

chief in executing the rash sentence which the frantic king was pleased to pronounce, and slaying with an instant and indiscriminate slaughter, eighty-five unarmed and innocent men, yea, men consecrated to the office of priests of the Lord—an office peculiarly sacred and justly respected. Mischief, in entering the city where the priests usually resided, and mingling in one common destruction, male and female, young and old, parents and children, and even the helpless infants. Had he only contented himself with falsely accusing the priests, had he only asserted that they enquired of the Lord for David, in order to provoke the king against them as enemies to his reign, and promoters of what was considered David's usurpation, he would have been guilty of mischief of no small amount. He would have acted contrary to truth, he would have broken the established bond of society, and violated the great principal law of human intercourse and confidence among men. He would have occasioned unfounded and injurious suspicions regarding the priests, in the already too irritable mind of the monarch. He would have laid them innocently and unconsciously under the displeasure of their temporal sovereign. He would have ruined their reputation and influence as priests of the Lord. He would have withdrawn from them the countenance, provision and protection which Saul's government afforded, and so weakened or withheld that general respect which from the people they received. His false accusation was of itself a mischief of no common magnitude, simply as it tended to destroy the credit and the confidence to which the priests were entitled, and through them, to injure the cause of religion as then established or professed; and if mischievous it. Doeg, it is not less so in any man, whether exalted to offices of civil or of sacred trust, or moving only in the ordinary circles of human society, to give currency to unjust and injurious accusations to ruin by unfounded charges, by calumnious surmises, the character, the credit, the usefulness and success of any of his fellows.

The mischief is however the greater, when done by such as are invested with authority, because of the influence of their opinion, and the possibility of evil consequences ensuing before their baseness is fully detected, or a remedy effectually applied. We see in the present case of Abimelech, how ineffectual was the personal pleading of the parties accused, and how speedily without proof or investigation, the sentence went forth against them; and it is often thus with false accusations when proceeding from high or influential quarters. The most positive protestations of innocence cannot then prevent suspicious uprisings, time itself often cannot wear away, the baneful efforts resulting from the infamous calumny of mighty men. The evil spreads often from man to man, from society to society, from place to place, until the helpless victims of malicious defamation find repose only

in the grave. But the mischief of Doeg consisted not merely in falsehood, in preferring a false accusation against the priests of the Lord, but also in accomplishing their destruction. Falsehood is ever the sure sign of a deeply depraved heart—a heart capable of falsehood, is capable also of committing the grossest crimes. The deliberate liar, the wilful calumniator, is a murderer in disguise, and ready for evil work. This was fully exemplified in the case of Doeg. His perfidy was followed, and if possible surpassed by his cruelty, and whether we consider the object or the extent of his cruelty, or the cool, deliberate and unprovoked manner of its exhibition, we cannot but regard the mischief herein included, as peculiarly aggravated.

The priests were of an order selected and appointed by God himself. Their calling and their character were alike sacred. Their ministrations extended equally to princes and people. The potentate of Israel with his meanest subject, all needed and sought their prayers and their purifications. As the constituted medium of intercourse with heaven, through whom supplication and sacrifice were presented unto God, they claimed the respectful reverence of all ranks and classes among the Jews. And hence, we find that on this occasion, peremptory, absolute and decisive was the command of the king to the guard in attendance, to turn and slay the priests of the Lord, they did not comply. "The servants of the king would not put forth their hands to fall upon the priests of the Lord." The command of the king could not overcome their accustomed reverence, or lead them to practice cruelty in circumstances so revolting to natural feeling, and especially to the most hallowed sentiments and emotions of their heart. They stood as if disabled and disarmed by some sudden and supernatural influence. No hand is put forth, no arm is lifted up. Silent and seemingly, nevertheless they hear the mandate of their sovereign. They saw before them the accredited servants of heaven and though owing allegiance to Saul as his subjects and soldiers, yet they felt awe by the sacredness of the character of the Lord's priests, and by the authority of him who has said "touch not mine anointed and do my prophets no harm."

But while they hesitated, Doeg, the false accuser, enacts the part of a murderer. To the king unrestrained by the awe which seems to have unnerved his servants, addressed a cruel command personally to this mighty Doeg; and instantly it is obeyed. The company of priests speedily fall before his upraising hand. No awe seizes his spirit as it turns upon the anointed ministers of Jehovah. No fear of Jehovah's vengeance arrests or unnerves his arm, as one after another is cut off. He goes forth in his exterminating career to the city, the kindred, the families, the substance of the priests; he needs not the eyes of the widow and the fatherless, the tender mother and her infant charge become alike