

theme is treated. In a work written upon this noble symbolic method, one is never sure of *exactly* stating the author's meaning,—indeed, as we have said of Shakespeare, the meaning is too full to be stated more briefly than by the whole poem; but we are sure that we are not far from the writer's intention, when we say, that in Saul he represents a man who is *eminently* the creature of spiritual influences; who is of the happiest sensitive and perceptive constitution, but lacks the one thing needful, the principle of *faith*, which would have given the will to submit himself to the good influence and resist the bad. "Faith wanting, all his works fell short," is the only *explicit* statement in the whole poem of this idea; but the whole poem indirectly implies it. This view of Saul's character, which is amply justified by Scripture history, is carried out and illustrated with an elaborate subtlety of which it is impossible for us to give our readers an adequate idea. The evil spirit of the King is brought personally, under the name of Malzah, upon the stage; and we are made to understand Saul's nature, and the nature of all who are the more or less passive slaves of the natural and spiritual influences *ab extra*, by the exaggeration of this character in the spirit himself, who is depicted with an imaginative veracity which we do not exaggerate in saying has not been equalled in our language by any but the creator of Caliban and Ariel. Malzah is decidedly "well disposed," like many another evil spirit, human or otherwise; he knows his faults; is almost changed, for the moment, into a good spirit by artistic influences, especially music; he has attained to be a deep philosopher through the habitual observation of himself; and does not at all like the evil work of destroying the soul of Saul,—a work which he undertook voluntarily, and to which he returns as the fit takes him. The following passages will carry out what we have said, and will illustrate the oddity, subtlety, and originality of this writer's language.

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"In this poem, for the first time, spirits have been represented in a manner which fully justifies the boldness involved in representing them at all. Malzah is a living character, as true to supernature as Hamlet or Falstaff are to nature; and, by this continuation, as it were, of humanity into new circumstances, and another world, we are taught to look upon humanity itself from a fresh point of view, and we seem to obtain new and startling impressions of the awful character of the influences by which we are beset. Seldom has art so well performed the office of handmaiden to religion as in this extraordinary character of Malzah, in whom we have the disembodiment of the soul of the faithless, sophistical, brave, and generously disposed king of Israel, and a most impressive exposition of the awful truth, that he who is not wholly for God is against Him. For proof of our opinion we can only refer the reader to the entire work, of which a few separate passages are no tests whatever."

[In a recent letter, Dr. Richard Garnett, late keeper of Printed Books at the British Museum, informs me that the author of the "North British Review" article was the late Mr. Coventry Patmore, author of "The Angel in the House," etc.]