

king of Gerar. He was now in the Philistine country. Kedesh lay to the south-east, and Shur to the south-west of the promised land.

V. 2.—The Patriarch's visit to this Philistine Prince was not at its commencement honorable to him or to his partner, neither of them having acted with the simplicity and integrity, becoming servants of God. Instead of appearing there in their true character as husband and wife, they had agreed to appear as brother and sister. "Abraham said of Sarah his wife,—She is my sister." He was led to take this unworthy and unwise step from want of confidence in the presence and protecting Providence of Him who had said—"Fear not I am thy shield." Believing that he dwelt among a lawless people, and fearing that they might slay the husband to gain possession of the wife, still attractive and beautiful, he with her concurrence, so speaks and acts, as to leave the impression, that the relation between them was of an entirely different character. This was in itself wrong, and like all unbelieving expedients was pernicious and perilous in its tendencies both as respected themselves and others. The effects soon began to appear. The king of Gerar becomes enamoured of Abraham's sister, and purposes to make her his wife.

V. 3.—Sarah is taken from the tent of Abraham that she may become the wife or more probably one of the wives of a Philistine Prince. She would become the wife or paramour of another. Abraham's shield comes to his protection. In a dream God warns the king at his peril to proceed no farther. Thou art but a dead man—thy life is in jeopardy, all but forfeited,—Why? For the woman which thou hast taken,—*"for she is a man's wife."* How clear and stern and universal is this Divine prohibition of polygamy! The woman was beautiful—the affection for her was strong, but the discovery that she was the wife of another must immediately prevent even a king from proceeding any farther.

V. 4.—Abimelech's purpose was formed in entire ignorance of Sarah's real relationship to Abraham. Informed of the truth, he appeals to God who had warned him of his perilous position. "Wilt thou also slay a righteous nation?" Like a good ruler he pleads for his people, fearing that Divine judgments may come upon them. The righteousness which he pleads was then innocence or guiltlessness in this matter.

V. 5, 6.—Even he himself was guiltless of intentional wrong, both parties having given the same statement of their relation to each other. The appeal is sustained. There is guilt in the transaction, but it is not Abimelech's nor his people's. Jeho-

vah testifies to his innocence, in consequence of which he had restrained him, from rushing in ignorance into an unlawful connection. Our upright intentions may be pleaded as an excuse, for a wrong course only when we could not know better.—Good intentions will not make wrong right, nor be held as an excuse, when our ignorance is wilful, or when we do not diligently use the means of knowledge. We here learn that great as human weakness is it would be greater but for the restraining influences of Divine Providence and preventing grace.

V. 7.—Duty was now to be discharged. He is now enlightened, and God must now be obeyed, the woman restored and the prayers of Abraham solicited. *Prophet* here has its generic meaning; it does not mean a predictor of future events, but a teacher, a servant of God, called and qualified to instruct men in the things of God, and to plead with God in their behalf.

V. 8.—This heathen prince proceeds to act at once upon the knowledge of his duty just imparted. Not only restores to Abraham his own, but adds thereto valuable gifts. Deep impressions are left by his intercourse with the God of Abraham. Scripture furnishes many subsequent examples of the same kind, such as the repentance of the king and people of Nineveh at the preaching of Jonah. Alas that so many in christian lands and sabbath schools remain insensible, and impenitent, and disobedient, though so often called by God to repent.

Vv. 9, 10.—In this remonstrance of Abimelech with Abraham, there is much to admire and to commend. He might have taunted Abraham with his gross inconsistency. He might have asked him where was his religion, his faith, his conjugal love, and what would have been his position and the position of his wife, if the Lord had not in mercy turned him from the course into which he might have almost said that Abraham led him. He refrains from all taunting words. Mildly, but faithfully, he represents the wrong done, asking what had been seen in himself or people to justify such a course?

Vv. 11, 12.—Abraham's reply explains, very partially excuses, but utterly fails to justify his procedure. *It explains his course.* He was afraid of violence and death on Sarah's account. Forgetting the past protection and the promises of Jehovah, he sought out an unworthy invention to procure safety. *It partially excuses his course.* What he affirmed was truth, though it left a false impression. She was his sister, the daughter of Haran, who was his brother by his father's side, and therefore his sister according to oriental forms of expression. *It fails to justify his course* (1) because it involved dissimulation; (2) because it evinc-