

effect in ridding the people of evil than in conferring on them positive good. Royalty bred in Saul what it bred in most kings of the East, an imperious temper, a despotic will. Even in his own family he played the despot. And if he played the despot at home he did so not less in public. All that we can say in his favour is, that he did not carry his despotism so far as many. But his jealous and in so far despotic temper could not but have had an evil effect on his people. We cannot suppose that when jealousy was so deep in his nature David was the only one of his officers who experienced it. The secession of so many very able men to David, about the time when he was with the Philistines, looked as if Saul could not but be jealous of any man who rose to high military eminence. That Saul was capable of friendly impulses is very different from saying that his heart was warm and winning. The most vital want in him was the want of godliness. He had little faith in the nation as God's nation, God's heritage. He had little love for prophets, or for men of faith, or for any who attached great importance to moral and spiritual considerations. His persecution of David and his murder of the priests are deep stains that can never be erased. And that godless nature of his became worse as he went on. It is striking that the last transaction in his reign was a decided failure in the very department in which he had usually excelled. He who had gained what eminence he had as a military king, utterly failed, and involved his people in utter humiliation, in that very department. His abilities failed him because God had forsaken him. The Philistines whom he had so often defeated crushed him in the end. To him the last act of life was very different