

we have here a counterfeit Samuel and a counterfeit Prophecy, others say, that Satan spoke under the appearance of Samuel. But surely these are very extravagant suppositions. If we take the narrative as it stands we shall find that this woman was an impostor—that she knew not Samuel at first—that she was as much frightened at the result as Saul himself—that Samuel was really the spirit of the prophet under a visible form such as angels assume—that he appeared by the miraculous power of God, and delivered a circumstantial prophecy, which was fulfilled to the letter—that the woman had no more to do with his appearance than simply being the occasion. In confirmation of this, it is to be observed, that Samuel charges Saul, and not the woman, with disquieting him, and bringing him up.

The only objection to this view is, that Samuel's appearance at this time and in this way seems to countenance impositions and cheat of this kind. Observe, however, that there may have been circumstances, not recorded, shewing plainly that the woman's arts had nought to do with this appearance. The circumstances that are given shew her amazement and alarm. And lastly, the result serve to shew the uselessness of such attempts, the woman did nothing; but the information, which was, not indeed the cause, but the occasion of giving to Saul, and which, but for his unlawful meddling with forbidden, useless and hurtful arts, the goodness of God would have withheld, this information was not only unserviceable but injurious. It overpowered his soul and body, and unfitted him for the trials of the morrow. And so will it be with all who seek counsel of Satan, either in reality or in pretence.

Was it only in those ancient days that men believed in witches? Up till a very recent period in Scotland and England men believed in witches; and, I fear, many believe in them yet. Probably nothing ever happened among ourselves that so clearly shewed the want of principle of many people, the shallowness of Christian instruction, and the thinness of the layer of profession that covers the darkness and unbelief of many professing Christians, as the fact that when an impostor appeared in this County a few years ago, hundreds went to her to get fortunes read more cheaply than made. This most degrading thing, this tempting of Providence was more culpable than Saul's sin. Lies and deceit, if believed, can only do one thing—delude, injure, and perhaps destroy him who believes them. Deception in abundance can be had without paying for it. Moreover, any one, by applying to such persons, whether he knows it or not, renounces Christ, casts away the pearl of great price, and allies himself with the Devil. Read what is said concerning Saul, 1 Chron. x, 13, "So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord, even against the word of the Lord, which he kept

not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it; and enquired not of the Lord; therefore he slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse." We believe in a spiritual world of course. We believe in evil spirits: who have some evil influence upon men,—as far good. But to believe that they can be employed to tell the future, (which is concealed from us and them,) by impudent and deluding cheats, is a very different thing. What right have we to know what God has concealed? If it were good for us, he would have told us. Let us hear Isaiah when he speaks of necromancers whispering and muttering, and ventriloquists speaking as it were out of the ground: "And when they shall say unto you, seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep and that mutter; should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to their word, it is because there is no light in them." (Is. 8: 19, 20.) Again, see the effect of embracing Christianity, shewn in the Acts of the Apostles. The Ephesians were great Magicians. When Paul preached there the effect upon many such is thus described: "And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed."

A. P.

The Child Samuel.

I SAM. III.

In the history of the Hebrew commonwealth, Samuel was the last in the line of the Judges, and the first in the line of the Prophets. At the time of his appearance, the degeneracy of the people was great, and demanded some immediate check. The tribes were dissipated, the country was torn by dissention within, and harassed by hostile invasion from without;—worse than all the authority of their Divine Ruler was but feebly felt. "The word of the Lord" we are told "was precious (or rare) in those days; these was no open vision." But better days were soon to dawn upon them; God was about to renew his messages, and resume the deliverance of his mandates to the people. He was about to choose a prophet for himself, and the choice fell on the Child Samuel.

It was in the stillness of the night that God first spake to Samuel, and, let us bear in mind, that it is also in stillness and in silence that God usually reveals himself to our souls. When we are alone, with nothing to distract our thoughts, or disturb the calmness of the spirit, then it is that God will whisper His secret to us, and make us