



THE  
**LIFE OF DAVID;**

OR, THE  
**HISTORY**

OF THE  
**Man after God's own Heart.**

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*Omnia probate, bonum tenete.—S.P.*

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TO THE

**REV. SAM. CHANDLER,**

D.D. F.R. and A. SS.

To whom, Sir, could the republication of this little history with more propriety be addressed, than to a gentleman to whom it is under such considerable obligations? When it first appeared, it was honoured with *your* notice in an especial manner; and is not a little benefited by your *labours*. You, Sir, with a *careful* hand noted its errors; and what has stood the test of your strictures is certainly established with additional authority. Whatever might be the motives which influenced *so vigorous* an exertion of your *learned* and *critical* powers—powers so universally acknowledged and respected, the author of this piece will not now inquire: it is sufficient to him, that they operated to the extending the knowledge of his tract, among that class of readers who stood most in need of the information it furnished; and he is persuaded you will with pleasure hear his assurances, that the work owes no small share of what approbation it may have gained, to your *elaborate review* of it. Several worthy pious persons having candidly declared in private conversa-

tion, (and unknowingly to the author himself) that the perusal of your book really strengthened the facts advanced in the history. For this, therefore, he considers you as entitled to his thanks; and that his acknowledgments might be as public as the obligation, no method of conveyance seemed more proper, than to prefix them to this new Edition of "*The History of the Man after God's own Heart.*"

He scorns, Sir, to follow the practice of Dedicators in common, who, from venal motives, surfeit their patrons with fulsome adulation: he will not, therefore, call the blushes into your countenance, by expressing his private sentiments of your *learned* Review of this Historical Sketch, farther than by one observation; which is, that had you been totally unknown in the republic of letters before, your apology for the death of Uriah would alone have raised your literary fame beyond the power of envious detraction. However, not to offend your modesty, he desists from farther encomiums; but with a wish that you may long live to enjoy the reputation acquired by so *laudable* a performance, he concludes with subscribing himself,

Sir, your greatly obliged,

and very humble Admirer.

## P R E F A C E .

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SOME reverend panegyrists\* on our late king, † have, a little unfortunately, been fond of comparing him with a monarch in no respect resembling him; except in the length of his reign, *thirty and three years*: which a lucky text informed them to be the duration of David's sovereignty over the Hebrew nation. Had our good old king died a year sooner, or had we been indulged with him a year longer, the opportunity of applying this text would then have been lost; and in either case we might not have heard of the parallel.

A reverence for the memory of a worthy Prince, has occasioned the world's being troubled with a new history of king David, (which, otherwise might not have appeared) merely to shew how the memory of the British monarch is affected by the comparison.

“Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?” is the language of Jesus Christ. “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good;” is the language of the apostle Paul. The liberty thus granted is unlimited; but it is more than mere grant of liberty, these are positive injunctions: let no one then be so timid as to resign an inclination to satisfy just doubts: in Britain, thanks to the obstinate heresy of our brave forefathers, no audacious Romish priest dare prescribe limits to the exercise of our reasoning faculties; and Protestant ones surely will not: nay, they cannot,

\* Dr. Chandler, Mr. Palmer and others.

† George the II<sup>d</sup>.

consistently with those principles which justify their dissent from the Romish communion. An honest desire to obtain truth, will sanctify the most rigid scrutiny into every thing. An apostle has told us, that we are not to believe even an angel from Heaven, who should preach any other gospel than that of Christ;\* and, no authority can be so sacred, as to set aside the *most valuable distinction of humanity*, with which our Creator has furnished us; or to give the lie to our most self-evident conceptions of right and wrong.

If that liberty, of which Britons boast the possession, means any thing, it must primarily include freedom of thought; without which there can be no freedom of action. Thus it must mean an uncontrolled power to examine the validity of every proposition offered to our assent; without which power, and the due exercise of it, our assent cannot be the assent of rational beings. If the reformed religion means any thing, it must mean a religion founded by the authority, not of councils and synods, but of conviction, the result of private judgment. True Protestants do not puzzle themselves about the decisions of Trent, Constance, or Dort; they protest against all authoritative dictates; disciples of the meek, the lowly, the humane Jesus, they seek of themselves to judge of right or wrong. Who is most the Protestant, the friend to human kind, and to truth? Those who appeal to the human understanding, and submit to the public judgment whether things are really so or not; or those who say, they are so, they shall be so, you shall acknowledge them to be so, or else——?

\* Galatians i. 8.

Let not weak-minded Christians who think truth not able to maintain its authority without legal enforcements, lament what they call licentious abuses of that liberty on which we are happy to congratulate ourselves: injudicious productions of the pen will always meet the treatment they deserve. Fallacious pretensions to reasoning cannot deceive mankind in these liberal times; nor can truth be obscured, when the attention of honest inquiries after it, is properly exerted. If the little historical sketch which follows, and which in fact, exhibits no more than what we have all daily read, without presuming to decide upon; if it really is that audacious calumny which many roundly affirm it to be; it will doubtless be considered as such: if, on the contrary, it contains undeniable matters of fact, fallaciousness will appear in the angry objections against it; and the writer trusts, the futility of such objections, have already been made sufficiently apparent.

The name of David has never been mentioned by divines but with the greatest respect, from the time in which he lived to the present day; and he is always quoted as an illustrious example of holiness! so illustrious, that the greatest instance of purity that ever existed on earth, was frequently saluted by way of eminence, in reference to him, *Son of David!* so illustrious, that on the death of the late king of Great Britain, many sermons were preached and published, in which, parallels are drawn betwixt him and this standard of piety, in order to justify encomiums on the former, by declaring how nearly he resembled the latter.

In what manner David first acquired, and has ever



since maintained, this extraordinary reputation, is not difficult to deduce, he was advanced, by an enraged prophet, from obscurity to the Hebrew throne; and taught by the fate of the unhappy monarch who was raised in the same manner, whom he supplanted, and whose family he crushed, he prudently attached himself to the cause of his patrons,\* and they were the trumpeters of his fame. The same order of men, true to their common cause, have continued to sound the praise of this church-hero from generation to generation, unto the present time: in like manner the grand violator of the English constitution obtained the epithet of *holy Martyr*.

A new scrutiny being made, however, into David's claim to sanctity, which, notwithstanding a very learned defence of him, turned out so greatly to his dishonour; the scene has been shifted by a few whose sense has overbalanced their bigotry by two or three scruples. Some such, like Sheba of old, blow the trumpet and cry, "We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse!" In this manner have some clerical weather-cocks veered about to an opposite point of the compass; and David, who, till now has been considered as a man who "did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite," has, by one stroke of politics, been resigned to the mercy of his detectors; and the importance of the detection endeavoured to be annihilated, as the easier task; all which appears with rather an ill grace, at a time when it is manifestly extorted.

\* The Prophets and Priests.

Thus much being premised relating to the conduct of the champions for orthodoxy, on the occasion of this little squib which has produced so much bustle in the clerical lives, proceed we to say something of the tract itself.

The intention was, without any regard to remote objects, or heed of future consequences, which in fact ought *never* to be considered in investigating any point; to give a fair undisguised narrative of the life and transactions of David, king of Israel.

This, however, was not so easy to perform, as it was to project; from three difficulties which impeded the execution.

1. It is not easy to conquer the early prejudices of education in favour of the Hebrew nation; which the careful inculcation of their story during our infancy, hinders our seeing in a proper light: so that relations which might shock humanity in what is called profane history, are read without any emotion but that of reverence, in *this*. This misconception is in great measure assisted.

2. By their History being written *by themselves*: and difficult to be corrected.

3. By the broken unconnected manner in which it is transmitted down to us: which renders it impossible to give a complete narrative of any period in it.

A common share of humanity, which a little attention to common sense enabled the author to extend to every nation under Heaven as the objects of it, relieved him from the first of these difficulties: to overcome the other two, he has assumed the liberty of giving *his* sense to what appears dark, or misrepresented; which he hopes will not be denied him, so

long as it is not found that a forced construction is put upon any thing cited ; or, that it is represented in any other light than what it naturally appears in, when considered with the freedom, which it is our duty to use in the examination of every historical record.

And lest it should be imagined that too great liberties are taken with the biblical writers ; it may not be amiss to mention once for all, that innumerable instances might be produced, to shew that the authority of *the Lord*, so continually quoted to sanctify every transaction related ; constituted for the most part, nothing more than national phrases, which obtained universally among so bigotted a people as on all occasions the Jews appear to have been : one-twelfth part of whom were appropriated to the priesthood ! A phraseology in some measure similar obtained in England, at that time, when shunning the cruel talons of papacy, the people rushed into the jaws of wild enthusiasm. That the sense in which the acts of David are here understood, is the most obvious and natural, appears from the amazing pains it has occasioned his champions, to force another upon them. Of this, the *Life of David*, by Dr. Delany, is a most remarkable instance ; but the gross palliations, puerile conjectures, and mean shifts to which he has been driven, prove the difficulty of the task ; while they are too frivolous to bias any, but the most *Catholic believers*.

Mr. Stackhouse, in his *History of the Bible*, has urged arguments against particular passages, under the title of *Objections* ; so cogent, that *his answers* to them, certainly could not be satisfactory even to himself.

Dr. Chandler has lately added his name to the list

of David's apologists. Strange! that so holy a king should need the exertion of so much learned and critical dexterity, to establish his fame for goodness of heart! This gentleman's performance, which was published as a reply to the first edition of the present work, is a very extraordinary piece; and shews that great learning is no security for soundness of judgment. The Doctor's book has been considered in a letter addressed to him, and published separately; to which the reader is referred for an examination into the merits of his arguments. In answering the Doctor, new lights opened on many occurrences, which, as far as they could be detached from that particular controversy, are taken into the present edition.

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THE best of kings is a title which adulation and servility have always conferred on the most contemptible, as well as the most detestable tyrants; and the frequency of its application to the object is ever in proportion as he is undeserving of it. Had the flattering sycophants of king David been satisfied with applying to him this common-place appellation, rational men, who form their conclusions from the result of general experience, would have inferred only that he had been one of the numerous herd of bad princes who have oppressed mankind, and there would have been nothing peculiar either in the fact or the inference. But when the extremity of adulation conferred on David the title of *The Man after God's own heart*, thinking men, who know the source from which such adulation ever flows, are prepared to expect, in the develop-

ment of his history, a character pre-eminently wicked, and in this they are not deceived.

All historians of credit agree in describing *God's chosen people*, the *Jews*, as the most vicious and detestable of mankind;\* their own historians confirm this character of them, and the whole series of facts which constitute their history, prove it beyond a possibility of doubt.

Among *the chosen people of God*—the most depraved of all nations—it is pretty certain that the worst and wickedest man of that nation was *David*, *The Man after God's own heart*. The truth of this proposition will be abundantly proved in the following short history.

A question will here naturally present itself, how the Jews became so much more vicious and depraved than their neighbours? And to resolve that question, it will be necessary to consider in what respects their laws and customs differed from those of others. It will be found that they differed most essentially from all other nations in the world in two particulars: 1st. They had more religion than any other nation; and, 2dly. They had more priests. Other nations among whom superstitious rites and ceremonies prevailed, were satisfied with practising them on solemn festivals,

\* Tacitus describes the Jewish people as formed of the worst outcasts of the surrounding nations, collected together by Moses, and kept for ever separated from the rest of mankind, by an opposition of manners, and hostility of sentiment. *Nam passimus quisque, spretis religionibus patriis, tributa et stipes illuc congregabant; unde auctæ Judeorum res—adversus omnes alios hostile odium—transgressi in morem eorum, idem usurpant; nec quidquam prius imbuuntur quam contemnere Deos, exuere patriam; parentes, liberos, fratres, vilia habere.*—Taciti Hist. Lib. v.

and occasionally on particular or important events; but the Jews practised their superstition incessantly: none of the common duties, or ordinary functions of life, could be performed by them, without a reference to the rules of their superstition; they were bound to a strict observance of them whenever they ate, drank, or performed any other of the natural functions.\*

Other nations had a few priests dedicated to their gods or idols, seldom exceeding a few dozen in a whole nation;† but the Jewish priesthood constituted

\* Moses quo sibi in posterum gentem firmaret, novos ritus contrariosque ceteris mortalibus indidit; profana illic omnia, quæ apud nos sacra; rursum concessa apud illos, quæ nobis incesta.—Seperati epulis, discreti cubilibus, projectissima ad libidinem gens, alienarum cubitu abstinent, inter se nihil illicitum, circumcidere genitalia instituere, ut diversitate noscantur.—Taciti Hist. Lib. v. It is impossible to draw a more disgusting picture of a nation, than this elegant and correct historian, in describing the Jews.

† The Romans, though so numerous and powerful a nation, had but very few priests, compared to the Jews. The Augurs were at first only 3, and in process of time were increased to 15. The Aruspices were 12. The Pontifices were at first but 4, and were afterwards increased to 16. The Flamines were but 3. The Salii 12. The Feciales, who were 20 in number, though classed by authors among the priesthood, were merely civil officers employed as heralds. And the Vestals, or Nuns of Rome, were only 4; altogether between 50 and 60. Vide Kennett's Roman Antiq. And yet Saint Austin, De Civitate Dei, Lib. iv. cap. 15, admits that the Romans were so virtuous, that God gave them the empire of the world because they were more virtuous than other nations, yet, with true Christian charity, he says, that they must nevertheless be damned as heathens. We do not find that the priests of other enlightened nations of antiquity were proportionably much more numerous than among the Romans. In England at present the number of the priesthood cannot be much less than 20,000; there are near 10,000 parishes, each having one priest at least, several two, and some three or more, exclusive of Deans and Chapters,

a twelfth part of the whole people, and claimed and exercised the privilege of devouring a tenth part of the produce of the country, without contributing any thing to its productive labour.\* And it is probable that the Jewish nation alone, though but a miserable handful of semi-barbarous savages, had more priests than the rest of the then known world collectively, and were consequently more vicious and more enslaved than any other people.

Mankind have been too long duped by that universal *cant* of priests, who, in their language, have ever affected to couple *religion* and *morality* together, and to represent them as *inseparably united*, though the slightest attention must show that they are perfectly *distinct*, and a full and mature consideration of the subject must prove that they are even extremely *opposite*. They well knew that man, in the most abject state of mental degradation to which superstition could reduce him, must still acknowledge the force and excellence of virtue and morality, and must perceive

Prebends, &c. &c. and all these in the established church, as it is called, exclusive of a great variety of other sectaries of different denominations.

\* The Jewish priesthood being one tribe, or twelfth part of the nation, do not appear to have assumed to themselves much more than an equal proportion, compared to their numbers, in taking the tithe or tenth part of the produce of the land, however unjust it may appear that they should be supported in idleness at the expence of the industry of the rest: but the English priesthood, though abundantly numerous, do not form above one five-hundredth part of the whole nation, yet they have the conscience to take also the tenth of the whole produce, which is near fifty times more than their just share, according to the proportion of their Jewish models, from whose example they pretend to derive their claim.

their necessary tendency to promote his welfare and happiness. They well knew how useful to their own views and interests it would be to persuade him that religion, virtue, and morality, were one and the same, or, at least, intimately and inseparably connected; the credulity of man gave credit to the imposture without examination, and the uniform experience of above 2,000 years has not hitherto been sufficient to undeceive him. Unhappy man! destined for ever to be the dupe of his own credulity, in opposition to the testimony of his experience, and the evidence of his senses. Does not the history of all ages show, that the most religious nations have always been, and still are, the most vicious and immoral!

Another most formidable evil necessarily results from such a system of superstition, that is, a state of civil slavery, which is always found its universal concomitant. Whenever the human mind is debased and degraded by a system of gross superstition, it becomes incapable of any one manly, liberal, or independent sentiment; every energy of the mind is lost, reason is surrendered, virtue, the chief support, if not the sole foundation of freedom, is banished, and man is fitted to receive the abject yoke of slavery; tyranny and despotism make an easy conquest of him, and the priest is ever ready to rivet his chains, and perpetuate his bondage, by the pretended sanction of Heaven. The power and influence of the priest and the tyrant is ever in proportion to the debasement of man; they have a common interest, have ever made a common cause against him, and have constantly erected their common throne on the ruins of his freedom, his welfare, and his happiness.



Let us not, therefore, be deterred from unmasking to the view of mankind that immense mass of vice and depravity which constitute the foundation of the Jewish superstition; let no blind veneration for that hideous idol deter us from exposing its deformity; let us cultivate that which is truly good and useful; let reason assume her just empire over the mind of man, and credulity, ignorance, and folly, abdicate their usurped dominion: then shall we soon behold the galling fetters of vice and superstition broken by the irresistible power of virtue, morality, and truth.

THE  
**LIFE OF DAVID.**

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THE first establishment of regal government among the Hebrews, was occasioned by the corrupt administration of Joel and Abiah, the two sons of Samuel, whom he had deputed to judge Israel in the decline of his life.\* The people, exasperated at the oppression they laboured under, applied to Samuel for redress, testifying a desire to experience a different mode of government, by peremptorily demanding a king.† At this, however, Samuel was greatly displeased: not that his sons had tyrannized over the people, for of that he takes no manner of notice, neither exculpating them, nor promising the people redress; his chagrin arose from this violent resumption of the supreme magistracy out of the hands of his family; a circumstance for which he expresses great resentment.‡ He consults the Lord, and not knowing else how the insurrection might terminate, in his name yields to their desires; promising them a king with vengeance to them.§ “For,” says the Lord, “they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.”¶ The people, nevertheless, resolving to free themselves from present oppression, at the hazard of the threatened judgments, obstinately persisted in their demand, and dispersed not without a promise of compliance.

Samuel, to all outward appearance, chose the most impartial method of choosing a king, which was by lot,

\* 1 Sam. viii. 3. † Ver. 5. ‡ Ver. 6, &c. § Ver. 11, &c.  
¶ Ver 7. compared with chap. ix. 16. chap. x. 1.

from among the people assembled by tribes ; but prudently pitches upon his man, previous to the election ; the whole tenor of his conduct manifesting, that he intended to give them a king in name, but still to retain the supreme authority in his own hands, by choosing one who should continue subordinate to his dictates. Opportunely for his purpose, a young countryman, named Saul, having rambled about to seek his father's asses, which had strayed, and finding all search after them vain, applied to Samuel as a prophet,\* with a fee in his hand, to gain intelligence of his beasts.

We gather from several passages in Jewish history, that there were seminaries of prophets, *i. e.* the universities of the times, where youth were trained up to the mystery of prophesying. We find there were false prophets, nonconformists, not of the establishment ; we find that even the true ones were liable to be imposed on by their brethren ;† and we find moreover, by this instance, that prophets did not disdain to give assistance in their prophetic character, concerning domestic matters, for reasonable gratuities. A chief among the prophets, one who had been a judge over Israel, is applied to in a pecuniary way, for intelligence concerning lost cattle.‡

\* 1 Sam. ix. 7, 8. † 1 Kings, xiii. 18. Josephus in loco.

‡ Pretensions to divinations continue to this day, though, in the opinion of reformed churches, all prophesying and miracles have long since ceased. These modern prophets are drolly ridiculed by our facetious countryman, Butler, in the person of Sydropel, a dealer

——— “ In Destiny's dark counsels,  
 Who sage opinions of the moon sells ;  
 To whom all people, far and near,  
 On deep importances repair.  
 When brass or pewter hap to stray,  
 Or linen slinks out of the way ;  
 When geese and pullets are seduc'd,  
 And sows of sucking pigs are chous'd :  
 When cattle feel indisposition,  
 And need th' opinion of physician ;  
 When murrain reigns in hogs or sheep,  
 And chickens languish of the pip ;

It has been said, that this is the only instance recorded of a prophet being applied to for purposes of this nature; but it appears that it was usual for men to have recourse to prophets, and that the phrase was, "Come, and let us go to the seer;"\* and that prophetic intelligence was paid for, is evident from the inquiry between Saul and his servant, concerning their ability to gratify him.†

But, to proceed: Saul not only found his asses, but a kingdom into the bargain; and had the spirit of the Lord given to him;‡ which we find taken away§ again, when he proved untractable: though it seems somewhat odd, how he could possibly prove disobedient, while he acted under the influence of this Divine Spirit! For, the possibility being admitted, the advantage of inspiration is difficult to be conceived.

After Samuel had in private || anointed Saul king, and told him his asses were already found, he dismissed him for the present: He then assembled the people for the election of a king: at which assembly, behold, the lot fell on the tribe of Benjamin; and in that, on the family of Matri; and finally, on Saul, the son of Kish.¶ An election somewhat resembling consistories for the appointment of bishops; where the person being previously fixed on, God is solemnly prayed to for a direction of their choice.

It is not intended here to give a detail of the reign of king Saul; the notice hitherto taken of him being merely because the life of David could not be properly introduced without mentioning the alteration of government, and the manner in which monarchy was es-

When yeast and outward means do fail,  
And have no power to work on ale;  
When butter does refuse to come,  
And love proves cross and humoursome;  
To him with questions and with urine,  
They for discov'ry flock, or curing.

\* 1 Sam. ix. 9. † Ver. 7, 8. ‡ Ch. x. 6. § Ch. xvi. 10.  
|| Ch. x. 1. ¶ Ch. x. 20, 21.

established in Israel : since Samuel's disappointment in Saul, naturally leads to his similar choice of David.

The disobedience of Saul, in daring to sacrifice without his patron the prophet,\* who failed of coming according to his appointment ; and his lenity and prudence, in sparing the king, and some cattle, from a nation which Samuel, in the name of the Lord, had commanded him utterly to extirpate,† irrevocably lost him the favour of this imperious inexorable prophet : and, in the end, produced the miserable destruction not only of himself, but of his family : which will occasion no surprize, when we consider the absolute dominion and ascendancy which the Jewish priests maintained over this ignorant superstitious people. A dominion which every article in the Levitical law enlarged and strengthened.

We are not to imagine that the sparing Agag, king of the Amalekites, was the only cause of this rupture between him and Samuel. For we may gather from other parts of his history, that Saul was not over-well affected towards his patrons the Levites ;‡ in subjection to whom he had too much spirit to continue. Samuel quickly perceived he had mistaken his man, he haughtily avowed his intention of deposing him ;§ and ordering Agag to be brought into his presence, he hewed him in pieces—"before the Lord."||

We now come to the hero of the history.

In pursuance of his intention to make another king, Samuel went under the pretence of a sacrifice, and anointed another country youth,¶ which was David, the youngest son of Jesse, the Bethlehemite ; and gave him the spirit of the Lord, which he had just taken from poor Saul. The king, in the mean time, reflecting on the precariousness of his situation, now that the priests, on the part of Samuel, were incensed against him ; and well knowing their influence among his sub-

\* 1 Sam. xiii. 8—14. † Ch. xv. 3. ‡ Ch. 22. 18, 19. and Ch. xxviii. 9. § Ch. xiii. 14. xv. 26. 28. || Ver. 33.

¶ Ch. xvi. 13.

jects, fell into a melancholy disorder of mind,\* which his physicians were unable to remove.†

This was artfully made the occasion of introducing David to court. The king was advised to divert himself with music; and David was contrived to be recommended to him for his skill on the harp.‡ Saul accordingly sent to Jesse, to request his son; which was immediately complied with: and David was detained at court, in the capacity of the king's armour-bearer.§

Here the story begins to grow confused, beyond *lay*-skill to reconcile. A war with the Philistines is abruptly introduced; in the midst of the relation of which, we are abruptly informed that David returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep|| again; from whence his father sent him with provisions for his brothers, who were in the army.¶ What can be thought of this? Jesse hardly recalled his son from the honourable post of armour-bearer to the king; it is not likely that he was turned off, since we afterwards find him playing on the harp to the king, as before; \*\* neither was it proper employment for the king's armour-bearer to be feeding sheep, when the army was in the field, and his majesty with them in person! Why—the most easy method is to take it as we find it; to suppose it to be right, and go quietly on with the story.

In the Philistine army was a man of extraordinary size, named Goliah, who came out of their camp, day by day, challenging and defying any one among the Hebrews to single combat, and to rest the decision of their quarrel upon the event; an offer which no one among the Israelites was hitherto found hardy enough to accept.†† David is said to have arrived at the army just as it was forming for engagement; at which time the giant advanced as before, with reproachful menaces; and, after having enquired carefully concerning what reward would be given to the conqueror of this giant,

\* 1 Sam. xvi. 14. † Josephus. ‡ 1 Sam. xvi. 18. § Ver. 21. || Ch. xvii. 15. ¶ Ch. xvii. 17. \*\* Ch. xviii. 10. †† Ch. xvii. 4. &c.



and learning that great riches and the king's daughter were to be the prizes of conquest, David courageously declared before Saul his acceptance of the challenge,\* notwithstanding the contempt with which his offer had been treated.

Saul, relying on the youth's ardour and assurance of victory, girded his own armour on him † but David put it off again, trusting entirely to a pouch of stones, and his own skill in slinging. ‡ The success answered his hopes, and stamped, what would otherwise have been deemed a rash undertaking, with a more respectable name; he knocked Goliath down with a stone; then ran in upon him, cut his head off with his own sword, and brought it triumphantly to the king of Israel. § The consequence was the defeat of the Philistines.

Here we meet with another stumbling-block. For, though Saul, as has already been observed, had sent to Jesse expressly for his son David; though David had played to him on the harp; though Saul had again sent to Jesse, to desire that David might be permitted to stay with him; and in consequence of this had given him a military appointment about his person; though he had now a fresh conference with him; had just put his own suit of armour on him; and though all these occurrences must have happened within a small space of time, yet his memory is made so to fail him on a sudden, that he knew nothing either of David, or his parentage! but while David went to meet the giant, he enquired of others, who proved as ignorant as himself, whose son || the stripling was? This stumbling-block must likewise be stepped over, for it is not removeable.

The reputation which this gallant action procured to David, soon gained him advancement in the army, and a warm friendship with Saul's son, Jonathan. ¶ But the inordinate acclamations of the people, on account

\* 1 Sam. xvii. 32. † Ver. 38. ‡ Ver. 40. § Ver. 49. || Ver. 55.  
¶ Ch. xviii. 3.

of the death of the Philistine giant, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands;"\* a rhodomontade out of measure extravagant, when we compare the two subjects of the contrast, justly occasioned Saul to view David with a jealous eye. We have all the reason in the world to believe that Samuel and the priests made every possible advantage of an adventure so fortunate for their intended king, to improve his growing popularity, which even at its outset had so far exceeded all bounds of decency: "What," said Saul, "can he have more but the kingdom?"† and we may therefore conclude that the king saw enough to alarm him; for we are told, that "Saul eyed David from that day and forward,"‡ Thus we find that on the following day, while David played as usual on his harp before Saul, the king cast a javelin at him,§ which David avoided. Saul then made him captain over a thousand, saying, "Let not mine hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him:"|| an expression however which is evidently put into Saul's mouth, since it is impossible he could have made use of it openly. He made him the offer of his daughter Merab for his wife, in consequence of the defeat of Goliath; but she, we know not why, was given to another;¶ afterwards he gave him Michal: and David's modesty\*\* on this occasion was incomparably well acted; he knowing himself, at the same time, to be secretly intended for the kingdom by Samuel.

Saul, upon reflection, concluding it dangerous to execute any open act of violence against this young hero, politically hoped to ensnare him, by exalting him high in favour, or to get rid of him by putting him upon his mettle, in performing feats of valour; for a deficiency of valour is not to be numbered among David's faults. It was with this view that the king yet required of him an hundred Philistine foreskins,†† as the con-

\* 1 Sam. xvii. 7. † Ch. xviii. 8. ‡ Ver. 9. § Ver. 11.  
 ¶ Ver. 17. ¶ Ver. 19. \*\* Ver. 23. †† Ver. 25. according  
 to Josephus 600 heads.



dition of becoming his son-in-law. He produced double the number "in full tale."\*

This demand, after David appears to have fulfilled the prescribed conditions, seems not only unjust, but also, even making allowance for Hebrew customs, very ridiculously expressed. It must have been a glorious sight to have seen David bring the foreskins to king Saul, strung perhaps on a piece of pack-thread, and dangling in his hand, or thrown across his shoulders like a sash: and if Miss Michal was present, how must her pretty little heart exult when the required number being told off, as many more were gallantly presented at her feet!

David still advanced in his military† reputation, and met with a powerful advocate in the person of Jonathan, his brother-in-law and faithful friend, who effected a temporary reconciliation between him and Saul;‡ at which time Saul swore he would no more attempt his life. Nevertheless, whether it was that he could not get the better of his jealousy, or that he discovered more than is transmitted down to us, we know not; consequences incline us to the last conjecture: Saul made two more attempts to kill him;§ from one of which he was protected by his wife Michal; and finding it not safe to stay at court, he fled to Samuel, in Ramah.|| Hither Saul sent messengers to apprehend him;¶ but these, it seems, seeing Samuel presiding over a company of prophets, and prophesying, were seized with a spirit of prophesying also; and not only so, but it is related that Saul finding this, went at last himself, to just the same purpose; for he likewise prophesied,\*\* stripping off his cloaths, in which ridiculous condition he continued for a day and a night.

This is an extreme odd relation! That the solemn appearance of an assembly of prophets, presided over by a person so respectable, and heretofore of such

\* 1 Sam. xviii. 27. † Ver. 30. xix. 8. ‡ Ver. 4. § Ver. 10, 11.  
 || Ver. 18. ¶ Ver. 20. \*\* Ver. 23.

great authority in Judea, might influence, in an extraordinary manner, persons entrusted with a commission to apprehend or kill a man patronized by these prophets, exhibits nothing wonderful; they might easily perhaps, be prophesied out of their errand; and might then prophesy in concert. Prophecy is a vague term, not always limited to the prediction of future events; the extempore preaching of many dissenters, and the discourses of the Quakers, who profess to speak as the Spirit gives them utterance, seem to come under the term prophecy. These persons can work themselves and others into such fits of enthusiastic intoxication, that they believe themselves agitated by supernatural influence. Such might be the prophesying here mentioned. But Saul prophesied! so it is said. Had the subject of Saul's prophesying been transmitted down to us, it might have greatly illustrated this passage in the history; but no, he is barely said to have *prophesied*; and we are prudently left to guess what. Being thus at liberty, we, among other expositors, may easily surmise what he might take for his text, and was the general tenor of his discourse, on this particular occasion.

Afterward David had a private interview\* with Jonathan; for he durst not venture to appear at court. At this meeting, Jonathan, who had conceived too great an affection for this man, and was at length seduced by him from the duty and allegiance which he owed to his father and king, solemnly promised† that he would sound his father's intentions on the next day, which being the festival of the new moon, David's attendance was expected at the king's table; and that he would warn him of any danger intended him. David lay hid in the field until Jonathan brought him the required intelligence; and when the king inquired concerning him, Jonathan as had been before concerted, said that he had requested leave to go and per-

\* 1 Sam. xx. 1.

† Ver. 12.

form a family sacrifice at Bethlehem. Saul's reply on this occasion is very pertinent, and shows his antipathy to David not to have been the causeless inveteracy of a disordered mind. "Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother's nakedness? For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom: wherefore now send and fetch him unto me; for he shall surely die."\* Jonathan expostulated with his father, and had a javelin hurled at him for his reward.†

David being advertised, according to agreement, of the king's disposition toward him, retired to Ahimelech, the high priest, at the city of Nob;‡ who treated him with shew-bread, and armed him with the sword of Goliath, which had been hung up and consecrated to God.§

We may consider David's resuming this sword, after its dedication as a religious trophy, whatever gloss may be put on his interview with Ahimelech, to be a clear manifestation of hostile intentions, or a declaration of war against his father-in-law, for which he now took the first opportunity to prepare. Thus accoutred, he fled out of Judea, to Achish, king of Gath;|| intending, as we have good reason to believe, to enter into a treaty of alliance with him against the Hebrews; but the popular cry was against him before he accomplished any thing, or at least any thing that has reached our times. Here David appears to disadvantage in point of policy: for though his carrying with him the sword of Goliath was artful enough, and likely to collect followers in Judea, since it was a continual witness of that prowess which had gained him such

\* Ver. 30, 31. Josephus in loco. † Ver. 33. ‡ 1 Sam. xxi. 1.  
§ Ver. 9. Josephus. || Ver. 10.

extraordinary reputation; yet, for him, under this circumstance, to throw himself into the power of the Philistines, among those very people from whose champion he had ravished *that sword*, was the highest imprudence! and we perceive he might have suffered for it, had not he made use of a stratagem to procure his release, which he effected by acting the madman.\* Mankind seems to have been very easily imposed on in those days.

David, now thinking it time openly to avow his design of disputing the crown with Saul, went to a cave called Adullam, which he appointed the place of rendezvous for his partizans. Here we are told he collected together a company of debtors, vagrants, and disaffected persons, to the number of four hundred; and opened his rebellion, by putting himself at the head of this body of men:† men, whose desperate situations under the government in being, rendered them fit agents to disturb it, and proved the surest bond to connect them to a partizan thus embarked in an enterprize against it. Hither also came to him his father and all his brethren; and the first movement that he made was to go to the king of Moab, to obtain a retreat for his father and mother, until he knew the event of his enterprise.‡

By the advice of the prophet Gad, David next marched into the land of Judah:§ Gad, no doubt hoped, that as the young adventurer was of that tribe, he would there meet with considerable reinforcement. When Saul heard of this insurrection, he pathetically laments his misfortune to those about him, that they, and even his son Jonathan, should conspire against him.|| Then started up one Doeg, an Edomite, who informed Saul, that he had seen David harboured by the priests in Nob.¶ Upon this, Saul summoned all those belonging to that city before him, with Ahime-

\* 1 Sam. xxi. 13.

† Ch. xxii. 2.

‡ Ver. 3.

§ Ver. 5.

|| Ver. 7, 8.

¶ Ver. 9.

lech their chief, who began to excuse himself as well as he could; but Saul remembering, without doubt, the threatening of Samuel, concerning the affair of king Agag;\* and considering these priests as traitors, from this corroborating evidence against them, he commanded them all to be slain, to the number of eighty-five persons.† Moreover, agreeable to the barbarous usage of that nation, the massacre included the whole city of Nob, man and beast, young and old, without exception.‡

Though the king's rage in this instance exceeded not only the bounds of humanity, but also of good policy, it nevertheless serves to show how deeply the priests were concerned in the rebellion of David; since he could not be mad enough to commit so flagrant an act, without some colourable pretence;§ and shows also that Saul had not so great an opinion of their holiness as we, at this distance of time, are, by their own annals, instructed to have. Had Saul been more implicit, he might have enjoyed the name of king, have continued the dupe of the priests, have died in peace, and his children have succeeded quietly to the inheritance. But,

“Ye gods! what havoc does ambition make

“Among your works!”

During this time, David rescued the city of Keilah from the Philistines,|| who were besieging it, hoping to make it a garrison for himself. But upon the approach of Saul, not thinking himself able to maintain it, being as yet but six hundred strong, and not choosing to confide in the inhabitants, whose loyalty even his recent kindness to them could not corrupt, he

\* 1 Sam. xiii. 14. xv. 26, 28. † Ch. xxii. 16—18. ‡ Ver. 19.

§ In so small a territory as Judea, the difference between the king and his son-in-law, so popular a man, could not be unknown to persons in any measure removed from the vulgar. Therefore, Ahimelech's pleas of ignorance did not deserve credit.

|| 1 Sam. xxiii. 3.

therefore abandoned it, and retired to the wilderness.\* This passage alone is amply sufficient to confirm the reality of David's rebellious intentions; it is, therefore, worth analyzing. That he delivered this city from the depredations of the Philistines, and that by this action he hoped to purchase the friendship of the inhabitants, are acknowledged: the use to which he intended to convert this friendship, is the point to be ascertained. Saul was advancing to suppress him. Had he seduced them from their allegiance, and obtained the expected protection, he would have deprived Saul of this city, which city might have been considered as a garrison. The old plea, of his providing only for his personal safety, against his malignant persecutor, has often been urged; but his intended retention of a city, to secure that safety, was a flagrant rebellious intention. Had he gained this one city, as his strength increased, he would have concluded as many more as he could have procured, necessary for his preservation, until he had monopolized the whole country, agreeable to the grant of Samuel, which would then have justified the usurpation; but disappointed in the first step, by the loyalty, miscalled treachery, of the Keilites, he evacuated the town, having lost the recompence of his labour, and with his men "went whithersoever they could go."† In the wilderness Jonathan came privately to see him, and piously engages in the cause against his own father, by covenant; in which it was agreed, that if David succeeded, of which Jonathan is very confident, *he* was to be a partaker of his good fortune;‡ but as Jonathan was not to join him openly, he went home again.

Saul, having received intelligence of David's retreats, pursued him from place to place, until he was called off by news of an invasion of the land by the Philistines;§ whether of David's procuring or not, we are uncertain: thus much is certain, and does not dis-

\* 1 Sam. xxiii. 13. † ib. ‡ Ver. 16—18. § Ver. 27.



credit the supposition, that he quickly after took refuge among those Philistines. After repelling the invaders, Saul, however, returned to the wilderness of Engedi, in pursuit of David, with three thousand chosen men. At this place we are told of an odd adventure, which put the life of Saul strangely into the power of David. He turned in to repose himself\* alone in a cave, wherein at that time, David and his myrmidons were secreted.† This, one would imagine to have been a fine opportunity for him to have given a finishing stroke to his fortune, by killing Saul, and jumping into the throne at once: but David knew better what he was about, than to act so rashly. He could entertain no hopes that the Jews would receive for their king a man who, with such great seeming holiness, should imbrue his hands in the blood of the Lord's anointed. Beside, what evidently destroys the boasted merit of David's forbearance toward Saul, in this instance, is an obvious, though overlooked consideration, that, compared with David, Saul had a strong army with him; and had the king been missing, had he been observed to enter the cave without coming out again; and upon search, had he been there found murdered, there would not have escaped, of all

\* The words are, "to cover his feet:" which Josephus and others, mistake to mean, that he retired into the cave to ease nature. But in Judges, iii. 24. we find that expression to imply, that the servants of Eglon, king of Moab, supposed their master to have locked himself in, to repose himself with sleep, in his summer-chamber. This is farther corroborated, in Ruth, iii. 7. where, when Boaz had eaten his supper, he laid down on a heap of corn, doubtless to take his rest. Ruth, by her mother's instruction, went, uncovered his feet, and lay down by him—to have some refreshment likewise. For, in the middle of the night, when the man awaked, surprised at finding an unexpected bedfellow, and demanded who she was, the kind wench replied—"I am Ruth, thine hand-maid; spread therefore thy skirt over thine hand-maid, for thou art a near kinsman." In the present instance, it is evident, Saul slept in the cave; as he discovered not the operation that had been performed on his robe, till David called after him, to apprize him thereof.

† 1 Sam. xxiv. 3.

that pertained to David, any that *pissed against the wall*. Of this David could not be insensible; and therefore, only privately cut off the skirt of Saul's robe,\* and suffered him to depart in peace. When the king was gone out from the cave, David calls after him, and artfully makes a merit of his forbearance, protesting an innocency, to which his being in arms was, however, a flat† contradiction. Saul freely and gratefully acknowledges himself indebted to him for his life, and seems so well convinced of his own precarious situation, that he candidly confesses it; only tying him down with an oath,‡ not to destroy his children after him—an obligation which, in due time, we shall see in what manner remembered and fulfilled by David.

Saul must certainly have been greatly fatigued, or strangely overseen, to have let David catch him at so great a disadvantage—a conduct not usual with good generals. Yet, while we credit the relation, the meanness of his reply to David's harangue, can be no otherwise accounted for. Saul does not appear to have wanted resolution on other occasions; but to acknowledge his assurance that David would obtain the sovereignty, and poorly to entreat a fugitive rebel in behalf of his family! is a conduct not even to be palliated, but upon the foregoing supposition. We must either condemn the general or the king, neither of which characters appear with extraordinary lustre upon this occasion. David, on the other hand, dissembles admirably here, pretending to Saul a *great reverence* for the Lord's anointed, though conscious, at the same time, that *he was also* the Lord's anointed, and anointed purposely to supersede the other Lord's anointed; and, moreover, was at this very time aiming to put his election in force! But, as the people were not of his council, and he knew their great regard for religious sanctions, it was certainly prudent in him to set an example of piety, in an instance of

\* 1 Sam. xxiv. 4.

† Ver. 8—15.

‡ Ver. 21.



which he hoped, in time, to reap the benefit himself. About this time Samuel died.\*

We next find our young adventurer acting the chief character in a tragi-comedy, which will farther display his title to the appellation of being a Man after God's own heart.

There dwelt then at Maon, a blunt rich old farmer, whose name was Nabal. David hearing of him, and that he was at that time sheep-shearing, sent a detachment of his followers to levy a contribution upon him,† making a merit of his forbearance, in that he had not stolen his sheep, and murdered his shepherds.‡ Nabal, who, to be sure, was not the most courteous man in the world, upon receiving this extraordinary message, gave them but a very indifferent reply, including a flat denial. "Who," says he, "is David? and who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants now-a-days that break away every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give unto men whom I know not whence they be?"§ Upon receiving this answer, David, without hesitation, directly formed his resolution; and arming himself, with a number of his followers, vowed to butcher him, *and all that belonged to him*, before the next morning.|| And how was this pious intention diverted? Why, Abigail, the charming Abigail! Nabal's wife, resolved, unknown to her spouse, to try the force of beauty, in mollifying this incensed hero, whose disposition for gallantry, and warm regard for the fair sex, was probably not unknown at that time. Her own curiosity also might not be a little excited; for the ladies have at all times been universally fond of military gentlemen: no wonder, therefore, that Mrs. Abigail, the wife of a cross country clown, was willing to seize this opportunity of getting acquaintance with captain David.

\* 1 Sam. xxv. 1.  
§ Ver. 10, 11.

† Ver. 5—9.

‡ Ver. 7.

|| Ver. 13, 14—22.

And this motive certainly had its force, since she could not as yet have known David's intention: we may observe she was told of it by David at their meeting.\* She prepared a present, and went to David, saying, very sententiously, "Upon me, my Lord, upon me let this iniquity be:"† judging, very humanely, that could she get him to transfer his revenge upon *her*, she might possibly contrive to pacify him, without proceeding to disagreeable extremities. Nor was she wrong in her judgment; for we are told, "So David received of her hand that which she had brought him, and said unto her, go up in peace to thine house; see I have hearkened to thy voice, *and have accepted thy person.*"‡ But however agreeable this meeting might have been to Abigail, we do not find that Nabal was so well pleased with the composition his wife had made for him; for when he came to understand so much of the story as she chose to inform him of, he guessed the remainder, broke his heart, and died in ten days afterward.§ David loses no time, but returned God thanks for the old fellow's death, and then Mrs. Abigail was promoted to the honour of being one of the Captain's ladies.||

We are now told another story extremely resembling that of the cave of En-gedi. Saul again pursues David with three thousand chosen men; again fell into his hands during his sleep; only that here David stole upon him in his own camp; he ran away with the king's spear and bottle of water, and Saul went back again as wise as he came.¶

The opinion of Mons. Bayle seems most probable concerning this adventure, who looks upon it but as another detail of the former affair at En-gedi; and that for very good reasons. For, upon a comparison of both, as laid down in the 23d, 24th, and 26th chapters of 1 Samuel, we may remark,

\* 1 Sam. xxv. 34. † Ver. 24. ‡ Ver. 35. § Ver. 37, 38.  
 || Ver. 39. ¶ Ch. xxvi.

I. That in each relation Saul pursues him with the same number of chosen men.

II. That both adventures happened at or very near the same place.

III. That in each story David comes upon Saul in much the same manner, withholds his people from killing him, and contents himself with taking away a testimonial of the king's having been in his power.

IV. That in the second account, when David is pleading the injustice of Saul's persecuting him, as he terms it, he does not strengthen his plea by representing to him that this was the *second time* of his sparing him, when he had his life so entirely in his power; and that Saul's pursuing him this second time, was a flagrant instance of ingratitude, after what had happened on the former occasion.

V. That in the second relation, Saul, when he acknowledges David's forbearance and mercy to him in the present instance, makes no mention of any *former obligation* of this kind, although it was so recent, and in the main circumstance so similar.

VI. That the historian, who evidently intended to blacken the character of Saul, and whiten that of David, does not make the least observation himself, in the second narrative, of reference to the first.

These reasons prove, beyond doubt, that we are furnished with two relations of the same adventure. To account for the double record, and their variations, must be left to commentators, connectors, and harmonizers, who are used to compromise affairs of this nature.

David finding that with his present strength, he was unable to maintain any footing in Judea, puts himself once more under the protection of Achish, king of Gath.\* Achish, who does not appear to have been a very powerful prince, seemed to consider David alone, and David at the head of a little army, as two very

\* 1 Sam. xxvii. 1--3.

different persons: for he now assigned him a place named Ziklag, for a habitation, where he remained a year and four months.\*

As he had now a quiet residence, those who entertain an opinion of David's sanctity, would be apt to suppose he would here confine himself to agriculture, to composing psalms, and to singing them to his harp: but David found employment more suited to his genius. It is not intended here to be insinuated that he might not sing psalms, at leisure times; but his more important business was to lead his men out to plunder the adjacent country. We have the names of some nations, as they are called, but which must have been small distinct communities, like the present camps of wandering Moors and Arabs, over whom he extended his depredations: these are the Geshurites, the Gezrites, and the Amalekites.† Of these people he made a total massacre, at those places where he made his inroads; saying, very prudently, "Lest they should tell of us, saying, so did David, and so will be his manner, all the while he dwelleth in the country of the Philistines.‡" After thus carefully endeavouring to avoid detection, he brings his booty home, which consisted of *all* which those miserable victims possessed.§ He made presents of this to his benefactor king Achish,|| who, demanding where he had made his incursion, was answered, against the south of Judah, &c.¶ intending by this falsity to insinuate to the king his aversion to his own countrymen, and attachment to him. "And Achish believed David, saying, he hath made his people Israel utterly to abhor him; therefore he shall be my servant for ever."\*\*

The Philistines at this time collected their forces together, to attack the Israelites. To which service Achish summoned David,†† and met with a cheerful

\* 1 Sam. xxvii. 6, 7.

† Ver. 8.

‡ Ver. 9. 11.

§ Query, whether David might not compose a psalm upon this occasion. || Josephus.

¶ 1 Sam. xxvii. 10.

\*\* Ver. 12.

†† Ch. xxviii. 1.

compliance ; “ Surely,” says David, “ thou shalt know what thy servant can do.\*” He accordingly marched his adherents with the troops of king Achish ; but when the princes of the Philistines saw a company of Hebrews in their army, they were much surprized, and questioned Achish concerning them. The account which Achish gave of them, did not satisfy the princes, who justly feared their captain might prove a dangerous auxiliary. “ Make this fellow return,” said they, “ that he may go again to the place which thou hast appointed him, and let him not go down with us to the battle, lest in the battle he be an adversary to us : for wherewith should he reconcile himself to his master ; should it not be with the heads of these men ?”† David was accordingly dismissed, very much mortified at their distrust of him.‡

Here now was a signal evidence of David’s righteousness ! The Hebrews, according to their own testimony, understood themselves to be the favourite people of God, and David is delivered down to us as a distinguished character for piety among this peculiarly esteemed people. Yet could this very man, without any hesitation, freely join himself and company, to an army of uncircumcised idolators, marching with hostile intentions against his countrymen ! His advocates indeed pretend, that had his offers been accepted, he would nevertheless have gone over to the Israelites, at the commencement of the battle : this is taking off the charge of one crime, by imputing to him another equally bad—a most base act of treachery ! As, however, the Israelites, on the foundation of their own intimacy with the Deity, thought they had no more obligations to a moral conduct towards the heathens, than the Roman Catholics now imagine they have to keep faith with heretics ; these advocates endeavour to preserve the piety of David’s character, at the expence of what David, according to this method of arguing, did extremely well without, on all occasions ; namely, *honesty*.

\* 1 Sam. xxviii. 2.

† Ch. xxix. 4.

‡ Ver. 8, 11.

Upon his return to Ziklag, he found that, during his absence, the Amalekites had made reprisals upon him, and burnt Ziklag; and had carried off all the women captives.\* But in the relation there is one remark well worth noting, which is that “they slew not any either great or small”†—so much more moderation had these poor heathens in their just revenge, than the enlightened David in his unprovoked insult. If they came to avenge so savage an insult, it shewed great consideration in them to spare the innocent, the guilty being absent: if they only came on the common principle of plunder, the bare comparison of the different treatment of the sufferers in each instance, speaks forcibly without amplification. Upon this misfortune, his band began to mutiny, and were on the point of stoning ‡ him; when he, who knew how to soothe them, enquired of the Lord what he should do? and evaded their rage, by inspiring them with a resolution to pursue the Amalekites, and with the hopes of recovering all their losses. He, therefore, with four hundred picked men, set out on the pursuit, and by the way found a straggler§ who had fainted: after recovering him, they gained, by his means, intelligence of their route. David came upon them unexpectedly, at a place where they were, without apprehension, regaling themselves after their success: and though David’s men recovered all they had lost, together with other booty, and found their wives and children unhurt: yet could not their captain resist so inviting an opportunity of gratifying his delight in blood-shedding: the pursuit and slaughter continued from the twilight (we know not whether of the morning or evening) of one day, until the evening of the next. None escaped but a party which rode upon camels.||

Of the spoil taken from these people, David sent presents to the elders of his own tribe of Judah, “and to all the places where David himself and his men were

\* 1 Sam. xxx. 1. † Ver. 2. ‡ Ver. 6. § Ver. 11. || Ver. 17.



wont to haunt.”\* By which means he kept them attached to his interest.

The dispute between the Philistine and Hebrew armies, did not terminate but by the defeat of the latter, the death of Saul, and of three of his sons.†

Such was the catastrophe of king Saul! a man advanced from the humble state of a shepherd, by the prophet Samuel, to be his deputy in the government of the Hebrew nation, under the specious name of king: a man, who allowing for the *peculiar complexion* of the people over whom he was placed; does not, on the whole, seem to suffer by comparison with any other king in the *same* history; or whose character appears to be stained with any conspicuous fault, except that he was one degree less cruel than his haughty patron: and was disobedient enough to endeavour to be in effect, what he was only intended to be in name. On the whole, he appears to have been strangely irresolute and inconsistent with himself; and is perhaps represented more so than he might really have been: but the undertaking to render himself independent was an arduous task for one in his situation; therefore his actions and professions might sometimes disagree. However, it is impossible to argue from every expression that may be produced; we must form our judgment from leading events, and corresponding expressions; and determine as they tally with probability. If Saul himself, however he is represented as subscribing to it, was really assured of David's destination to supersede him by divine decree, there was nothing left for him but resignation: Can man fight against God? since therefore his continual aim was to destroy David, it argues against this assurance: and if Saul himself was mad, surely his soldiers were not: how came he to find an army as mad as himself, to persecute the Lord's anointed.

We shall now have an opportunity to observe the conduct of our hero in a regal capacity. The death of

\* 1 Sam. xxx. 31.

† Ch. xxxi.

Saul facilitated his advancement to a sovereignty, to which he had no pretension, either by the right of inheritance, which was claimed by Ish-bosheth, a remaining son of Saul; nor by popular election, which Saul himself had the shew of; but by the clandestine appointment of an old prophet; which inspired him with hopes, of which, by arms and intrigue, he at length enjoyed the fruition.

David had returned to Ziklag but two days, when on the third, there came to him an Amalekite, who officiously informed him of the event of the battle between the Israelites and Philistines. He owned himself to be the person who killed Saul, after his defeat, at his own request: he being already wounded. He hoped to be well rewarded for his news, by David; whose intentions were so well known, that he presented him with Saul's crown and bracelet\*. But, alas! he knew not David, and perished in the experiment: David ordering him to be killed for daring to slay the Lord's anointed.† David's treatment of this Amalekite, is agreeable to the customary rules of politics; and has nothing therefore remarkable in it, farther than it is rendered so by peculiar circumstances. Saul was declared to be rejected by God, and David was the pretender to his throne; it may therefore be imagined by some, that this man might have had some claim to *his* private gratitude, especially considering the account the Amalekite gave of the matter.

Who can help smiling at the relation of David's tearing his clothes off his back, and bursting into a sorrowful lamentation for the death of a man, to whose destruction he had so freely offered to lend assistance but just before?

Upon this alteration of affairs, David, asking counsel of the Lord, was advised to leave Ziklag, and go to Hebron, one of the cities of Judah; whither he and all his men repaired.‡ There he got his partizans to

\* 2 Sam i. 10.

† Ver. 15.

‡ 2 Sam. ii. 1.



anoint him king over Judah; at the same time that Abner, Saul's general, had, at Mahanaim, made Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, king over Israel.\* It may be remarked here, that David did not seem to claim in right of the sacred unction bestowed on him long since by Samuel. He realized his title indeed, as soon as he could make it out, by the law of force: but if his divine title to the Hebrew crown was universally known, and if, as has been urged, Ish-bosheth had none at all, how came David's title not to be universally acknowledged? Did only one tribe believe in it? Yet David, with the divine grant, was obliged to obtain the sovereignty by arms and intrigue! just for all the world like the wicked, who attain their desires by exactly the same means, to all external appearance. Upon this division of the kingdom, a battle was fought at the pool of Gibeon, between the army of Ish-bosheth, commanded by general Abner, and that of David, headed by Joab: victory declared in favour of the latter, with small loss on either side, except that Joab lost his brother Ahasel, who was killed by Abner's own hand.†

We must here be content with general hints; being only informed that "there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker."‡ What very much conduced to this, was an ill-timed quarrel between king Ish-bosheth and general Abner, concerning one of Saul's concubines, with whom Abner had been too familiar:§ and his resentment of the notice taken of this amour, occasioned a treaty to be negotiated between him and David, whom Abner engaged to establish over all Israel.|| David accepted his offer, but demanded, as a preliminary, the restoration of his first wife Michal;¶ who, during the disputes between

\* 2 Sam. ii. 4, 8.  
§ 2 Sam. iii. 7.

† Ver. 17, 23.  
|| Ver. 12.

‡ 2 Sam. iii. 1.  
¶ Ver. 13.

him and Saul, had been espoused to another.\* This demand he likewise made openly, by an express message to Ish-bosheth, who kindly complied with it: the poor man who had since married her, following her weeping all the way.†

It is impossible to avoid noting David's amorous disposition here; which could not be content with six wives, who bore him children ‡ (no mention of those who did not), but was yet so warm, that it took the lead even in his most important concerns.—We will not pretend to assign the cause of that sad disorder, the symptoms of which are described in the 38th Psalm.

After Abner had traitorously endeavoured to advance the interest of David§; he had an interview with him||; which, quickly after he returned, coming to the ears of Joab; he, who does not appear to have been acquainted with the secret spring which actuated Abner's zeal for the cause of David; represented to him the imprudence of admitting a man among them, who to all appearance came only as a spy. Unknown to David, he sent for him back again, and privately stabbed him, in revenge for the loss of his brother Asahel¶. This was a most base piece of treachery, worthy the servant of such a master: to assassinate a man in cool blood, in revenge for an action which was committed in the heat of battle, in self-defence, and even after fair warning given.

Upon the murder of Abner, David again acts the mourner \*\*; which has a greater probability of being sincere now, than when he grieved for the unhappy Saul; because the false Abner was preparing to do him essential service, by betraying his master's cause. But the event proved full as advantageous to David; as will presently appear.

When Ish-bosheth and his friends heard of the fate of Abner, who had been the very life of their cause; it dejected all their spirits; and two villains, named

\* 1 Sam. xxv. 44.    † 2 Sam. iii. 15, 16.    ‡ Ver. 2, &c.  
§ Ver. 17.    || Ver. 20.    ¶ Ver. 27.    \*\* Ver. 31, &c.

Rechab and Baanah, hoping to make their fortunes by the public calamity, went and murdered their master king Ish-bosheth, as he was reposing himself during the heat of the day, and brought his head to David\*. But not reflecting on an obvious maxim in politics, they like the Amalekite before, who claimed the merit of killing Saul, soon found that he thought it adviseable to punish the traitors, whatever he thought of the treason†.

Had David reflected on all the circumstances which led to this murder, with that tenderness becoming a person professing so much piety, his compunction would have greatly embarrassed him in the proper behaviour on this occasion. For if these two execrable villains deserved punishment, what did *he* merit who was the primary cause of so nefarious an action? Two poor rogues from subordinate views, effected by assassination what David sought at the head of an army, which naturally reminds us of the pirate and Alexander. So strangely do relative circumstances bias our judgment of things essentially alike. Had David aspired to no other sceptre than his shepherd's crook, the villains had not presumed on the usurper's gratitude; and Ish-bosheth, who was a quiet prince, might have reigned long an honour to himself and a blessing to his country.

Ish-bosheth does not appear to have been a man of parts, qualified to contend with such an antagonist as David; for nothing is recorded of him: Abner was the person who raised him; and had he lived, would as easily have deposed him, and though no qualifications are a security against assassination, yet, as in the case of another unfortunate monarch, Darius, king of Persia; such cowardly wretches generally take the advantage of precipitating misfortunes already commenced, that they may pay their court to the rising sun.

The murder of this unhappy son of an unhappy father

\* 2 Saun. iv. 5, &c.

† Ver. 12.

advanced David to the dignity to which he aspired,\* (though we shall see in a passage which reflects no great honour on him, that Saul had more sons yet living.) He was now in his thirty-eighth year; having reigned seven years and an half in Hebron † over the tribe of Judah.

Although David was now invested with that supremacy which had been the aim of his endeavours since the time that Samuel inspired him with the spirit of—ambition; yet could not his enterprising genius continue satisfied with such an exaltation. The first object of his attention now, was the city of Jerusalem, then inhabited by the Jebusites; (but it was of no importance who inhabited it, if David conceived a desire for it): this city he besieged, and the inhabitants relying on the strength of their fortifications, out of derision planted cripples on their ramparts to guard their walls; saying “except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither. ‡” Nevertheless David carried the place, and made it his chief city. §

N. B. He supplied himself with more wives and concubines out of his new acquisition. ||

While he was thus amorously engaged, the Philistines hearing that he was made king over all Israel, came and disturbed him; but David according to the usual term *smote them*; ¶ and his strokes were always sufficiently felt.

The comic tale of David's bringing home the ark will not be long dwelt upon; it may only be remarked, that it was brought on a new cart, drawn by oxen; and that Uzzah some way or other lost his life, or, as the text reads, was *smote by the Lord*,\*\* for his impiety in saving the ark from being overturned. †† But

\* 2 Sam. v. 3. 1 Chron. xi. 3. † 2 Sam. ii. 11.

‡ Chap. v. 6. Josephus. § Ver. 7. 9. 1 Chron. xi. 5. 7.

|| 2 Sam. v. 13. ¶ Ver. 20, 25. 1 Chron. xiv. 11.

\*\* Query; whether the Lord did not sometimes smite by the hands of the priests.

†† 2 Sam. vi. 7.

if “the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh into the heart;” the intention of Uzzah was indisputably good, and the alledged crime surely pardonable; the seeming exigency precluding all hesitation and reflection. Had the ark been really overturned for want of this careful prevention, Uzzah might then, it would be naturally imagined, have been rather *smote* for neglecting to save it. However, it was no longer trusted to profane hands, but carried the remainder of the way upon the more holy shoulders of the Levites,\* with great parade: attended by musicians, and by David himself who, dressed in a linen ephod, *danced before the Lord with all his might*:† and this, in such a frantic indecent manner, that he exposed his nakedness to the bye-standers. Wherefore his wife Michal sneered at him: “How GLORIOUS was the king of Israel to day, who uncovered himself to-day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows SHAMELESSLY uncovereth himself.‡” David, it seems, was of a different opinion; for he told her he *would* play before the Lord; and would be yet *more vile* than she had represented him;—adding, “and of the maid-servants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honour.”§ Some staunch zealots have very prudently spiritualized this part of David’s answer, and given the mystical sense of it; the profane, who are content with the evident signification of words, having construed it no otherwise than into an insinuation that he had no cause to be ashamed of what he exposed. Fie on them!

This story is concluded with a remark as odd as the rest of it:—“Therefore Michal, the daughter of Saul, had no child until the day of her death.”|| For, if Michal had hitherto borne no children, neither to David, nor to her immediate husband, her barrenness

\* 1 Chron. xv. 2, 15.

† 2 Sam. vi. 14.

‡ Ver. 20.

§ Ver. 22.

|| Ver. 23.



must have been constitutional; and, preceding her offence, could not be a punishment inflicted in consequence of it. Moreover, if, on the other hand, she *had* borne him children, and this disgrace to her was the consequence of a resolution made by her husband David, that she should have no more children *by him*: her quiet resignation, under this imposed widowhood, is by inference a high compliment on this poor woman's conjugal virtue! which was far from the historian's intention to bestow. Indeed there is great reason to credit Michal, and to believe that David really behaved with all the extravagance she ascribes to him: for she appeared before this affair as a discreet kind of a woman; no instance of folly being produced in her, unless the contrivances she made use of to save her husband from the effects of her father's rage may be allowed to bear such interpretation. Whatever judgment however is passed upon Michal's censure of David's behaviour in this procession, it showed great cruelty and ingratitude in him to fix so disgraceful a stigma on her; and not to make allowance for female indiscretion, the worst name that could be bestowed on her fault.

After this, David smote the Philistines, not sparing even Gath, that city which had so humanely protected him.\* He then smote the Moabites, putting to the sword two-thirds of the nation, by causing them to lie prostrate on the ground, and measuring them by lines; "even with two lines measured he to put to death; and with one full line to keep alive:"† so systematic was his wrath! Hadadazar, king of Zobah, was the next whom he smote; who being assisted by the Syrians of Damascus, he next smote them‡. Yet all this smiting and slaying is so obscurely mentioned, that we know nothing of the offences committed against this mighty chief, to excite such blood-thirsty indignation. Indeed, the cause is, without much difficulty, deducible from the produce of these wars, which

\* Sam. viii. 1. 1 Chron. xviii. 1. † 2 Sam. viii. 2.

‡ Ver. 3. 5. 1 Chron. xviii. 3, 5.

sufficiently indicate the nature of David's *thirst*. Great quantities of gold, silver, and brass, are said to have been brought to Jerusalem;\* and the priests may with reason be supposed to be the instigators to these wars; since we find all the plunder surrendered to them.† We have therefore no cause to wonder at the exalted praises they have bestowed upon the instrument of their wealth. He is said to have "gat him a name, when he returned from smiting the Syrians."‡ —This may very easily be credited; but it is to be feared, that if the name he gat from the Jews, and that which he gat from the Syrians were compared, they would not accord extremely well together.

David was at this time seized with a *temporary* fit of gratitude toward a lame son of his old friend Jonathan, named Mephibosheth, to whom he restored all the private patrimony of his grandfather Saul, and took him into his family;§ not without due consideration, it is to be supposed; since by that means he kept him under his own eye. But this gratitude was not lasting; for upon an accusation preferred against him by his servant, David readily bestowed all Mephibosheth's possessions upon that servant;|| yet, when the accusation was found to be false, instead of equitably punishing the aspersion of innocence, and reinstating Mephibosheth in his former favour, he restored to him but half the forfeiture of his supposed guilt,¶ leaving the villain Ziba in the quiet possession of the other half, as the reward of his treachery.—But of this in its proper place.

The next memorable act recorded of David, is the only acknowledged crime that he ever committed; all his other transactions being reputed "right in the eyes of the Lord."\*\*

In the midst of an obscure detail of smiting and slaying; in revenge for the contemptuous treatment of

\* 2 Sam. viii. 7, 8, 10. 1 Chron. xviii. 2, 4, 6, 8, 10.

† 2 Sam. viii. 11. 1 Chron. xviii. 11. ‡ 2 Sam. viii. 13.

§ Chap. ix. 1. || Chap. xvi. 4. ¶ Chap. xix. 29.

\*\* 1 Kings xv, 5, compared with 1 Chron. xxi. 1.



some ambassadors, sent by him with compliments of condolence; but who, perhaps deservedly, were considered as spies; while Joab was with the army prosecuting the siege of Rabbah, a chief city of the Ammonites; David, then at Jerusalem, walking one evening on the roof of his palace, perceived from that eminence a handsome woman bathing herself.\* Fired with the sight, he sent to enquire who she was: and understanding she was Bathsheba, wife to Uriah, who was at that time opportunely absent in the army under Joab, he caused her to be brought to him directly, (no ceremony in the case) and after gratifying his inclination, sent her home again.† Some time after, the woman finding herself with child, naturally informed the king of it. He, never at a loss for ways and means, immediately ordered Uriah home; ‡ of whom he enquired news concerning the operations of the campaign, and then dismissed him to his own house, sending after him a present of victuals.§ David intended the good man a little relaxation from the fatigues of war, that he might kiss his wife, and be cheated into a child more than he had a natural right to; but whether Uriah had received any intimation of the honour his Majesty had done him; or whether he honestly meant the self-denial which he professed, we are not advertised: however, Uriah would not go home but slept in the guard-room, with the king's servants.|| David took care to be informed of this, and questioned Uriah concerning the reason of it. Uriah urged a scruple of conscience against going to enjoy any indulgence at home, while the ark, Joab, and the army remained in tents in the open field.¶ He was detained another night; when David made him drunk,\*\* waiting to see what effect that might have. It was still the same; Uriah, like many other drunken men, was resolved not to go home. David, finding him so obstinate, altered his plan of operations, and determined

\* 2 Sam. xi. 2.  
|| Ver. 9.

† Ver. 4.  
¶ Ver. 11.

‡ Ver. 6. § Ver. 8.  
\*\* Ver. 35.

then to get rid of him for ever. To which intent, he sent him back to the camp, with a letter to the general. "And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the fore-front of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten and die."\* This instruction was accordingly complied with; † and then Bathsheba, like another Abigail, was taken into David's seraglio. ‡

Nathan the prophet read David an arch lecture upon this subject; § and he, who took care not to disagree with his best friends, bore with the reproof, and humbled himself accordingly.

This complicated crime committed by David is universally allowed; but people think so little for themselves, that even *this* would be qualified, were it not found ready condemned to their hand in the relation of it. This crime is given up too, as the *only stain* in David's character: but the circumstances of it will not permit this to be granted, abstracted from any consideration of the man. For, though a generally good man may, in a sudden start of any of the passions, lose government of himself so far, as to violate conjugal fidelity, or perhaps suddenly to kill another; yet a deliberate scheme, including *two* such crimes, can be concerted only by a *bad heart*. It is also to be remarked respecting his famous repentance of this black transaction, that he shewed no tokens of relenting until it was extorted from him by artifice! and that even then, though he mourned his crime, he never entertained a thought of relinquishing future commerce with the woman so wickedly obtained, but kept her until he died! and altered the regular course of succession, in favour of a son he had by her. ||

It is hoped the supposition may be allowed, that the noise this righteous affair made, might be one motive for Joab's desiring David to come and partake some of the honours of the campaign: ¶ an opportunity of

\* 2 Sam. xi. 15. † Ver. 17. ‡ Ver. 27. § Ch. xii. 1.  
 || 1 Kings i. 13. ¶ 2 Sam. xii. 27, 28.

which he prudently laid hold : but—fatal was his presence wherever he appeared.

How shall a person subject to the feelings of humanity, (a security of more avail among men than the most binding laws) how shall a man, not steeled to a very Jew, find expressions suited to the occasion, when he relates the treatment of this poor city, Rabbah? The study would be as difficult as unnecessary; the simple unexaggerated tale, if seriously attended to, will shock the humane reader sufficiently. The city was taken and plundered; and David “brought forth “the people that were therein, and put them under “saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of “iron, and made them pass through the brick-kiln :\* “and thus did he unto all the cities of the children of Ammon.”† The precise punishments here alluded to are not understood at this time: writers being much divided in their expositions of these words; but that extraordinary punishments are meant, cannot admit of a doubt; for though *believers* expound the putting the Ammonites *under* saws and harrows, into the making slaves of them, and that these were the tools with which they laboured; yet this will not agree with the latter of the texts whose authority is mentioned in the note; where it is said, that he [David] “CUT THEM “with saws and with harrows of iron, and with axes.” And should more evidence be yet required, Josephus also writes, that “the men were put to death by exquisite torments.” The general truth of the fact stands therefore unimpeached. And is it thus the people of God, headed by a man styled, in a peculiar

\* It is supposed that the ancient slavery of the Jews to the Egyptians, and the labour they were employed in by their lordly taskmasters, the making bricks, might be a current reproachful jeer upon the Jews, when any quarrel happened between them and their neighbours; and that the making their prisoners pass through the brick-kiln, was a cruel method of revenging such affronts. A conjecture not improbable.

† 2 Sam. xii. 31. 1 Chron. xx. 3.

manner, *the man after God's own heart*, used the prisoners of war? *Bella! horrida bella!*

It would not be easy to select any period of any history more bloody, or abounding more in wickedness of various dyes than that which is the object of the reader's present attention. Instances succeed so quick that the relation of one is scarcely concluded, but fresh ones obtrude upon notice.—But now horrors of a different hue demand our attention.

Amnon, one of our hero's sons, ravished his sister Tamar, and then turned her out of doors.\* Absalom, her brother by the same mother, seemingly took no notice of it, until two years after; when he invited all his brothers to a feast at his sheep-shearing; where he made Amnon drunk, and murdered him:† so deliberate, and yet so determined was his revenge! Absalom on this account, fled out of Judea, for three years:‡ until, at the intreaty of Joab, he was invited home again by his father, whose favourite he was.§ But though he returned to Jerusalem, yet would not his father see him for two years more.||

Absalom, during his exile, conceived a design of deposing his father; for after their reconciliation, his first attention was to render himself popular. To this end he set up a splendid equipage:¶ but politically increased his affability with his magnificence: rising up early, and planting himself in the way, to salute all who came to his father's levee. Of these he kindly enquired their business, or grievances; throwing out hints of the king's remissness in the execution of justice, and how uprightly *he* would conduct himself, were their causes to be determined by *him*\*\* The profession of piety is universally, and was in particular among this people, the most successful disguise for crafty designing men to assume. When Absalom, therefore, thought his scheme sufficiently ripe for exe-

\* 2 Sam. xiii. 14

§ Chap. xiv. 21, 24.

\*\* Ver 2. 4.

† Ver. 28.

|| Ver. 28.

‡ Ver. 38.

¶ Chap. xv. 1.

cution; he desired leave of his father to go to Hebron, to perform a vow made by him while a refugee in Syria.\* At Hebron he set up his standard, and his followers assembled in such numbers, and the defection was so general, that David thought it advisable to retire from Jerusalem.†

With him he took all his family and dependants, except ten concubines, whom he left in his palace to keep house‡. The priests, Zadock and Abiather, with the ark, would also have gone with him; but he thought it would be more for his service for them to remain in the city as spies; to send him intelligence how matters went.§ It is no inconsiderable part of politics to know how to suit men with proper employments, Ahitophel, his prime minister, joined the malecontents||; to balance which misfortune, David prevailed on Hushai, a trusty man of some importance, to remain in the city, that he might ingratiate himself with Absalom, thwart the counsels of Ahitophel, and transmit intelligence to him from time to time through the conveyance of the priests, whose sons were to carry on the correspondence.¶ Having concerted matters thus, he evacuated Jerusalem, and Absalom entered\*\* it.

When David was upon his journey from the city, he was met by Ziba, servant to Mephibosheth, with asses and provisions for his majesty's accommodation in his retreat††: of whom, when David enquired why Mephibosheth did not come with him; this treacherous servant told him that he staid behind at Jerusalem, hoping to obtain the kingdom of his grandfather, during this disturbance ‡‡: by which lying aspersion, he gained a grant of all his master's possessions.

Here we may introduce a circumstance, which is so far material, as it serves to shew, that the sanctity of David was not quite so universally assented to, as may be imagined, while he was living; and his actions

\* 2 Sam. xv. 7. † Ver. 12, 14. ‡ Ver. 16. § Ver. 27, 28,  
 || Ver. 12, 31. ¶ Ver. 32, &c. \*\* Ver. 37,  
 †† 2 Sam. xvi. 1. ‡‡ Ver. 3.

not only fresh in memory, but more perfectly known, than possibly, was prudent to transmit to these distant ages.

As David prosecuted his flight, he was met by a man of Saul's family, whose name was Shimei. This man as he came on, kept muttering curses between his teeth, and at length cast stones at the King and his attendants, calling out to him, "Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial; the Lord hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned, and the Lord hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son; and behold thou art taken in thy mischief because thou art a bloody man"\*. This is pathetic, and truly characteristic of the person to whom the speech was addressed. Some of his retinue were at the point of silencing this brawler with the "ultima ratio regum †;" but David prevented it ‡, wisely considering this not to be a season for proceeding to extremities.

Absalom, in the mean time, being come to Jerusalem, like a buck of spirit, took the damsels which his father had left to keep house, and cuckolded the old man by way of bravado, on the top of it §; in a tent erected for this heroic purpose!

Ahitophel advised Absalom to select twelve thousand men, and pursue David directly, before he had time to recover his surprize ||; which was certainly the best resolution that could have been formed. But Hushai, as was concerted, proposed a different plan of operations; opposing to the former, the well known valour and military skill of the old king; and the hazard of making him and his men desperate ¶. He advised a collection of all the troops in the kingdom; that success might be in a manner insured; and that Absalom should command them in person. By which

\* 2 Sam. xvi. 7. 8.

† The motto on French cannon.

‡ 2 Sam. xvi. 9, 10.

§ Ver. 21, 22. || Chap. xvii. 1.

¶ Ver. 8.



means, he affirmed that they should overwhelm David and his party, wherever they found him.\* Hushai gained the ascendancy ; and when he knew that his scheme was accepted, he gave immediate notice to the priests : † with instructions for David how to conduct himself. ‡ David divided his forces into three bodies ; commanded by Joab, Abishai, and Ittai : but by the prudent care of his men, was not permitted to hazard his person, by being present in action. § When he had reviewed his army ; he gave his generals especial charge to preserve the life of Absalom ; and with a policy that reflects honour upon his military knowledge, expected the enemy in the wood Ephraim : || a covert situation, being the most judicious that could be chosen, for a small army ¶ to encounter one more numerous. David's men were tried veterans, among whom were the remains of those who served under, and lived with him at Gath ; \*\* whereas, Absalom's army must have consisted chiefly of fresh men. The battle decided in favour of David ; †† with great slaughter of the rebel army : and as Absalom fled on a mule, his hair, which is celebrated for its beauty and quantity, entangled in the boughs of an oak, and he remained suspended in the air ; while his mule ran away from between his legs. ‡‡ He was observed in this condition by a man who went and told Joab ; and he, who consulted the safety of David, rather than his parental weakness in behalf of an unnatural son, killed Absalom with a dart. §§

David grieved immoderately for this reprobate son, on whom he had misplaced a great affection : ||| and though he had *acted* the mourner on several former occasions, this is the only one, in which his sincerity need not be questioned. It is true, he might be really concerned at the murder of Abner ; but then circum-

\* 2 Sam. xvii. 11.

† Ver. 15.

‡ Ver. 16.

§ Chap. xviii. 1—3

|| Ver. 4—6.

¶ According to Josephus, David had but four thousand men.

\*\* 2 Sam. xv. 18.

†† Chap. xviii. 7.

‡‡ Ver. 9.

§§ Ver. 14.

||| Ver. 33. Chap. xix. 4.



stances ought to be attended to; Abner was killed prematurely; he had not finished his treacherous negotiation; David had much to hope from him; but—when his expectations had been answered, it is far from being improbable, that he would have found an opportunity himself to have got rid of a man, on whom he could have placed no reliance. But to return.

David was roused from his lamentations by the reproaches of his victorious general,\* who flushed with success, told him the truth, but, perhaps, told it too coarsely. It is evident that Joab now lost the favour of his master, which the murder of Abner, the killing Absalom in direct contradiction to David's express order; and lastly, his want of sympathy, and his indelicacy in the present instance, were the apparent causes.

After the battle, he invited Amasa, Absalom's vanquished general, to return to his duty: very imprudently and unaccountably promising him the chief command of his army in the stead of Joab;† which was seemingly but an unthankful return for the victory that officer had just gained him, and for his attachment to his interest all along. Amasa, it is true, was a near relation; but Joab, according to Josephus, stood in the same degree of consanguinity; they being both the sons of David's sisters, this offer must therefore have been rashly influenced by his resentment against Joab, as before mentioned.

The remains of Absalom's scattered army dispersed to their homes in the best and most private manner they could:‡ but David inadvertantly plunged himself into fresh troubles, by causing himself to be conducted home by a detachment from the tribe of Judah.§ This occasioned disputes between that and the other tribes. They accused Judah of stealing their king from them.|| Judah replied, that they gave their attendance, because the king was of their tribe; and that it

\* 2 Sam. xix. 5—7.

§ Ver. 11, 15.

† Ver. 13.

|| Ver. 41.

‡ Ver. 3,

was their own free will\*: the others rejoined that they had ten parts in the king, and that their advice should have been asked as to the bringing him back.† At this juncture, one Sheba took advantage of the discontent, “and blew a trumpet, and said, we have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to his tent, O Israel.”‡ The consequence of this, was a second insurrection. Amasa was ordered to assemble an army to suppress it; but not proceeding with the desired speed, Abishai was afterward commissioned with the same trust; Amasa and Abishai met and proceeded together, and were joined by Joab and his men. But Joab, not thoroughly liking to serve under a man he had so lately vanquished, and having as few scruples of conscience as his old master, made short work, stabbed Amasa, and re-assumed the command of the whole army.§

Being once again supreme in command, Joab proceeded directly to the reduction of the malecontents who shut themselves up in the city of Abel of Bethmaacha: he battered the town, but by the negociation of a woman, the inhabitants agreed to throw Sheba's head to him over the wall; which they performed;|| and thus was quiet once more restored. Joab returned to Jerusalem, where we are told that he was general over all the host of Israel.¶ Not a syllable appears of any notice taken by David of the murder of the general by himself appointed: and of the assassin's usurping the command of the army.

Not finding room in its proper place, it shall now be noticed, that when David was returning to Jerusalem from the reduction of Absalom's rebellion; with the men of Judah, who came to escort him, Shimei, the Benjamite,\*\* joined him at the head of a party of his own tribe. This man, who at a former meeting, so freely bestowed his maledictions on David when a fugitive: upon this change of circumstances, reflecting

\* 2 Sam. xix. 42.

† Ver. 43.

‡ Chap. xx. 1.

§ Ver. 7, 9.

|| Ver. 15, 16, &amp;c.

¶ Ver. 23. \*\* Ver. 16.

on the king's vindictive temper, came now to make his submission: David accepted his acknowledgements, and confirmed his pardon with an oath.\*

We shall have occasion to refer to this passage anon.

Mephibosheth came also to welcome David on his return, and undeceive him with regard to the false Ziba's representation of him;—but he appears to have met with no other redress, than a remittance of *half the grant* made to Ziba of his estate.†

These intestine troubles put David upon pondering how to secure himself, as far as he could forecast, from any future disturbance.

It is the part of good politicians, not only to form wise designs themselves, but also to make proper advantage of public occurrences, that all events indiscriminately may, more or less, lead to the purposes wanted to be obtained. Of this policy we shall observe David to be mindful, in the ensuing transaction. Not that a panegyric upon his contrivance in this instance is by any means intended; for certainly a more barefaced transaction was never exhibited: such indeed as could only have been attempted among the poor bigoted Jews. It is sufficient, however, that it answered David's purpose; than which more could not have been expected from the most complete stroke that refined politics ever produced. But view it in a moral light, and certainly a blacker piece of ingratitude and perfidy can hardly be imagined. It was impossible to continue the narrative without prefacing thus much.

David having with much trouble, from his competition with Ish-bosheth, established himself upon the Jewish throne; and having in the latter part of his reign been vexed, and driven to disagreeable extremities, by the seditious humour of his subjects, the rebellion of his own son Absalom, and the revolt of

\* 2 Sam. xix. 23.

† Ver. 29.

Sheba; his mind now fell a prey to suspicion. He called to remembrance that some of Saul's family were yet living; whom, lest they should hereafter prove thorns in his side, he concluded it expedient to cut off.

Whenever David projected any scheme, a religious plea, and the assistance of his old friends,\* were never wanting. A famine befel Judea, which continued three years: probably occasioned by the preceding intestine commotions. "David inquired of the Lord: and the Lord answered, it is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites."† But where is this crime recorded? Samuel charged Saul with no such slaughter: he reproached him with a contrary fault, an act of *mercy* ‡ which is assigned as one of the reasons for deposing him. So that this crime was not recollected, ‡ till many years after the man was dead! and then God punishes—whom? a whole nation, with three years famine: which, by the by, was not sent as a punishment neither; but merely as a hint of remembrance, which ended in hanging the late king's innocent children!

The oracular response dictated no act of expiation; but only pointed out the *cause* of the famine. So that the Gibeonites (who, by the way, had hitherto made no complaints that we know of) were applied to § for a knowledge of what recompence they demanded. They required no gifts, neither that for their sakes David should kill any man in Israel (which

\* The prophets and priests. † 2 Sam. xxi. 1.

‡ If God sought vengeance for a particular act of cruelty perpetrated by Saul: when was vengeance demanded for David's massacre of the Edomites, the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Jebusites, and others, who at times became the object of David's wrath?—That the charge may allude to some former affair, is not contested; it is, however, truly remarkable, that there should be no chronological record of a fact, which after such a length of time demanded an expiation so awfully hinted, and so extraordinary in its circumstances!

§ 2 Sam. xxi. 2, 3.

qualifying expressions seems artfully intended; since they only required David to *deliver* the men to *them*, that *they* might kill them); but that seven of Saul's sons should be surrendered to them, that they might hang them up—*unto the Lord*.\* David, not withheld by any motives of gratitude toward the posterity of his unhappy father-in-law, but in direct violation of his oath at the cave of En-gedi,† granted the request he must himself have instigated,‡ sparing only Mephibosheth, who luckily was so unfortunate as to be a cripple, and so much a dependant on David, and kept under his own eye, that he had no room for apprehension from him. He therefore reserved Mephibosheth, in memory of another oath between him and his father Jonathan. Mephibosheth having such a shocking scene to contemplate, and, considering his decrepitude, might (as he really was) with little hazard be preserved, as an evidence of probity in this pious king.

A conscience of convenient flexibility is of great use: thus David being under obligation by two oaths, forgot one, and remembered the other. When Creon, in *Œdipus*, was interrogated concerning his conscience, he replied—

—“ 'Tis my slave, my drudge, my supple glove,  
My upper garment, to put on, throw off,  
As I think best: 'tis my obedient conscience.”

David, now thinking himself securely settled, was moved both by God§ and by Satan,|| to cause his subjects to be numbered: which is, oddly enough, imputed as a great sin in him to require: for, poor man, according to the premises, he was but a passive instrument in the affair. Even David should have his due. The prophet Gad called him to account for it; and as a punishment for this sin of compulsion,

\* 2 Sam. 6.      † 1 Sam. xxiv. 21, 22.      ‡ 2 Sam. xxi. 6.  
§ Chap. xxiv. 1.      || 1 Chron. xxi. 1.

propounded to him for his choice three kinds of plagues, one of which *his subjects* thereby necessarily incurred—seven years famine, three months persecution from enemies, or three days pestilence.\* David chose the latter.

It may be as well to decline this story, as to enter into any more particular consideration of it. From the above state of the case, the intelligent reader will need no assistance in making his own private reflections on it.

We have now attended David down to the decline of his life: when his natural heat so far decayed, that no addition of clothing† could retain a proper degree of warmth. His physicians prescribed a young woman to cherish him in his bed, by imparting to him a share of juvenile heat.‡ This remedy may be very expedient in cases of extreme age: but why beauty should be a necessary part of the prescription is difficult to conceive. They sought a *fair damsel*; and the damsel they found, was *very fair*.§ Possibly David might himself direct the delicacy of the choice: but if his physicians intended it as a compliment to their master, it indicated a very insufficient knowledge of the animal œconomy: thus to stimulate the old man, and harass a carcase already sufficiently worn out: whereas a virgin of homelier features, at the same time that she would have furnished an equal degree of warmth, would have been less liable to put wicked thoughts in the patient's head.|| However, the historian has taken care to inform us, that “the king knew her not:”¶ an assertion, which, from the premises, there does not appear any reason to controvert.

\* 2 Sam. xxiv. 13. 1 Chron. xxi. 12. † 1 Kings, i. 1.

‡ Ver. 2. § Ver. 3, 4.

|| “Boerhaave frequently told his pupils that an old German prince, in a very infirm state of health, being advised to lie between two young virtuous virgins, grew so healthy and strong, that his physicians found it *necessary* to remove his companions.”

*Mackenzie on Health, p. 70, Notes.*

¶ 1 Kings, i. 4.



While the king lay in this debilitated extremity of life, he was destined to experience yet another mortification from his children. Adonijah his eldest son, since the death of Absalom, taking advantage of his father's incapacity, foolishly assumed the title of king,\* which, had he been a little less precipitate, would have soon fallen to him, perhaps, without contest. For though David afterwards is represented as having secret intentions to alter the succession, yet the countenance shewn to his pretension by Joab, the general, by Abiathar the priest, and even by all his other brothers,† seem to indicate, that had Adonijah been more prudent, we should not now have heard so much of the wisdom of Solomon. It is possible Adonijah might, even as it was, have maintained his anticipated dignity, had he not, like Saul before, slighted his most powerful friends. He made an entertainment, to which he invited all his brothers, except Solomon;‡ but what ruined him, was his not inviting Nathan the prophet; it was *there* the grudge began: and the exclusion from this merry bout, and the confidence of the party, caused the prophet's loyalty to exert itself,§ which might probably have been suppressed by a due share of Adonijah's good cheer.

Let not the writer be accused of putting a malicious construction upon every transaction he produces. Pray, reader, turn to your bible: in the tenth verse of the first chapter of the first book of Kings, you will find a remark that Nathan was not called to the feast. The very next verse begins, "Wherefore, Nathan spake unto Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon," &c. He was certainly nettled at the slight put on him, and some others, in not being invited to Adonijah's feast, else he would not have insisted on that circumstance; which had better been waved. The supposition is not so ridiculous as has been represented; for surely the probability of Nathan's being corrupted, was not

\* Ver. 5. † Ver. 9, 19, 25. ‡ Ver. 9, 10. § Ver. 11.



less than that of David's sons; who, yet, all of them, except Solomon, (who, had he been invited, had some private reasons to the contrary, which their proceedings shew them to have been aware of) were agreeable to settling the succession on their elder brother; though certainly as much interested in the disposal of the kingdom, as Nathan could be.

Nathan and Bathsheba concerted to inform David of this matter;\* where the affronted prophet could not forget the slight put upon him; but, it being foremost in his mind, he insists upon the circumstance of exclusion, in an earnest manner; "But me, even ME, thy servant, and Zadok the priest, and Benajah the son of Jehoiada, and thy servant Solomon, hath he not called;"† which spake the cause of his officious loyalty but too plainly. David here acknowledges the promise by which he waved the right of primogeniture in favour of Solomon, Bathsheba's son.‡ He now directed him to be set upon a mule, to be proclaimed and anointed king of Israel, by his appointment.§ The acclamations of the people upon this raree-shew disturbed the opposite party at their table; and an event, so unexpected, quite disconcerted them: they all dispersed;|| Adonijah ran to the tabernacle, and took sanctuary at the altar. He obtained of Solomon a conditional promise of pardon,¶ depending on his good behaviour.\*\*

And now, methinks, some gentlewoman, of more than feminine patience, whose curiosity may have prevailed with her to proceed thus far, may here exclaim; "It must be granted, Sir! that David had his faults; and who has not? but what does that prove? only that he was a man. If he was frail, his repentance was exemplary; as you may perceive, if you can pre-

\* 1 Kings i. 13. † Ver. 26. ‡ Ver. 30. § Ver. 33, 38.

|| Ver. 41, 49, 50. ¶ Ver. 52.

\*\* Solomon soon found a pretence, ridiculous enough, but sufficient in his eyes, to get rid of Adonijah, when his father was dead.

vail with yourself to read some of his psalms. Indeed, after your ill-treatment of the scripture, it will avail little to tell you that you contradict those inspired penmen, who expressly stile David, *the Man after God's own heart*. Nay, your writing against him, under that epithet, shews sufficiently the rancour and impiety of *your heart*; so that I am fearful there are small hopes of reclaiming you.'—Good Madam! hear me calmly, and we shall part excellent friends yet. Had David not been selected from the rest of mankind, why then—it is possible—hardly possible—he might pass in the gross, with the rest of the Jewish kings. But, when he is exalted and placed in a conspicuous point of view, as an eminent example of piety! he then necessarily attracts our notice in an especial manner, and we are naturally led to wonder, that a more happy subject of panegyric had not been chosen. If he was an holy psalmist; if he is stiled the Man after God's own heart; he also lived the life here exhibited: and his capability of uniting such contrarities, does but augment his guilt!

Yet, even in his psalms, he frequently breathes nothing but blood, and the most rancorous resentment against his enemies. Of these take a specimen or two, from the elegant *ekeings* out of that transcendent pair of geniuses, Messrs. Thomas Sternhold and John Hopkins; in recommendation of whose version, and the taste of our countrymen, it may be truly affirmed, that their psalms have gone through more editions than the works of any other poet, or brace of poets, whatever.

PSALM lxviii. 22—24.

And he shall wound the head of all  
His enemies also,  
The hairy scalp of such as on  
In wickedness do go.

From Basan I will bring, said he,  
My people and my sheep,  
And all my own, as I have done,  
From dangers of the deep,

And make them dip their feet in blood  
 Of those that hate my name ;  
 The tongues of dogs they shall be red  
 With licking of the same.

Again, in PsALM lxi. 24—27.

Lord, turn their table to a snare,  
 To take themselves therein,  
 And when they think full well to fare,  
 Then trap them in their gin :

And let their eyes be dark and blind,  
 That they may nothing see ;  
 Bow down their backs, and let them find  
 Themselves in thrall to be :

Pour out thy wrath as hot as fire,  
 That it on them may fall,  
 Let thy displeasure in thine ire  
 Take hold upon them all.

As desarts dry their house disgrace,  
 Their seed do thou expel,  
 That none thereof possess their place,  
 Nor in their tents once dwell.

Very pious ejaculations for the whole congregation  
 to *sing to the praise and glory of God!*

David's failings, as they are qualifyingly termed, are generally mentioned as exceptions to the uniform piety of his character : but, if David ever performed any truly laudable actions, *those* are the real exceptions to the general baseness which stains the whole of a life uncommonly criminal.

The writer does not pledge himself to reconcile rapine and cruelty, with morality and religion ; there are Commentators who love these knotty affairs ; to them they are left. When the vindictive tenor of any of David's psalms has been insisted on, the translation is immediately censured ; prudently enough ; as every one who has sense to perceive the incongruity between such bloody wishes and denunciations, and the acknowledged purity and mercy of the All-beneficent Father of Nature, may not have learning enough to dispute about Hebrew points, and to make them point what meaning he pleases. However, such a one, by

comparing the labours of Hebrew critics, may yet be enabled to form some sort of judgment between them. For instance, in that terrible 109th psalm, it is certain our Doctors in Divinity do not like it: but something must be done with it: some, therefore, say, that the verbs are not translated in their proper tenses, and that prophetic declarations are thus mistaken for the Psalmist's execrations: others again say, that to be sure they *are* imprecations, but not the imprecations of David; but those of his enemies on him, which he there only relates! O happy men! why do not we all learn Hebrew? His exemplary repentance is pleaded; is it any where to be found but in the psalms? "By their fruits ye shall know them." If David was ever truly pious, we shall certainly perceive it in his behaviour on his death-bed. *There*, it is to be hoped, we shall find him forgiving his enemies, and dying in charity with all mankind. This is what all mankind in general make a point of, from the saint to the malefactor. David, therefore, must certainly give us an extraordinary instance of his attention to this important evidence of contrition, But what shall we think, when we see this Nero of the Hebrews die in a manner uniform and consistent with the whole course of his life? What will be our reflections, when we find him, with his last accents, delivering two cruel and inhuman murders in charge to his son Solomon? Murders still further aggravated by the included crimes of ingratitude and perjury! one of them to be executed on his old faithful general, Joab, who powerfully assisted him on all occasions, and who adhered to him in all his extremities, till at the last, when he had justifiable cause for chagrin: but who, notwithstanding, had not appeared against him in actual hostility; but only drank a glass of wine with the malcontents. It will avail nothing to plead the private faults of the man; we are now to consider him as relative to David, in his public capacity. In which light we must loath the master, who died me-

ditating black ingratitude against so faithful, so useful a servant. For even his defection at last may, perhaps, admit of being interpreted into a patronization of that particular plan for the succession, rather than into a rebellion against the superannuated monarch.

His other charge was against Shimei, who reviled David at his retreat from Jerusalem, during Absalom's rebellion; but who made his submission to him, when he returned victorious: and whose pardon David had sealed with a solemn oath.\*

Attend we now to the cause of these reflections.

After exhorting Solomon on his death-bed, to keep the statutes of the Lord, David proceeds:

“Moreover, thou knowest also what Joab, the son of Zeruah, did to me, and what he did to the two captains of the hosts of Israel, unto Abner the son of Ner, and unto Amasa the son of Jether, whom he slew, and shed the blood of war in peace, and put the blood of war upon his girdle that was about his loins, and in his shoes that were on his feet.”

“Do therefore according to thy wisdom, AND LET NOT HIS HOAR HEAD GO DOWN TO THE GRAVE IN PEACE.”†

This was afterwards fulfilled in the basest manner, by the administrator to this pious testament.

David concludes thus:

“And behold, thou hast with thee Shimei, the son of Gera, a Benjaminite of Bahurim, which cursed me with a grievous curse, in the day when I went to Mahanaim; but he came down to meet me at Jordan, and I swore to him by the Lord, saying, I will not put thee to death with the sword:

“Now, therefore, hold him not guiltless; for thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him; BUT HIS HOAR HEAD BRING THOU DOWN TO THE GRAVE WITH BLOOD.†”—That is to say, ‘It is true, I promised not to put him to death, but *thou* art a wise man, and knowest what *thou* oughtest to do; *thou* knowest thyself not to be

\* 2 Sam. xix. 23.

† 1 Kings ii. 5, 6.

‡ Ver. 8, 9.

‘bound by that obligation; therefore his hoar head,’ &c. So saying, he expired!

This command was also executed in a manner, worthy the son of **Such a Father!**

To take a retrospect view of the foregoing narrative; in few words may be seen the sum total of the whole. A shepherd youth is chosen by a disgusted prophet to be the instrument of his revenge on an untractable king. To this end, he is inspired with ambitious hopes, by a private inauguration; is introduced to court, in the capacity of a harper; and by knocking down a man with a stone, whom, if he had missed once, he had four more chances of hitting, and from whom, at the last, he could have easily ran away; he was advanced to the dignity of son-in-law to the king. So sudden and unlooked for a promotion, within sight of the throne, stimulated expectations already awakened; and Saul soon perceived reasons to repent his alliance with him. Being obliged to retire from court, he assembled a gang of ruffians, the acknowledged outcasts of their country, and became the ringleader of a lawless company of banditti. In this capacity he seduces his brother-in law, Jonathan, from his allegiance and filial duty; and covenants with him, that if he obtained the kingdom, Jonathan should be the next person in authority under him. He obtains a settlement in the dominions of a Philistine prince, where instead of applying himself laudably to the arts of cultivation, he subsists by plundering and butchering the neighbouring nations. He offered his assistance to the Philistine armies, in the war against his own country, and father-in-law; and is much disgusted at their distrust of his sincerity. He, however, availed himself of the defeat and death of Saul, and made a push for the kingdom. Of this he gained only his own tribe of Judah: but strengthened by this usurpation, he contested the remainder with Saul’s son, Ishbosheth, whom he persecuted to the grave: Ishbosheth being assassinated by two villains, with intention to pay their



court to the usurper. He is now king of Israel : in which capacity he plundered and massacred all his neighbours round him at discretion. He defiled the wife of one of his officers, while her husband was absent in the army : and finding she was with child by him, he, to prevent a discovery, added murder to adultery ; which being accomplished, he took the widow directly into his well-stocked seraglio. He then repaired to the army, where he treated the subjected enemies with the most wanton inhumanity. A rebellion is raised against him by his son Absalom, which he suppressed, and invited over the rebel-general, to whom he gave the supreme command of his army, to the prejudice of the victorious Joab. After this he cut off the remainder of Saul's family, in defiance to the solemn oath by which he engaged to spare that unhappy race ; reserving only one cripple, from whom he had no apprehensions : and who, being the son of Jonathan, gave him the opportunity of making a merit of his gratitude. When he lay on his death-bed, where all mankind resign their resentments and animosities, his latest breath was employed in dictating two posthumous murders to his son Solomon ! and, as if one crime more was wanting to complete the black catalogue ; he cloathed all his actions with the most consummate hypocrisy : professing all along the greatest regard for every appearance of virtue and holiness.

These, Christians ! are the outlines of the life of a Jew, whom you are not ashamed to continue extolling as a man after God's own heart !

This Britons ! is the king to whom your late excellent monarch\* has been compared !

What an impiety to the Majesty of Heaven !

What an affront to the memory of an honest prince !

It is with great joy the writer of these memoirs takes his leave of a story, with which, by this time, he is sufficiently disgusted. He entered upon it, however, from honest motives ; and he concludes it with the consciousness of having performed a work, which he

\* George II.



flatters himself will prove acceptable to all who entertain adequate conceptions of the eternal rectitude of that great Creator of the universe, whom they profess to adore. He despises all the pious ravings and anathemas which have been thundered against him by some reverend inquisitors: he expected them, has exposed them; and hopes he may, without offence finally reply in the words of their forgotten master, "Father forgive them, for they *know not*\* what they do." Those who estimate a man's religion by his implicitness to prescribed notions, and who think it their duty to stifle their living objections in compliance to the dead letter; (for objections they will have, and very strong ones too) such have, and will undoubtedly be shocked at this publication. Such may produce numerous texts in opposition to what is here produced; and can inspired writers be inconsistent with themselves? It is not at present necessary to discuss that question. Argue that point among yourselves; the printer will at least profit by your disputes; though you may happen to

— Explain a thing till all men doubt it,  
 And write about the subject, and about it:  
 So spins the silk-worm small its slender store,  
 And labours till it clouds itself all o'er.

This, yet, is none of his concern. The love of truth is a motive which ought to supersede every other consideration: for every other consideration is subordinate in comparison with it. Truth requires no tenderness of investigation, and scorns all subterfuges. It is, when displayed,

————— divinely bright,  
 One clear, unchang'd, and universal light.

To rescue truth, therefore, from obscurity and disguise, is the most rational way of giving

*Glory to God in the highest; and on earth, peace: good-will toward men.*

\* Query.