this.

It had really been a hasty proceeding when they put the crown

upon Saul's head in Gilgal. Saul was not equal to the inner difficulties of the situation. If he had been introduced into settled conditions, reared upon the throne in possession of an inherited and established power he would have been, with his noble and chivalrous nature, one of the best kings of Israel; but here everything had first to be created, and Saul was not equal to this task: he was a nobleman and cavalier, but here was needed a ruler and king. His whole character has a cast which I would almost call rude and provincial; the original and sunny, the winning and all-compelling personality that sways men by moral conquest, this he lacked. And this is just what he needed; for the office did not carry the man, but the man had first to create the office.

It was no easy thing for the Israelites who were accustomed to perfect freedom and local independence to renounce these congenial and familiar conditions and subordinate themselves to a single will. When there was combat with the national enemy involving the struggle for existence, they followed him willingly and gladly; but to feel themselves members of a commonwealth even in times of peace and to abandon perhaps well-founded personal claims in the interest of the state and public order, was more than could be expected of them, and the people had to be accustomed to it slowly and gradually. In fact, it was achieved only when they had a sense of doing whatever came hard to them as a personal favor to the king, somewhat as a child on first going to school can be accustomed and reared to the discipline of the school only when he does all that is asked of him with the joyous feeling of showing the teacher a personal kindness. And to awaken this feeling in Israel Saul was not the man. Of decidedly choleric temperament, bold and energetic, but at the same time abrupt and inconsiderate, it was not natural for him to sue for love; indeed, he had no compunctions about offending Israel in its most sacred feelings when state policy, as we would express it to-day, seemed to call for it.

Israel had a solemn league and covenant with the Gibeonites, a Canaanitish alliance of four cities. We can understand that Saul felt it as a severe restraint to have an enclave of alien people dwelling a few miles from the gates of his capital. In his zeal for Israel, as the report says, he attacked the Gibeonites and undertook to defeat them. Furthermore, it became a necessity to reduce the predatory and dangerous people of the desert, the Amalekites. The solemn curse was pronounced against them, and Saul marched against them and conquered them, but considered it more expedi-

ent not to execute the curse, and spared the captive king and the best part of the booty. This could not but seem a great sin to the religious consciousness of that time, being a breach of promise and perjury toward God himself, and robbery or at least embezzlement of God's property. So even Samuel lost faith in the man of his choice, and in deep grief abandoned him to whom, as king, law and right ought to have been inviolable and sacred.

When we realise further that even in the war with the Philistines there were no great and decisive victories, and that the enthusiastic uprising finally ended in a spiritless and wearisome guerrilla warfare, we can understand the change in public sentiment and understand, too, how Saul himself was forced to recognise that he was not equal to his position and was not accomplishing what was expected of him and what he ought to accomplish. Now, for a noble man striving only for the best with honest purpose and consecrated zeal there is no more terrible spiritual torment than the consciousness of his own insufficiency; Saul's strong and yet sensitive nature succumbed to this infernal assault, and darkness settled upon his great soul.

When I contemplate this picture that so moves the depths of the heart, I am always impressed with the parallel in the figure of that most unfortunate of rulers on the Prussian throne, personally perhaps the most gifted of all, the son and counterfeit of an incomparable mother, and richly endowed with all advantages of mind and soul, who was welcomed at the beginning of his reign with rejoicings and enthusiasm beyond what any Hohenzoller had ever received, and yet ended at last alone and forsaken in the night of insanity, because a pitiless destiny had placed him in a position and before tasks to which his empyreal nature was not equal.¹

It is a touching proof of the genuine and grateful love bestowed upon Saul that Israel remained faithful to him in his misfortunes, and that no one undertook to remove him from the throne, not even after he had actually become a danger to his people. On the contrary, they did everything possible to subdue the evil spirit. The magic power of music was invoked to dispel the melancholy of the unhappy king. Some one in Saul's retinue knows a man especially talented in singing, and at the same time of tried valor, knight and troubadour in one, the Judean David of Bethlehem. David is summoned to court and obeys the summons. Thus enters upon the scene the man who after Moses is the greatest personage

¹ Frederick William IV., son of Queen Louise, and brother of Emperor William I.

of ancient Israel, and for whom it was reserved to complete the work of Moses.

David is one of those divinely favored, sunny natures whom all hearts acknowledge, the born ruler whom all willingly and gladly acknowledge and serve. Distinguished by all the advantages of mind and body, radiant with youth, beauty and power, compelling all hearts to love by his fascinating amiability, thus he appears before the king. At first all went well. Even Saul could not withstand the charm of this personality; he made the young man who soon became indispensable to him his armor-bearer, what we would call his personal adjutant. The chivalrous Jonathan recognises in the chivalrous Judean an affinity, and the two hearts are united in a most devoted, fraternal league of pure and generous friendship, while the king's daughter Michal also is inflamed with ardent love for her brother's bosom friend and her father's favorite, and Saul, for whom it was a matter of great concern to keep such a hero near him, gives him his daughter to wife.

But soon the evil spirit began its fiendish work even here. It is not clear what aroused the wrath of the suspicious king. According to one account it was jealousy of David's warlike deeds and success. True, it was necessary in those days that the king should be at the same time the chief in bravery, but there was his glorious son Jonathan, who at least equalled David in military fame. According to another account he sees in David a pretendant to the crown, a possible rival in the dominion over Israel. This account owes its origin wholly to the fact that David actually did become his successor; but it is wholly improbable that at that time anybody, even David himself, should have thought of such a thing; when Saul resigned the crown it would simply descend to Jonathan, and the most that David could have expected would be to become perhaps grand-vizier of his friend and brother-in-law. On the other hand the oldest account offers us what seems to be the first credible and plausible clue: here Saul suspects that David had entered into a conspiracy against him with Jonathan, a plan to depose him and put Jonathan in his place.

David cannot have failed to see that such a change of rulers would be a real blessing for Israel in the condition of the people at that time, and many a good patriot may have thought the same. Whether David some time uttered an incautious expression to this effect, or whether the suspicious king imagined this thought in the heart of his son-in-law,—at all events, in an attack of his malady he threw a spear at him, and David fled. The priests at Nob, who

had innocently aided the fugitive, were overtaken by a fearful judgment: they were summoned before the king's tribunal and executed as traitors, and their city and sanctuary destroyed; only one, Ebiathar by name, escaped and fled to David.

Meanwhile David had fled to his home in Judah and had there gathered about him a band of desperate men, four hundred rash and reckless fellows, whose leader he became. He is often represented as a regular robber chief, before whom no man was sure of his life, no woman of her honor; and there is some support for such a view in the familiar story of David's relations with the rich Nabal and his prudent wife, the fair Abigail. But such stories must be judged from the oriental point of view. To this day any Arab would shoot down on the spot like a mad dog a man refusing his hospitality in such an insolent and offensive way as Nabal does David's. No, we have rather to picture him to ourselves like the knight-errants who go out seeking adventures and are always ready to draw their swords where there is need. For instance, David is informed that the city of Keilah is hard beset by the Philistines; his people remonstrate with him, saying: "We are scarcely sure of our lives in Judah, and shall we now begin a feud with the Philistines?" But David undertakes the foray and rescues the city. On this occasion, however, and in general we see that the members of his tribe are rather in sympathy with Saul and regard David and his band with evident distrust.

Despite the critical condition of his kingdom, Saul did not shrink from civil war, but led his standing army against David and his men. David succeeded, indeed, in evading him, but finally the soil of Judah became too warm for him and there remained nothing for him but to take refuge with the enemy: he became the vassal of the Philistine king, Achish of Gath, who received him with open arms and gave him the city of Ziklag as residence. Even here he was helpful to his people and fought their enemies while pretending to Achish that he was fighting with Judah and Israel, and that he was taking no prisoners in order to keep the matter secret. Achish, too, was completely fascinated by him and trusted him blindly.

When David had dwelt a year and four months in Ziklag, destiny overtook Saul. The Philistines prepared for a decisive campaign against Israel, and David was expected to join the army of Achish. How David would have acted if the Philistines had insisted on the fulfilment of his feudal obligations we cannot say, but the other Philistine kings did not trust David and protested against

such an ally. David probably never thanked his God more ardently than when he was thus sent home. Saul with his troops was stationed on Mount Gilboa, and the battle ended in his total defeat. When he saw all lost and his three sons fallen, in despair he fell upon his own sword. The Philistines cut off the head of the corpse and sent it together with the armor of the fallen king to the temple of Astarte; the headless body and the corpses of his three sons they hung upon the walls of Beth-shan, the nearest considerable city. But now the men of Jabesh, which Saul had once rescued from utmost need, remembered their debt; they took down the bodies from the walls by night and took them across the Jordan to Jabesh, where they gave them honorable burial and mourned them for seven days.

Saul is one of the most tragic figures in history. A great and nobly endowed nature, heroic and chivalrous, inspired with fiery zeal, he finally accomplished nothing; the dream of Gilgal proved a cruel illusion; the man of the people, whose very name signifies "the desired" and in whom the longing of Israel seemed embodied, had been a will-o'-the-wisp. At his death the situation was again just what it had been at his coronation: Israel prostrate, the power of the Philistines greater and firmer than ever before. He had not shown himself equal to the task which destiny and circumstances had set for him.

And I would call attention to one more point: he lacked appreciation of the true character of Israel; in this regard tradition has given a wholly correct picture of him. He was exclusively a soldier, and was in a fair way to change Israel into a secular military state and thus divert it from its religious function in universal history. Saul may claim our deepest compassion and our heartiest sympathy, but the fall of his power was a blessing for Israel. We have no direct information as to the length of his reign; from such sources as we can command it did not last long. Five years is the least that we are obliged to estimate, but ten is the utmost possible. According to the most probable estimate of dates, based on the very accurate Assyrian chronology, Saul's death would fall in the year 1017; this will not deviate more than a few years at the utmost from the actual date.

But Saul's blood was not to flow on Mount Gilboa unavenged; an avenger and the real finisher of his life-work arose in the Judean whom he had fought and persecuted. For a while, it is true, David had to remain inactive. It would have been madness to begin the contest against the Philistines with his six hundred men;

he took care first to save what he could, and was anointed tribal king of Judah under Philistine suzerainty, and took up his residence as such at Hebron. It seems that Saul had left a single, minor son, named Ish-bosheth (or Eshbaal); Abner, Saul's cousin and commander-in-chief, took up his cause and established for him out of the ruins of Saul's dominion a kingdom at Mahanaim in the country east of the Jordan, in all probability under Philistine suzerainty also, while the whole territory west of the Jordan reverted to the Philistines. We know scarcely anything about the period immediately following: it is evident that they did not like to recall it in later times. When Abner had in some measure established himself, he attempted to subject David and Judah also to the dominion of Ish-bosheth: a battle was fought at Gibeon, but the Judeans under the lead of David's nephew and general, Joab, won a complete victory, and Abner fled with the remnants of his army across the Jordan.

Soon, however, dissension arose between Abner and Ish-bosheth. Saul had left a concubine named Rizpah, and Abner took her. Ish-bosheth could see in this nothing but a design against his dominion, and called Abner passionately to account, whereupon the latter renounced allegiance to his ward and went over to David. He had probably recognised for some time that there was no prospect under existing circumstances that Ish-bosheth's reign could last long. David then demanded back Saul's daughter, Michal, whom after David's flight Saul had given in marriage to a noble of the tribe of Benjamin. Abner himself brought her to Hebron and was splendidly entertained by David. He went away with a promise to win all Israel over to David. Thereupon Joab hastens after him and stabs him on the pretext of revenge for blood.

Joab is the most remarkable figure among David's followers,—the man to whom he owes most. He has something terrible but at the same time grand about him, and reminds me vividly of one of the most characteristic personages of our German legends, the fierce Hagen of Tronje. Like Hagen, Joab is dominated and impelled by one single feeling, that of absolute fidelity to his master. Whatever is for the interest of his master he does, even if it should be a crime; for the crime he himself takes the responsibility in order that his master may reap the benefit. Abner was in fact, a questionable friend who was liable to become inconvenient and even dangerous, and his death was a desirable thing for David, although the latter denied, and very justly, all responsibility for

the deed; that he knew about it, or instigated it, is wholly out of the question, for that would have been, to use the familiar and shocking *mot* of Talleyrand, more than a crime, it would have been a blunder.

Soon after, Ish-bosheth, too, fell a victim to blood vengeance: he was assassinated by two Gibeonites. The murderers cut off his head and brought it to David thinking to win a reward; but David had them cut down by his guards and the head of Ish-bosheth deposited in Abner's tomb. Thus ended the son of Saul after a reign of seven and a half years.

There were still left two sons of Saul by the concubine Rizpah, but no one thought of them. The situation was such that experiments could not be risked, and David was the only one who could be regarded as equal to it. And so the voice of the people called him to the throne: the elders of the districts hitherto ruled by Ish-bosheth came to Hebron to offer the crown to David, and the terms of his regency were accepted by him with a solemn oath. Now the Philistines began to suspect their late vassal, and they attempted to destroy the kingdom of David in the bud. But the undertaking on which Saul had made shipwreck was accomplished by David and accomplished to last. In what were evidently long continued and bitter contests, from which tradition gives us a number of exciting episodes and individual deeds of heroism, he succeeded in breaking forever the Philistine dominion. He destroyed all their relish for returning to the attack in his realm, but disturbed them no more in their own. He did not take from them a single foot of their land or a stone of their fortresses, and thus by his wise moderation paved the way for a peaceable footing of arbitration between the two countries, which fortunately for Judah remained permanent.

While David thus had his hands full with the Philistine wars, the Moabites appear to have fallen upon his rear; they, too, are beaten and severely chastised, and joined to the kingdom of Israel as a tributary province. During the Philistine wars, perhaps, or in any event directly after the close of them, David took a step which gives shining evidence of his statesmanship. As king of all Israel he could not continue to reside at Hebron in the extreme south of the country. Only about six miles north of his native place Bethlehem, lies Jerusalem, at that time still in possession of the Canaanite tribe of the Jebusites. The almost impregnable location of this city could not fail to strike a man of David's military insight; he selected it for the capital of his new kingdom; he con-

quered it but did the Jebusites no harm, and thus made sure from the start of an element of grateful and devoted citizens. Jerusalem is situated pretty near the central point of the entire country, and belonging to none of the tribes it stood on neutral ground above them and their rivalries. When it is called the City of David this is no mere phrase, for Jerusalem is altogether the creation of David; and when we consider what Jerusalem was to the people of Israel, and through the people of Israel to all mankind, we shall recognise in the foundation of this City of David an event of world-wide importance.

In characteristic contrast to this, Saul, even when he was king, continued to reside quietly in his native village. And another characteristic contrast between the two kings forces itself here upon our attention. David immediately set about securing for this kingdom in the political centre an ideal centre of interest. The ancient popular shrine, the ark of the covenant, had once been captured by the Philistines and then given back; Saul had let it run down without concerning himself about it. David made it one of his first concerns to bring it from the out-of-the-way country town to which it had been taken, to his new national capital. In a great popular celebration in which the king himself officiated as a leading performer, the shrine was brought to Jerusalem, and thus the God of Israel himself made his entrance. If anything in the Psalms was really composed by David, it is the words of the twenty-fourth Psalm, which may very well have been sung on the occasion of that great celebration:

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates,
And be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors,
And the king of glory shall come in.
Who is this king of glory?
The Lord strong and mighty,
The Lord mighty in battle,"

That the Lord was mighty in battle David was soon to experience. Nahash, the king of the Ammonites, Saul's old opponent, died, and David sent an embassy of condolence to his son and successor Hanun. But Hanun took the messengers for spies and sent them back to their master covered with insults. Hereupon the Ammonites united with the Aramæans, Israel's neighbors on the north border, who probably were also somewhat uneasy at the sight of Israel's ambitious growth. At the Ammonite capital a battle was fought: while Abishai, Joab's brother, held the Ammonites in check, Joab beat the Aramæans in a decisive combat

and the campaign was won. But now the Aramæans called other allies into the field. David took the command himself, and there was a decisive battle fought at a place called Helam, the location of which we do not know; the Aramæans received a still more crushing defeat, and the hostile leader was among the slain. David captured rich booty, and the region about Damascus was added to his realm as a tributary province. And thus, too, the northern border was made secure.

But while David was thus occupied in the extreme north the Edomites invaded the land from the south. Joab proceeded against them in forced marches, and beside the Dead Sea they were beaten and fearfully punished; their land too became a tributary province. After a long siege the capital of the Ammonites fell also; but in this case David exercised leniency and only required certain public labors of them, indeed he even seems to have permitted the native dynasty to continue, of course as vassals of Israel.

Thus under the lead of David, Israel had become in a few years the dominant race, the most important nation between the Euphrates and the Nile, and it deserves to be once more emphatically pointed out in closing this part of the subject that it cannot be proved or even claimed with plausibility that David began a single one of these wars: only to ward off unwarranted attacks and for the defence of the most vital interests of his people did David draw the sword, but when he did, it was with might and as in a war of God. The close of his life might have been full of light and of peaceful enjoyment of the power he had acquired, but at the height of his renown and his career David incurred a heavy guilt and this guilt went on bearing evil deeds; thus a series of trials was prepared for him which plunged him into the depths of woe.

While his troops were in the field against the Ammonites he was smitten with a sinful passion for Bath-sheba, the wife of one of his officers; he had the officer put out of the way and took the woman. If we look into the whole wretched affair without prejudice we must come to the conclusion that the blame was just as great on the woman's part, if not greater. Few kings, indeed, would have made such frank confession of the sin as David did, and we get the impression that of all his numerous wives this demoniac woman was the only one whom he really and deeply loved.

Thus David had sinned against the sanctity of the family, and the heaviest retribution was to come upon him from his own family. His eldest son, Amnon, is enamored of his fair step-sister, Tamar, and accomplishes his shameful purpose by cunning and

force. Very likely he thought: If my father has done such things I need not restrain myself. In fact David does not venture, probably in view of his own guilt, to punish his wicked son; but two years after Amnon is murdered by Absalom, the full brother of the ravished Tamar. Now Absalom has to flee, but the king longs for this son, who after the death of Amnon was the successor to the throne, and who had slain in Amnon rather the crown prince than the violator of his sister. Joab sees through the situation and manages to procure for Absalom permission to return; but he is still banished from his father's presence and is not allowed to come to court. This was extremely unwise, and could not but embitter the son. Two years passed thus, and again Joab acted as intercessor and Absalom was restored to favor and now appeared as officially recognised crown-prince.

But Absalom's ambition was not satisfied with this. It is easy to imagine that many elements, and these not the worst, were dissatisfied with the new conditions and saw with deep regret the former simplicity and informality giving way before the pomp and splendor of the new monarchy. Absalom took advantage of this sentiment and even cultivated it. The description of the malcontent crown-prince and the way in which he wins popularity and steals the hearts of his father's people is nothing less than classic. When he thought the time had come he procured leave of absence to go to Hebron, and there the insurrection broke out; Absalom was proclaimed king and marched with his Judean supporters directly upon Jerusalem.

That the insurrection broke out in David's first capital, Hebron, and in his own tribe of Judah, is significant and highly complimentary to David: the Judeans evidently felt offended and slighted because David did not favor them, and because as king of all Israel he no longer would or could be tribal king of Judah. David was taken so completely by surprise that he barely managed to escape; he fled across the Jordan, but did not neglect to provide for representation of his interests in Jerusalem. And the cunning Hushai actually succeeded in detaining Absalom from an immediate pursuit of his father and in persuading him to a fatal delay. The militia of all Israel was first summoned and then Absalom crossed the Jordan.

Meanwhile David had found time to gather about him his old and tried guards; under the leadership of Joab these easily scattered Absalom's rabble hosts and Absalom himself, contrary to David's express command, was slain by Joab's own hand. The scene

that follows, David breaking out into bitter lamentations over the death of his still loved son and taking no pleasure in his victory, is familiar to all ; Joab is obliged to remind him by a frank admonition of his duty as king, but the king takes the death of his son so to heart that he dismisses Joab and puts in his place Absalom's general, Amasa. Now there was nothing to interfere with his return to Jerusalem, but in the spiritual anguish of these days and weeks he had lost his old discretion and wisdom. It may well have cut him deeply that his Judeans had been the first to desert him, and accordingly he persuaded them now to come alone and fetch him back to Jerusalem. This was done. But when the forces of the northern tribes came to the Jordan and saw how things stood, dissension and strife arose, which finally became so bitter that a Benjaminite named Sheba blew the trumpet and cried : We have no portion in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse. To thy tents, Israel ! And all Israel actually followed Sheba, and David was left alone with his Judeans. He immediately gave orders to his newly appointed general, Amasa, to get the army ready to march ; but when Amasa proved unable to execute the order he turned again to the tried and trusty Joab, and as though nothing had happened meanwhile, Joab did his duty with inflexible fidelity. He cut down his incapable successor, and the old and invincible warriors gathered enthusiastically about his standard. The rebels were promptly dispersed and driven into the extreme north of the country ; Sheba took refuge in the city of Abel Beth-maacah, and as Joab was preparing to besiege the city the inhabitants threw out the head of the rebel to him over the wall.

With this achievement David's kingdom was saved, and the evening of his life seems to have been passed in undisturbed repose. He reigned forty years in all : seven and a half years as tribal king of Judah at Hebron and thirty-three years as national king of Israel in Jerusalem. When he reached the age of seventy the infirmities of age made themselves felt ; he seems to have become quite torpid, a plaything without will in the hands of his followers, particularly of Bath-sheba, who entirely controlled him. Adonijah, the eldest son after the death of Absalom, was generally regarded as the successor to the throne, and David's old companions, Joab and Abiathar, were on his side, while Bath-sheba, supported by certain ambitious men who hoped thus to open a future for themselves, tried to divert the succession to her son Solomon, the youngest of David's sons.

Be it that Adonijah could not wait for the death of his father, or that he merely incurred the appearance of so doing,—under pressure of the report that Adonijah had caused himself to be proclaimed king and homage to be paid him, Bath-sheba managed to have Solomon formally recognised by the dying king and introduced to the people as his successor. As Benaiah, the captain of the guard, who wished to succeed Joab as general and actually did succeed him, was for Solomon and Bath-sheba and they thus had the whole military force at their disposal, all resistance was in vain and the outwitted opponents were constrained to make their peace with the newly appointed youthful king. Adonijah and Joab did not long survive the defeat of their hopes and died by the hand of the executioner; the priest Abiathar was merely deposed and banished.

David must have died soon after this settlement of the succession. He is the most luminous figure and the most gifted personage in Israelitish history, surpassed in ethical greatness and general historical importance only by Moses, the man of God. It is not possible to overestimate what David did for Israel: Israel as a people, as a representative of political life, as a concrete quantity in the development of universal history, as a nation in the fullest sense of the word, is exclusively his work. With this he completed what Moses had begun in quiet and inconspicuous labors on Sinai and at Kadesh. And all of this David created as it were out of nothing, under the most difficult conditions conceivable, with no other means than his own talents and his own all-inspiring and all-compelling personality.

However far I let my gaze wander among the ranks of the great figures of history, I find no parallel among them for so completely a "self-made man." He is one of those phenomenal men such as Providence gives but once to a people, in whom a whole nation and its history reaches once for all its climax. David created Israel and at the same time raised it to its highest eminence; what Israel was under and through David it never again became. And so we can easily understand how the eyes of Israel rested in grateful reverence upon this figure, and how a second David became the dream of Israel's future.

True, the picture of David does not lack the traits of human frailty, which Israelitish tradition with a truly admirable sincerity has neither suppressed nor palliated, but the charm which this personality exercised over all contemporaries without exception has not yet faded for us of a later day; whoever devotes himself

without prejudice to the contemplation of David's history and character cannot fail to like him. A saint and psalm-singer, as later tradition has represented him, he certainly was not ; but we find in him a truly noble human figure, which, in spite of all, preserved the tenderest and most fragrant bloom of its nature, perfect directness and simplicity ; nowhere any posing, nothing theatrical, such as is always found in sham greatness ; he always acts out what he is, but his unspoiled nature, noble at heart, generally comes very near to the right and good. At the same time the whole personality is touched with a breath of genuine piety and childlike trust in God, so that we can wholly comprehend how he appears to tradition as the ideal ruler, the king after God's own heart.

This king, who did more for the worldly greatness and earthly power of Israel than any one else, was a genuine Israelite in that he appreciated also Israel's religious destiny : he was no soldier-king, no conqueror and warrior of common stamp, no ruler like any one of a hundred others, but he is the truest incorporation of the unique character of Israel, a unique personality in the history of the world, and we understand how he could become the impersonation of an idea,—how the highest and holiest that Israel hoped for and longed for, appears as the Son of David.