

NOTES.—Wilderness of En-gedi: A wild, desolate and mountainous district on the western coast of the Dead Sea, and about thirty-five miles to the south-east of Jerusalem. Rocks of the wild goats: Some points in this wilderness of En-gedi that abound in high, steep cliffs, terrible precipices and deep gorges. It received its name, no doubt, from the fact that it was a place of resort for the ibex or Syrian wild-goat. Sheep-cotes: The caves, of which this region is full, were used by the shepherds to lodge their sheep in, shelter them from the heat of noonday and from storms.

I. Pursuit of David.—Ver. 1.—Saul was returned: going back to his capital, Gibeah of Benjamin. The wilderness of En-gedi: on the western side of the Dead Sea. The site of the ancient town is identified by a fine fountain ("Fountain of the Kid"), and some ruins.

Ver. 2.—Three thousand chosen men: chose them from the army with which he had pursued the Philistines. Miserable work for brave men! Rocks of the wild goats: the name En-gedi suggested goats; and, no doubt, wild goats were there found—as even occasionally now. (See Robinson.)

Ver. 3.—To the sheep-cotes: enclosures connected with caves; and the caves themselves—of which there are great numbers—were used in storms and cold to shelter sheep. Doubtless David was well acquainted with most of these caves. Saul went in: Saul entered the very cave where David was. One entering a cave can see nothing at first, but those within can see toward the light quite well. Saul saw no one, but was *seen*. In the sides of the cave: Caves are generally very irregular in their outlines, and men could easily conceal themselves.

II.—DAVID SPARING HIS ENEMY.—Ver. 4.—The men of David said to him: there was whispering in the depths of the cave. David's men, knowing something of the Lord's promises to David, judged that this was opportunity to kill Saul, and seize the kingdom, and bring these promises to pass. But we must not "do evil that good may come." And cut off the skirt of Saul's robe: we must suppose he had laid aside his robe or upper garment. David probably with his sword (swords are very sharp in the East; our soldiers keep their swords very dull), stealthily cut off a part of Saul's royal robe. The purpose will presently appear.

Ver. 5, 6.—David's heart smote him: He wished to exhibit some evidence of Saul's being in his power; yet what he had done seemed now an indignity and an injury. And he said unto his men: he told them his thoughts. Saul was king, and he (David) should have respected him, as well as spared his life. Conscientious David! Unstable Saul! It is not difficult to see which we should follow.

Ver. 7.—David stayed his servants: held back his lawless followers from touching Saul. It must have been good training for David to govern such men. And what a restraint he must have put on his own impetuous spirit. (His brother once taunted him about "his pride, and the haughtiness of his heart," 17: 28.)

III.—DAVID'S ADDRESS TO SAUL.—Ver. 8.—Cried after Saul: his purpose in cutting off a part of Saul's robe was that he could have evidence to present to him that while he might have killed him, he did not; thus seeking to disarm Saul's hatred, by returning him good for evil. David stooped with his face to the earth: a safe distance probably being between them, David calls to the king; and when he looked round, David did humble obeisance, and addressed him.

Ver. 9.—Wherefore hearest thou men's words? David assumes (what was perhaps the fact) that men spoke slanderously against him to Saul. How careful should we be of our words.

Ver. 10.—This day thine eyes have seen: Saul has just left the cave; and now he sees David standing at the same cave's mouth. There could be no doubt about his narrow escape. I will not put forth mine hand against my lord: Saul had not been so merciful. But David's rule was to please God, and not his own passions.

Ver. 11.—Yea, see the skirt of thy robe: he appeals to this, to show how near to Saul he had been, and yet had not slain him. Yet thou huntest my soul: without a cause, Saul sought David's death. "Soul" is here to be taken in the sense of "life."

Ver. 12.—The Lord judge: David would leave it to God to decide matters between them. Avenge me of thee: not wishing for vengeance, but simply that the Lord would take his part. See the use of this word in the New Testament—parable of the unjust judge ("do me justice").

Ver. 13.—Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked: There were more ancient times than those of David. This was an old proverb, meaning "A wicked man may be expected to do a wicked thing; but I will not do this wicked thing!"

Ver. 14.—After whom dost thou pursue? David compared himself to "a dead dog," which could bite and injure no one; and to "a flea"—something perfectly insignificant; and hints that hunting such was beneath the wisdom and dignity of a king.

Ver. 15.—The Lord therefore be judge: he leaves his case with God. Plead my cause: the same purpose as above. "Avenge me." Nothing vindictive, but a faithful trust in God.

IV.—SAUL'S CONFESSION.—Ver. 16.—Saul lifted up his voice and wept: he was overcome by the generosity of David. David did as he would be done by—he spared Saul's life. Saul did according to his own evil nature, and would have killed David. But a true repentance does not go back again, as in the case of Saul, to the old sins.

Ver. 17.—Thou art more righteous than I: Saul could not but acknowledge how much better David had acted than himself. After all he had a conscience; and for the time allowed the Holy Spirit to guide his conscience.

#### PRACTICAL LESSONS,

1. David made a better king from having known adversity. It is often a better friend than continued prosperity.
2. Three thousand warriors to capture David and his men. Great efforts for small ends.
3. David would, all his life, be thankful he did not injure Saul. Among our sweetest memories are the instances where God's grace has enabled us to do what was right.
4. Kindness, justice, and Christian generosity, will justify themselves, even in the conscience of an enemy.

#### Dec 23, 1883. } DEATH OF SAUL AND JONATHAN { 1 Sam. 31: 1-13.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"The wicked is driven away in his wickedness; but the righteous hath hope in his death."—Prov. 14: 32.

CONNECTION.—In our last lesson Saul and David parted in peace. But Saul soon forgot his promises, and sought David's life as much as before. David had many adventures, and much danger; and once again spared Saul's life when he might have slain him. The Philistines invaded Israel in great force; and the battle on Mount Gilboa took place, as in our lesson.

I. DEFEAT AND DEATH OF SAUL.—Philistines fought against Israel: for ages these brave and powerful enemies of Israel were ever ready to attack them. Did not they like our sins?—always at war with the soul. From before the Philistines: Saul was despised (28: 20) and his men probably had little heart, and the