

to remorse. **Is the young man Absalom safe?** Literally, "Is it peace to the youth Absalom?" The question shows the tenderness of the father overmastering the duty of a king; but its excuse lay in David's own guilty consciousness that his own sins had led to Absalom's crimes. (7) *If children knew how deep and unselfish is the love of their parents, they might less often neglect it.* **When Joab sent.** The text should probably read, "When Joab the king's servant sent me thy servant." **I saw a great tumult, but I knew not.** This was false, for Ahimaaz knew that Absalom was dead (verse 20), but preferred to let the Ethiopian slave bring the unwelcome news. (8) *His regard for truth probably weakened in the presence of the king's distress.*

30. Turn aside, and stand here. He takes his place among the courtiers surrounding the king, standing, for none might sit in the royal presence, and awaits a reward for his service.

31. Cushai came. The Ethiopian, who had started in advance but had been outrun by Ahimaaz. **Tidings, my lord.** The slave speaks bluntly and without consideration for David's feelings. **The Lord hath avenged thee.** "Judged thee out of the hand of thine enemies;" meaning that God had given David justice in his cause. (9) *The events of daily life do not happen by chance.*

32. Is the young man Absalom safe? As before, the uppermost thought in David's mind is for Absalom's life and safety. **The enemies of my lord . . . be as that young man.** Perhaps the slave did not know the tenderness of David's feelings, and spoke as one who looked at Absalom's

rebellion in its true light. A crime it was, and Joab was politic in disregarding David's instructions and putting Absalom to death, for not otherwise could the throne be ever again secure. (10) *That wrong be punished is for the best interests of society.*

33. The king was much moved. It added to his agony that his son was cut off in the midst of his crimes, with no opportunity for repentance, and especially that his guilt was the fruit of David's own sins. (11) *See in David's sorrow how surely sin brings to pass its bitter results.* **Went up.** By the stairs beside the gate to the room above it, occupying the space between the two walls. This was the nearest place where he could be alone. **Thus he said.** Eight times he repeated his wail over his lost son. "There is an old Jewish legend that with each cry one of the seven gates of hell rolled back, and on the eighth the lost spirit of Absalom was admitted to paradise."—*Dean Stanley.* **Would God I had died for thee.** Too late now the vain wish to die for Absalom, when once he might have lived for Absalom. Yet he mourned, until recalled to his kingly duties by the sharp rebuke of Joab. Then at last he took his place before the people, and went back in triumph to his throne. Absalom left one daughter, who became the ancestress of kings and a patron of idolatry. His pillar in the King's Dale has long since perished, for the monument which now bears his name is of later date, and Absalom left no memorial save the record of wasted opportunities and a ruined life. (12) *When young people get into trouble it is not they who suffer most.*

CRITICAL NOTES.

Absalom's rebellion and temporary success, the flight of David, and the utter overthrow of the rebels, together with the death of their leader in the "forest of Ephraim," are given with unusual fullness of details; for that reason, both pupil and teacher should read the entire account as found in chaps. 15-18. This will do more good than the reading of any lesson helps or commentaries, for all that is really known on the subject is given in these chapters. The battle was fought some ten or twelve weeks after the events described in the last lesson; the exact location of the forest of Ephraim is not known, but it was probably in some of the woodlands not far from Mahanaim. There is but little reason for thinking that it was fought within the borders of the tribe of Ephraim, since everything points clearly to some place on the east of the Jordan. The fatal blunder of Absalom was in rejecting the counsel of the shrewd and far-sighted arch-traitor Ahithophel (2 Sam. 17. 1-15), and in adopting the recommendations of David's bosom friend, who was acting as a spy in the camp of Absalom. Ahithophel proposed to march at the

head of the army and overtake David and his followers, capture and slay the king, and thus end the war at once. It is not impossible that Absalom was unwilling to allow Ahithophel to have such a victory all at once, and thus become exceedingly popular with the soldiers at the very outset. Besides, the advice of Hushai, who counseled the gathering of the people from Dan to Beersheba, must have appealed to the vanity of the haughty usurping son. Moreover, in spite of the deceit and lying of Hushai, Jehovah overruled affairs.

No judge, in passing sentence upon Absalom, could have summed up the case more forcibly than Dr. Clarke, quoted by Hurlbut and Doherty in their excellent *Notes*. These are his words: "Absalom's life was quadruply forfeited to the law: 1. In having murdered his brother Amnon. 2. In having excited insurrection in the State. 3. In having taken up arms against his father (Deut. 21. 18, 21). 4. In having taken to himself his father's concubines (Lev. 18. 29). Long ago he should have died by the hand of justice."

24. David sat between the two gates.