

stances it was that the old English Presbyterian churches re-read their New Testaments and gradually adopted the Independent form of government which they discovered there. Thus also was Evangelical Christianity kept alive in England. Those churches that long retained the Presbyterian name and polity became almost without an exception Unitarian in doctrine. It was neither Presbyteries nor ruling elders, but the *congregations managing their own affairs*, and they alone, who kept the faith in those dark days. Hence the fact that so many of the Unitarian churches in this country are still called Presbyterian in such documents as their own trust deeds."

FAITH'S ROLL CALL.—XII.

DAVID.

"God hath made all things for Himself, even the wicked for the day of evil. The wrath of men praise Him; the remainder He will restrain." Unworthy men are often called to fulfil most worthy purposes; apparently inadequate instruments do His bidding. Balaam, self-destroyed, could utter prophetic strains which even Isaiah could not excel. Some of the sweetest strains of poetry have come from those whose lives alas have been vile. These things, beyond the fact that sin must ever be considered a strange thing, call for no special wonderment; but that this man, David, should be the king, "after God's own heart," is an apparent wonder and perplexity, and that those psalms, whose universal application to the varied experiences of earnest hearts and lives in every age and clime, attest their inspiration, should have been largely shaped, and written by such an one as God's elected poet of the sanctuary, does bewilder the trust we would repose in the purity and truth of God. Let us however not be turned aside, but fairly meet these perplexities, for we may be assured that, by thus doing, faith can but be strengthened and truth confirmed.

"After God's own heart." This expression occurs in 1 Sam. xiii. 14; it is repeated by Stephen, Acts xiii. 22, with which quotation Ps. lxxxix. 20 is associated. Attention to the context will manifest that the expression is not one of moral signification, but expressive of regal power in face of Israel's foes; compare vers. 22-3 in the Psalm. The days of Saul were days of cruel necessity, might

made right, and no strong arm appeared to administer justice. Saul, chosen by popular vote, had disappointed the hopes of the nation; through whom should deliverance come? David appears: his courage, strength and patriotism were fit instruments for consolidating, and events proved that under David Israel did attain solidity, order and influence. Isa. xlv. 28; xlv. in its reference to Cyrus will illustrate the use of expressions, which for theological purposes are often regarded as having a direct moral reference, to indicate simple fitness for the object then contemplated, which is all we are justified in reading into the words "after His own heart." 1 Chron. xxviii. 2-4, and 1 Kings v. 3 give a moral estimate which from Solomon's remark to Hiram would appear to have been well known. David might and did gather together wealth and material and plans for Jehovah's house, but that a man of violence should erect the permanent sanctuary for the Ark of the Covenant was not to be tolerated; divine indignation must mark its disavowal of David's acts of lawless violence. David's course of sin is neither approved of nor palliated in the records we deem sacred and divine. Let that be fully understood.

This may clear the way for a calm and candid view of David's career, which for moral purposes we may divide into three eras—youth; conflict and early rule; penitence, fervour and age.

As a youth we feel the full power of his name David, the *beloved*, the *darling*, "Ruddy, beautiful, and good to look upon," 1 Sam. xvi. 12, and yet the apparently neglected of the family, for "He keepeth the sheep" was said as Jesse's sons were made to pass before Samuel. He grows upon our sympathies as the chance champion of Israel, chap. xvii., and the expressed estimate of his brethren, ver. 28, only brings out in bolder relief the indignant patriotism and trustful confidence of the stripling hero. No lip can falter or heart misgive in saying now "Surely the Lord's anointed is here." The simple guilelessness of the shepherd lad is certainly marked from his subsequent career by strong contrast.

"Latest born of Jesse's race,
Wonder lights thy bashful face,
While the prophet's gifted oil
Seals thee for a path of toil."

The scene soon changes, called by his prowess into prominence (chap. xviii. 7), the