

strength that Saul's soldiers became terrified and hid themselves "in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in holds, and in pits." At length the appointed time of waiting was ended, but Samuel had not kept his word. He was not there to conduct the necessary sacrifices for the inauguration of the battle. The last remnants of Saul's army, terrified beyond control, were deserting the royal standard. There was but one thing to be done. "Bring hither the burnt offering to me, and the peace offering," said Saul, and in the presence of the few remaining members of his army, Saul began the sacrificial offering to Jehovah. In the midst of it Samuel appeared. But not with apologies for delay came he, not with encouraging words for Saul, but with the denunciatory question, "What hast thou done?" In vain, Saul's explanations: "Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that *thou camest not within the days appointed*, and the Philistines assembled themselves together at Michmash; therefore, said I, now will the Philistines come down upon me to Gilgal, and I have not entreated the favor of the Lord. *I forced myself, therefore*, and offered the burnt offering." And Samuel answered, "Thou hast done foolishly; thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which He commandeth thee." And then he tells Saul that because of this transgression the royal sceptre will pass from him, that the Lord will choose another, "a man after his own heart, to be prince over the people."

The battle followed, and was entirely successful against the Philistines, although Jonathan's disregard of his father's commands almost cost him his life (see chap. xiv.); but Saul had forever lost the favor of Jehovah because of his first disobedience. Chapter xiv. finishes this historian's narrative of Saul by briefly summing up his military deeds, naming his sons and daughters and the captain of his army.

We find an entirely different narrative, both in style and representation, beginning with the next chapter (xv.) The older narrative had nothing to tell to show the glory of Saul's power, nor the effect of his work upon the fortunes of Israel, but sums up his career in a few lines. Saul's was the sin of disobedience; nothing could excuse him for that. No excuse could be taken for failure to do precisely as Jehovah directed. According to the moral law of the age it mattered not what a man's intentions were, his guilt for disobedience was just as great if he meant well as if he did not. He could not excuse himself on the plea of an error of judgment; he had no right to a judgment at all, except such as came by the direct command of Jehovah. If even by chance a law of the Lord were transgressed, that in no measure excused the offender. If one man killed another, either intentionally or accidentally, it mattered not, he was put to death. When Jonathan disregarded his father's commands, although in doing so he did not *wilfully* disobey, for "he had not heard his father charge the people" (xiv., 27), there was only one thing to do. Although Saul would far rather die himself than slay the child of his love, yet sternly he commanded: "Cast lots between me and Jonathan, my son." And Jonathan was taken. Then Saul said to Jonathan, "Tell me what thou has done." And Jonathan told him and said, "I did certainly taste a little honey with the end of the rod that was in my hand, and lo! I must die." And Saul said, "God do so, and more also; *for thou shalt surely die*, Jonathan."

It was not that Jonathan had disregarded his father's command merely—a father's love might condone this,—but there was the evidence that his disobedience had brought the displeasure of Jehovah (xiv., 34-38), and His counsel being withdrawn, there was no other course than to make such atonement as the Lord required. No ordi-