

less Joab thoroughly believed "that Absalom's death was the only effectual way of ending this most guilty and pernicious insurrection, and so preserving the country from ruin." (Blakie). On this account he dared disobey the king's orders. 15. **Compassed**—Made a ring about him in triumph and then "smote Absalom and slew him." The sad end of a self-willed, vain-glorious, ambitious and rebellious son. 16. **Blew the trumpet**—Sounded a retreat; stern and unscrupulous as he was, Joab is always statesmanlike. The rebellion being now crushed further slaughter was impolitic and would only cause sullen displeasure." (Pulpit Com.) 17. **A great pit**—"The great pit" (R. V.) As if there was some well known hollow in the woods. **A great heap of stones**—"Raised a cairn over it." The setting up of such monuments or memorials of any event deemed worthy of lasting remembrance was common in almost all early nations. **To his tent**—The insurrection quelled, the insurrectionists fled every man to his own home. The use of the word "tent" for "home" is a memorial of their desert life.

II. DAVID'S LAMENT. David sat at the

gate of Mahanaim anxiously awaiting the news of battle. Two swift runners of foot, Ahimaaz and Cush, hasten, bearing tidings of victory to the king. 32. **Is the young man Absalom safe?**—"Is it well with the young man Absalom?" It was not the news of victory but the thought of Absalom's safety that was the dominant feeling in David's mind. This is a question of supreme importance to every parent in respect to their children, and Sabbath school teachers in respect to their scholars. "Is it well?" 33. **Went up to the chamber**—To be alone with God. **And wept**—"There is not in the whole of the Old Testament a passage of deeper pathos than this." (Bible Com.) **Would God I had died for thee**—He would readily have sacrificed himself for the good and well being of his son. Think of Moses (Ex. 32: 32), also St. Paul (Rom. 9: 3). What sorrow of heart Jesus experienced when he beheld the rebellious city Jerusalem, and the swift destruction coming upon her, as he "wept over it" (Luke 19: 41). The cup of David's sorrow was the more bitter as he was conscious of the fact that his own sin was partly the cause of Absalom's sad fate.

## PRACTICAL LESSONS.

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1. *The instruments of God succeed as long as they carry out his purposes.* They may not be desirous of doing the will of God, but while they may not care to work with God they may be unconsciously working for him. Absalom seems to have had a part in the economy of God's dealing with David. The spirit in which the king would take a sudden reverse would prove the genuineness of his repentance and the depth of his religious life. We must all see that David stood the test well, for he bore himself throughout this trying experience with great humility and the sweetness of a disposition acquiescing in the will of God. Hence, while that lesson was being taught to the world Absalom prospered, even to the taking of the kingdom. But when the lesson had borne fruit the prosperity of the rebellious son was at an end.

2. *In the day of distress the mean-spirited taunt us.* The strange cursing of David during his flight by Shimei, the Benjamite, is an instance of this. It gave evidence of a vindictive and cowardly spirit. It was vindictive because it evidently proceeded out of feelings of hatred against David for displacing and succeeding Saul. It was cowardly because it was persisted in with insults and stonethrowing long after it appeared that David would make no resistance. It is a mean thing to taunt, in the day of their trouble, those who have been hostile to us (as we deem). Rather is it a good opportunity for returning good for evil and heaping coals of fire upon their heads. In this more excellent way we shall the more influence them in the direction of what is good, and often we shall win them to the right by our so doing.

3. *The success of the transgressor is short lived.* Absalom's reign was one of the shortest in history, yet he had carefully laid his plans and arranged his plots and had at first the most astonishing success. But at the first real shock of battle he failed and met an ignominious death. Even his followers must have forsaken him in the wildest panic, otherwise he would not have been left in the oak. There is no certainty of continuance in alliances and friendships based on lawless undertakings and wrong schemes. Lawless courses may seem to be succeeding for a time, but wrong cannot hope ultimately to triumph over right. We should have a supreme faith in the final success of the right.

Truth seems forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne,  
Yet that scaffold sways the future and behind the dim unknown  
Standeth God amid the shadows keeping watch above his own.

3. *There is great contrast between the plans made by the transgressor and their outcome.* The prospect before the sinner is often rose-colored to his view but the realization is a storm-cloud. Forbidden fruit may be fair to the sight, but like Dead Sea fruit, it becomes ashes to the touch. To Absalom doubtless the future was filled with brilliant pictures. He hoped to gain the throne of a splendid kingdom and have control of the vast treasures hoarded up for the building of the temple, and indulge himself to his heart's content. But instead of that he met with failure while almost on the threshold of success. Thus the prospects of