

ful and vigorous, and which might be expected to continue long an adornment to the room where it was placed. It did not, however, answer to our anticipations. The blossoms were soon withered, the leaves began to droop, and the plant gradually died. Then the cause was discovered. It had no root. In the shop of the florist it had made a brilliant appearance. When brought home it had thrown into the shade the beauties of other plants. But there was nothing durable in it. Its loveliness was soon gone, and its promise for the future proved utterly deceptive.

There have been human characters just like this plant, and one of them we have now to consider.

We saw last time what the Israelites had asked for—a king to judge them like all the nations. Samuel had been directed to grant their request, and we now see the King brought before them. He has

A fair appearance.

He stands among the thousands of Israel like a king,—‘a choice young man and a goodly,’ higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward,—a very hero in form and stature. And he has fine qualities corresponding to his external figure. He has shown obedience and diligence in executing his father’s commission, going from place to place in search of the asses; thoughtfulness, in proposing to return home lest his father should be troubled about him, (chap. 9. 4, 5;) discretion, in keeping silence concerning the revelation made to him by Samuel, and modesty in keeping out of sight when the choice of a king was to be. Chap. 10. 16, 21. And further, he has come under the distinct influences of the Spirit of God, to prepare him for his high station. Chap. 10. 9-13. And so, as far as the eye of man can see, he gives

A fair promise for the future.

The Israelites want a leader to go forth with them to battle. Here is the very man, strong, spirited, and brave, a man whose very presence will inspire his followers and make the hearts of the foes to quail. They want the splendour and dignity of a court. Here is one exactly fitted to sustain it. They want a ruler—intelligent, fair, and upright. Surely Saul will be all this. Samuel has warned them of arbitrary and oppressive conduct on the part of a king. Surely such a course will be far from the amiable and generous young monarch before them. There is something highly attractive in the first view we get of Saul. He seems just such a character as must become popular, and the more so as its various excellencies unfold to view. Samuel himself seems to have been greatly taken with the king he was directed to give the people. He was loth in after years to give him up, and

did so only at the express command of the Lord. Chap. 15. 35; 16. 1.

No wonder their king was received with acclamations by the people. For we must not misunderstand the words of Samuel: “See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen?” It was true that Saul was chosen of God for the people, but he was not the king of God’s choice. He was given in answer to the desire of the people, as we read in chap. 12. 13, “Behold the king whom ye have chosen and whom ye have desired.” He was exactly the kind of monarch the people wished for. The time was not yet come for the king after God’s own heart. Saul was the king after man’s own heart.

What became of this fair appearance and fairer promise?

We noticed this briefly last time, and shall have the subject brought before us again, so that I need not here enlarge upon it. The beauty passed away; the promise for the future, after a brief expansion, faded and withered. Under the rule of Saul, Israel was neither peaceful, nor happy, nor victorious. The spiritual influence under which he had come proved transient. He went his own way, and followed the counsel of his own heart. His elevation to the sovereignty rendered him in time haughty, arbitrary, jealous, wilful, and cruel. The change in him was not unlike that in Nero, or in Henry the Eighth of England. And profoundly sad was his end.

What caused this failure?

The fact of his having “no root in himself.” Matt. 13. 21. He had human virtues, human excellencies, and like all things purely human, they passed away. He had never yielded his being to God, never let the Spirit of God take possession of his heart, and so he “endured but for a time.”

Let each one take the warning.

Human nature produces many amiable qualities. Young people may be obedient to their parents, diligent in their business, thoughtful for others, modest in their demeanour, discreet in their conduct; they may even come under actual spiritual influence, may be attracted to the things of God, may enter into Christian occupations with the servants of God; and yet go no farther. They may be as branches full of blossoms, sweet and fair, but which, severed from the parent stem, and having no root of their own, must in time wither away; or like young pines I have seen where a fire had swept by, their branches still fresh and green, yet doomed to decay and perish, because the stem was burned and charred. The great need is for each one to be rooted in Christ, drawing perpetual life from him who is its unchang-