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THURSDAY, AUGUST 31, 1876.

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

In the first lesson for morning prayer, we lose sight of the prophet Elijah for a time, while we contemplate the fulfilment of one of his dire predictions in the death of the wicked Ahab. This king had natural justice on his side in wishing to recover Ramoth in Gilead, which ought to have been surrendered with the other cities, at the time when Ahab spared Benhadad's life, on condition that the cities won from Israel in the campaign against Omri, should be restored, and that the Israelites should have a quarter for their bazaars in the streets of Damascus. Three years after the treaty, Jehoshaphat, having married Ahab's daughter, was on a visit to the Court of Samaria, and engaged to assist Ahab in recovering Ramoth.

But Ahab had introduced Phœnician idolatry, as though it had been a light thing to walk in the sins of Jeroboam. He had also spared Benhadad's life from purely selfish motives, which could not be spared without injury to the Lord's people, and therefore a prophet had denounced that his life should go for Benhadad's life. And further, on the barbarous murder of Naboth, Elijah had declared that Ahab's blood should belicked up by the hungry dogs in the public square, where they had just licked up the blood of Naboth. These predictions must have been in the mind of Ahab a source of much disquietude, which appears to have been much increased by the prediction of Micaiah as to the utter discomfiture of the army of Israel. The four hundred who prophesied success, were probably prophets of the golden calves. In order to ensure his safety Ahab entered the battle in disguise, but his precautions were vain. An arrow from the angel of death winged its unerring course to the vitals of Ahab, and before the day closed, dogs licked up the blood of the murderer of Naboth, at the place foretold by Elijah.

This chapter shows the bad policy, to call it nothing worse, of making religious teachers dependent on those they have to teach. The people resolve that the mass of their clergy shall be married men, and there may be grave reasons for the resolution. But the clergyman with a family depending on him and who has to think from the first day of the year about the collections that are to be made for him before the end of it, must be heroic if he never yields to the temptation of softening down a truth which is unwelcome to his paymasters, or of extenuating a fault which is notoriously popular among them. There

are, of course, always some who would rather have it so. They want exponents of their own tastes and opinions. They prefer Zedekiah with his magnificent compliments, with his horns of iron, to Micaiah, the son of Imlah, with his simple incapacity for saying anything but the truth. But which would have been even the better *policy* for Ahab? to have listened to Micaiah, who displeased him with his plain truthfulness, or to swallow greedily the unctuous flattery of Zedekiah and the multitude of the four hundred worshippers of the golden calves?

In the first lesson for Evensong, we take our final leave of the great prophet, who in an age of general apostacy, stood forth from among the mass of men in solitary grandeur. He was the typical saint and hero of the old theocracy; and must have been recognized as embodying in the highest degree, the moral power which belonged to a life expressing a firm conviction of the Sinaitic revelation. When he appeared on the scene of history, it seemed as if the revelation committed to Israel was on the point of being trodden out by a young and vigorous idolatry. The marriage of Ahab with Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, King of Sidon, led to the worship of the Phœnician Baal, one of those seductive varieties of the worship of the vital forms of nature in a personified shape, which exercised so extraordinary a sway over the ancient world, and which in a more refined guise, has been by no means unwelcome to the modern world. And Elijah was, to the revelation of the one God, the Maker of the universe, what, in a later age, St. Paul was in certain portions of the Church, to the truth of man's justification through Christ's merits; and what St. Athanasius was, during the great Arian struggle, to the true Godhead of Jesus Christ, as it had been taught by the Apostles.

And therefore, he, too, as well as Enoch, was translated that he should not see death. In the presence of Elisha, and of fifty of the sons of the prophets, not far from the sacred waters of the Jordan, the chariot of God appeared in sight and carried him up into heaven, while Elisha cried, at the wonderful sight, "My father, my father! the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof."

THE COLLECT contains, as usual, a large amount of theological teaching in a small compass, opening out a greater variety of subjects than we have space for their consideration. After the invocation to the All powerful and Eternal One, the collect begins by acknowledging how much more ready He is to listen to our petitions than we are careful to offer them; and above all, that past experience testifies to the fact that notwithstanding all our complaining and dissatisfaction, He is accustomed to bestow upon us larger blessings than

our deservings would demand, and larger even than our ambition has led us to seek. The unworthiness of human nature is more strongly insisted on in the liturgy than in the articles, and is a very prominent feature of this collect. But notwithstanding our unworthiness, we are permitted to ask through Christ a pouring down, a large effusion of the abundance of God's mercy; forgiving us those things of which, after strict self-examination, our consciences are afraid will rise up in the judgment to condemn us; and bestowing upon us the highest blessings, of which we are entirely unworthy, and to which we can never have the slightest title or right after all our services, except through the merits of our Saviour Jesus Christ. The teaching of the collect is in thorough agreement with our Lord's own words: "When ye have done all, say, We are unprofitable servants."

THE EPISTLE is from the third chapter of St. Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians, in which he argues the dignity of the Christian ministry, from the superior glory attending the ministration of the Spirit, under the Christian dispensation. The former dispensation was a ministration of condemnation; it laid down a law of rectitude; it marked offences and punished them. But it contained within itself no atonement for sin, no provision for the attainment of righteousness. But the ministration of the Spirit furnishes the one all-sufficient atonement for the sins of the world, and is enriched with the full power of the Divine Spirit, in the gifts and graces which serve to produce the holiness which is required for the heavenly state. The revelation on Mount Sinai was a glorious one, surrounded, as it was, with all the pomp and grandeur which the elements of nature and the presence of angels could produce, and connected, too, with a brightness such as that reflected from the face of Moses, when he communed with God. And yet the splendor of that manifestation was but a faint shadow of the insufferable brightness of uncreated glory, in which the Word of God shall appear, when with His vesture dipped in blood, He shall be followed by the armies of Heaven, smiting the nations with the sword of His mouth—and wearing His triumphant name befitting His universal empire, and His resistless conquests—King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. The Mosaic economy began with a nation of six millions of people, and was afterwards confined to the mountains of Judea; but Christianity rose as the fountain rises, a spring of living water gushing forth; now it is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God; and in the fulness of time its healing waters shall flow over the kingdoms of the earth. Its voice is infinitely more powerful than the thunders of Sinai, while it is, at the same time, softer than the gale of the summer evening. Juda-