

during their wilderness life. **A very great slaughter.** 2. God leaves his own professed people to perish when they forsake him and follow idols. **Thirty thousand.** Without the ark they had lost four thousand; with it, more than seven times as many. **Footmen.** Israel was a mountainous country, hence its army was composed mainly of infantry, as chariots were useless, and cavalry were not then employed in war.

11. **The ark of God.** The chest containing the two tables of the law, built in the wilderness, and kept in the tabernacle as the token of Jehovah's presence. Borne before the host it had once opened the way through Jordan; but now, when the people were no more faithful, they found its power gone. **Was taken.** Its capture was permitted, (1) To punish the people for their profanation of it; (2) To rebuke them for their false confidence in the ark, rather than God; (3) To bring them to repentance from sin; (4) To show the Philistines that there was still a God in Israel. (See next chapter.) In reality the loss of the ark proved a blessing to the people and brought no good to its captors. 3. God often brings good out of seeming evil, and is ever watching over his cause, even while he seems to neglect it. **Sons of Eli.** Two wicked priests, though sons of a good, but weak, man. Their crimes were greed, impiety, and sensuality. **Were slain.** Their place was at the altar, not in the camp, and their death was a fit ending to lives of guilt.

12. **There ran.** Swift-footed runners were often kept with ancient armies to bear messages. An Arab at the present time has been known to outrun a good horse on long distances. **A man of Benjamin.** The tribe in whose limits the battle was fought. It lay between Judah and Ephraim. **Came to Shiloh.** The place where the tabernacle had stood since the time of Joshua, about seventeen miles north of Jerusalem. After the loss of the ark it was deserted by the Israelites and perhaps laid waste by the Philistines, and never again occupied. It is now called Seilun. **The same day.** On the day of the battle, and after the defeat, he ran twelve or fifteen miles. **Clothes rent.** The usual sign of lamentation. **Earth upon his head.** Ashes and dust were thrown upon the head as a token that the mourner had been brought down to the very earth. 4. Those who have forsaken God are brought near to sorrow.

13. **Eli.** The aged priest, now nearly a hundred years old; a sincere worshipper of God, but unable to cope with the turbulent age upon which he had fallen. **Sat upon a seat.** Rather, "upon his throne," the chair of state, already referred to in chap. 1. 9, where he sat as priest and judge. **By the way-side.** Probably it stood at the gate leading into the court of the tabernacle, which fronted the street of the city. **Watching.** Though he could not work, he could watch. **His heart trembled.** With a foreboding of disaster, for he knew the danger to the ark, which was the nation's greatest

treasure. **For the ark.** He was a patriot and a father, but, more than for the land or for his sons, his anxiety was for the ark. 5. The follower of God holds his cause dearest and nearest to his heart. **Came into the city.** At the gate of the city he met the people, while Eli and the priesthood were near the tabernacle within. **All the city cried out.** With the loud Oriental wail, in a voice penetrating and heard afar.

14. 15. **Eli heard.** He could hear but not see. **What meaneth the noise?** The question was addressed to the Levites around, and then borne out to the messenger. **Came in hastily.** Breathless with long running, unable to collect his thoughts and break the news gently. **Ninety and eight years old.** His old age may account for his weakness in administration, and should temper the severity of our judgment upon his character. It is to be noticed that this record, written probably by his adopted son Samuel, always refers to him kindly. **Eyes were dim.** "Were set, or stiff." But for his blindness he could have seen the torn garments and dust-covered head of the messenger, and known his message.

16. **I am he that came.** And thus can report not rumours but certain facts. **What is there done?** In Hebrew the same words as in 2 Sam. 1. 4, "How went the matter?" **My son.** The kind language of an old man, who was in a sense the father of the entire people. See Josh. 7. 19.

17. **The messenger answered.** A simple, direct statement, yet each sentence mounts higher and strikes a deeper pang. 6. How much of sorrow a word may bring! **Israel is fled.** This was a deep disgrace, threatening ruin to the people, yet it was but the beginning of sorrows. **A great slaughter.** A defeat might yet leave hope for a victory, but not the loss of the warriors upon whom the nation depended. **Thy two sons.** Sad tidings for a father's ears, fulfilling the prophecy of chap. 2. 34, and the presage of heavier woes to his house. **The ark of God is taken.** The most bitter tidings are reserved for the last, for this seemed the token that the covenant of God was broken, the people abandoned by their divine Head, and left to destruction. There was a general belief among ancients that when the gods of a nation were carried captive to the conquering city, they transferred their patronage to it, and ceased to protect their former homes.

18. **When he made mention.** This is stated to show that it was religious grief, and not paternal, that caused the aged man's death. **Fell off....backward.** The seat was probably of stone, elevated, and without a back. **By the side of the gate.** The gate leading to the court of the tabernacle. The ancient curtain had been replaced by a more substantial wall with gates of entrance, and probably the tabernacle itself was at that time not a tent but a