

ears: "The sword shall never depart from thy house!" How sad it is to think that our sins, though forgiven long ago, may bear fruit in later times, and may hurt not only ourselves, but our children. As Professor Blaikie has observed, there were three elements in David's grief: "(1) The loss of another child. (2) The fact that this beautiful boy had died in open rebellion against his father. (3) And that in this rebellious state he had passed to the judgment seat of the King of kings."

"Cut off even in the blossoms of his sin,  
No reckoning made, but sent to his account  
With all his imperfections on his head."

The weakness of David appears in a very strong light in this chapter as well as in the first part of the following. Though twenty thousand had been left on the field of battle, he seems to care for Absalom only. He allows his personal cares, his private interests, to overbalance those of the state. The unreasonableness of his conduct made a fearful impression upon his followers, and were it not for the statesmanship of Joab, it might have proved very disastrous. Supposing Absalom had been successful, what would have become of the religion of Israel? Would he have built the temple of Jehovah or continued the worship of God at the tabernacle?

## Thoughts for Young People.

### The Fast Young Man.

One Old Testament character was described in a few words: "he driveth furiously." He was type of a large class in modern life. This headstrong will and reckless daring are more characteristic of youth. In the nursery a proclamation of independence is made. On the rocking-horse a vehement spirit is displayed that bodes ill for the future unless got well under self-control. The tendency of the times is to throw off restraint and give a loose rein to forces that will carry headlong to ruin.

"In gallant trim the gilded vessel goes;

Youth on the prow, and Pleasure at the helm;

Regardless of the sweeping whirlwind's sway,  
That, hush'd in grim repose, expects his evening prey."

1. *The characteristics of the fast young man.* He has a dash and brilliancy which challenge admiration. Handsome in form and feature, courtly in manners and enthusiastic in spirit, he is taken as a very prince of good fellows. Back of all the graciousness is concealed baseness. The extravagance and love of display lead to the sacrifice of dearest interests, the betrayal of sacred trusts, and the perpetration of foulest crimes. The tendency of such a life is to burn out every trace of nobleness and drag down into depths of shame.

2. *The causes that produce him.* A common cause

is wealth of natural endowment. This inflates vanity and inflames ambition. So with natural gifts, as witness Byron, Burns, and Poe. Another is to be reared in the lap of luxury, to have means to gratify every desire without the need of labor. Sometimes the cause is parental mismanagement, which allows unlimited indulgence, or parental sin, which forfeits childhood's reverence.

3. *The consequences of fast living.* Many fast young men, with shattered health, blackened reputation, with nothing to live for, nothing to love, will close their career in a felon's cell or try the suicide's hand. Their companions suffer with them. Against the fascinating wiles of such perilous friendship none can be too watchful? One of the saddest consequences is the grief caused to broken-hearted relatives.

## Orientalisms of the Lesson.

David beheld a man running, who probably represents the professional runners of the East. Samuel foretold (1 Sam. 8. 11) that swift runners would be in attendance on the king, a custom well known in the East. David himself was a swift runner, for which he praises God. These runners were distinct from the footmen who accompanied the chariots, and were used as messengers, though swift running was greatly prized as an accomplishment of a warrior. These runners are much used in India, as post carriers, and for special service in transmitting orders of the government. They exhibit individuality in their motion in running, and just as a person is known by his walk, he may be known by his peculiarity of gait in running; hence David's watchman recognized the running of Ahimaaz, who was known as swift of foot. Endurance is as much esteemed in running power, however, as fleetness, as these runners often have to cover very long distances.

David's grief was inspired by more than usual paternal affection, as every king of the East had special desire to see the son of his own loins succeed to the throne. His repetition of the name of the deceased, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom, . . . O Absalom, my son, my son!" is in accord with the common language of lamentation in oriental countries, quite more emphatically and generally than the mere accidental use of such form of expression of grief sometimes occurring with us. It was, one may say, the proper formula, or the ritual language of such sorrow.

David, after the reproof of Joab for his excessive grief, anointed his head and washed his face and appeared at the gate of the city; the public place for hearing cases to be adjusted and giving judgment, as well as the place to ratify bargains. This ancient custom still obtains in the East. When Dr. Pococke returned from viewing the town of ancient Byblus, he says, "The sheik and the elders