

Hophni and Phinehas, together with thirty thousand of Israel, shortly to be followed by the destruction of Shiloh (Psa. 78, 50-64) and the long servitude of Israel to the Philistines.

Here was the complete overthrow of all that had once been intrusted to Eli. Whatever he may have done in former days his work became now a hopeless wreck. When he heard that the ark of God was gone he at once saw that all was over—as it proved, for many years (chap. 7, 2)—and he knew that the terrible catastrophe was due to his own fault. His neglect to restrain his sons while yet young, which might in the beginning have been deemed more fatherly indulgence, had resulted, first in their profanation of the sacred office they filled (chap. 2, 12), then in the alienation of the people from the worship and service of God (chap. 2, 17), and consequently in their utter destruction as a people, so that they soon became a prey to their enemies, and lastly in the loss of the crowning distinction of Israel—the outward type of the presence of God among them. When we remember all this we do not wonder first at the trembling anxiety of Eli as to the fate of the battle, and then at the despairing grief which caused his sad and sudden death. The captain could not and would not outlive the vessel his own neglect had wrecked; and though the aged priest was surely not cast away by God, whom he had so imperfectly served, still his life has proved a failure. His work when brought to the test could not abide it, and so he suffered the saddest loss of all except the loss of his own soul (see 1 Cor. 3, 13-15).

The lesson conveyed by the narrative is a solemn one. Each one, even the youngest, has something for which he is responsible. Each one exercises some influence over another, and has some part assigned him by God to carry out. The failure of a person to stand up boldly for the honor of the Lord whom he professes to serve may lead to some sorrowful wreck which he as yet little dreams of. What seems but a little weakness may turn out a fatal mistake. There is only one way to keep free from failure—obedience in little things as well as in great to the commandment of God, together with humble reliance on the great Keeper who can make the weakest strong, hold up the foot that otherwise must certainly have slipped (Psa. 94, 18), and prosper the work of his servants' hands (Psa. 90, 17).

Cambridge Notes.

Samuel's prediction, the "word" of verse 1, was fulfilled while the prophet was yet too young to lead the armies of Israel. The forty years of Philistine tyranny (Judg. 13, 1) closed with the second battle of Aphek (see next lesson), and had now run about half their course. Eli and Samson being probably contemporaries, it is well conjectured that the insurrection of the Israelites was connected with the great blow struck by the Danite hero at his death. The "Philistines" (= "aliens") were perhaps Egyptian immigrants (Amos 9, 7; Gen. 10, 13, *eg.*). At this time they formed a league of five independent cities near the south-west coast—Gath, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron, and Gaza—each ruled by its own "prince." Their chief deity was the "fish-god Dagon," but Baal-zebub was worshipped at Ekron, and the Shemite cult of Ashtoreth had also made way among them. The preternatural stolidity of their character is well brought out in the story of Samson (see our notes thereon). For the narrative of the desertion of Shiloh compare Psa. 78, 50-64; Jer. 7, 12, *Ver. 1*. The unfortunate division of chapters is due to the most improbable idea that Samuel's "word" was to call the Israelites to this disastrous battle. *Now*,

The extreme abruptness of this opening is possibly explained by the loss of a clause or two which appear in the LXX. and the Vulgate. It may equally well be the mark of a new document inserted here without change, after the usual manner of the compilers of the historical books. *Eben-ezer*. A name of happier omen, given by anticipation (chap. 7, 12). *Aphek*. Probably in Benjamin, near the historic pass of Beth-horon. Another Aphek is mentioned (chap. 29, 1). *Ver. 3, Elders*. The heads of families, the regular representatives of the nation under a patriarchal government. Compare the Roman *patres*. Note that the "people" form the army and the "elders" the council of war. *Jehovah*. They recognize whence the defeat had come. *Let us*. A plausible reading, suggested by the LXX. is, "Let us bring our God out of Shiloh, that he may come," etc. This illustrates well the half-heathen conception to which the Hebrews had descended—the presence of a deity secured by the movements of his outward symbol. *Ver. 4, Shiloh*. Clearly not far off (comp. *ver. 16, "to-day"*). *Jehovah of hosts*. In Hebrew *Yahweh Selah*, is a common title of God appearing first at this period. All the powers of heaven and earth are pictured as owning his universal sway. *Sitteth*. "Is enthroned upon." The wings of these golden cherubim overshadowed the ark, and on them the Shekinah rested (see Exod. 25, 17-22). The full title comes here to emphasize its sanctity, and consequently the magical power it was presumed to possess. *There* should probably be omitted, with LXX. and Vulgate. Hophni and Phinehas accompanied the ark. *Ver. 5*, This is doubtless a reminiscence of the siege of Jericho, whose result they attributed to the sacred symbol and the shout of victory. *Ver. 6, Hebrews*. The international title of the people, "sons of Israel" being the covenant name, used among themselves. The former signified "men from beyond [Euphrates]" referring to their original migration. An eponymous hero Eber appears in Gen. 10, 21, 24. *Ver. 7, God*. This is a word that does not suit the polytheist Philistines, and there seem to be traces in the LXX. of another reading, "because they [the Hebrews] said;" the rest of this verse also being altered to suit Philistine speakers. *Ver. 8*. The heathen conception of national deities involved, of course, that the divine patron of one tribe was mightier than another. *Yahweh*. The Israelites' deity had vanquished the gods of Egypt, and hence the Philistines' terror. *Smiling* (margin). Not the word used for the ten plagues. It refers to the overthrow at the Red Sea. *Ver. 9*, Paul perhaps had this in his mind in the exhortation of 1 Cor. 16, 13. *Servants*. Vassals, though in some cases it involved even slavery (chap. 14, 21). *Ver. 10, Tent*. Comp. 1 Kings 12, 16, etc., for such reminiscences of nomad life. Clearly the routed army fled to their homes, not to the camp, as in *ver. 3*. *Ver. 11*. The capture of the ark was meant to teach the Israelites to trust the reality and not the emblem. The subsequent plagues were to teach the Philistines that they had not conquered Jehovah. *Solin*. The predicted sign of doom. The family of Ithamar, Aaron's youngest son, had displaced that of Eleazar, the elder branch, in the judges' time. The course on Eli's house was completed when Abiathar was thrust out by Solomon, and Zadok's succession restored the old line. Saul's slaughter of the priests at Nob was another fulfillment. *Ver. 12, Array* (margin). Thus he left before defeat became rout. The distance was only twenty miles, and trained runners always accompanied an army to take news. Rent clothes and dust on the head were signs of mourning in all ancient nations. *His sent*. With this text we must probably suppose he sat by the