

THE DEATH OF ABNER.

2 Sam. iii. : 33-34. "And the king lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dieth? Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters: As a man falleth before wicked men, so fellest thou. And all the people wept again."

THE event which occasioned these pathetic lamentations on the part of David, in which the people so heartily united, occurred at a very critical period in the history of Israel. After the death of Saul, the kingdom had been rent in twain, one part adhering to the house of Saul, and the other following the house of David. The North was arrayed in fratricidal war against the South, and the South against the North. The desolating contest had lengthened out from months into years, and threatened to become a war of extermination.

Now, however, in the good providence of God, a brighter day dawned on the land, and a door opened for the return of peace. This happy event seemed to depend largely on the life of Abner. That brave captain, who had been the support and strength of the house of Saul, stung by the ingratitude of his master, and moved, perhaps, in part, by his knowledge of the fact that the Lord had sworn to give the kingdom to the son of Jesse, made overtures to David to bring about the peaceful union of the whole nation under his sceptre. For this purpose, he had visited David at Hebron, and had met with that welcome which was due alike to his character, his position, and his mission.

Having perfected his league with David, Abner departed, to gather the tribes to Hebron, to instal him as King over the united nation. Scarcely, however, had he left the city, when Joab, the captain of David's host, returning from an expedition in which he had been engaged, was informed of the visit and peaceful departure of Abner. These tidings were as gall to his malignant nature. Revengeful