

The Quiet Hour.

David Spares Saul.

S. S. LESSON.—1 Samuel 26: 5-12, 21-25. August 30, 1903.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Luke 6: 27. Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you.

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Connecting Links.—The last lesson was taken from ch. 20 of this book, and the intervening space is full of important events in the life of David; for in the present course of lessons we have merely a scattered selection from the story of David's varied adventures and struggles. When it was certain that he could no longer live in safety at the court of Saul (ch. 20: 24-42), David fled to Nob and received succor from the priests there, ch. 21: 1-10, for which kindness Saul afterwards exacted upon them a terrible vengeance, ch. 22: 9-19. David fled to Gath (ch. 21: 10-15), and was joined by a band of followers at the cave of Adullam, ch. 22: 1, 2. Then follows the narrative of the rescue of Keilah and the treachery of the Keilites, ch. 23: 1-15. Next we have the last meeting of Jonathan and David, ch. 23: 16-18. The sparing of Saul's life at Engedi; Samuel's death and burial; and the churlish behavior of Nabal and its results; are related in chs. 24, 25. Finally, ch. 26: 1-4 describes Saul's pursuit of David, and the encamping of the king's army on a hill, Hachilah, in the wilderness of Ziph, near Hebron.

1. A Bold Exploit. 5-7.

V. 5. And David arose. He was now in hiding in the wilderness of Ziph. He had sent out spies, v. 4, to discover the precise position of the army of Saul. Abner; Saul's uncle, ch. 14: 50, 51. He survived Saul probably seven years at least, 2 Sam. chs. 2, 3. The trench. See Light from the East. Round about him. The wandering tribes in the East make their encampments circular in form, the baggage of the men being at the circumference, while the chief, protected by these, lies in the centre, sometimes, but not always, in a tent.

Vs. 6, 7. Ahimelech the Hittite; not mentioned elsewhere. The Hittites, or descendants of Heth, second son of Canaan, dwelt at Hebron in the days of Abraham. From them Abraham bought a burial-place for Sarah, his wife, Gen. ch. 23. Esau married Hittite wives, Gen. 26: 34. One branch of the Hittites established a strong kingdom in the north of Palestine. Abishai . . . Joab; brothers, nephews of David, who afterwards shared between them the command of his army. Abishai saved David's life in one of the Philistine wars, 2 Sam. 21: 17. Both were involved in the murder of Abner, 2 Sam. 3: 30; both remained faithful to David in Absalom's rebellion, 2 Sam. 16: 9; 18: 2. But Joab supported Adonijah and was put to death by the order of Solomon. 1 Kings 1: 7; 2: 28-34. To the people; that is, Saul's army (Compare ch. 14: 45). Saul lay sleeping. Being in pursuit of a fugitive and not expecting a night attack, no guards had been set. His spear. Saul's spear was his sceptre, ch. 17: 10, and its being stuck in the ground was a sign that the king was sleeping in that place. It is still customary in Palestine to distinguish the chief's tent from the rest in the same way. At his bolster; "At his head." (Compare ch. 19: 16).

II. A Powerful Temptation, 8-12.

Vs. 8, 9. God hath delivered; literally "shut up" (see chap. 24: 18), by guiding them to the place where Saul lay helpless before them. Smite him . . . to the earth; as Saul had once attempted to pin David to the wall, ch. 19: 10. At once; the meaning is not "immediately," but "at one stroke." The Lord's anointed; so called because he had been set apart to the kingly office by the pouring of the sacred oil upon his head (see ch. 10: 1). The title is used of the king prophetically in chap. 2: 10, 35, but chapter 12: 3 is the first case of its actual use. And be guiltless. As in ch. 24: 26, David showed reverence for the king.

Vs. 10-12. David said furthermore; arguing the case with himself. The Lord shall smite him. David regards the life of the king as in a special sense in the Lord's hand. It may end either (1) by a stroke, such as befell Nabal (ch. 25: 38), or (2) by a natural death, or (3) by death in battle. But it belongs to the Lord to judge him and determine the time and manner of his death. Take thou now the spear. David would prove to the king that it had been in his power to do him harm, and thus show that the quarrel now dividing the nation had not been of his seeking. Cruse; a small cup or jar. It was placed near the head at night, and fastened to the saddle by day. No man saw it. Long practice as scouts enabled them to do their work without noise. A deep sleep from the Lord. The word is used especially of a supernaturally caused sleep, Gen. 2: 21; 15: 12.

In vs. 13-20 we have David's complaint. He rebukes Saul's servants for carelessness in not better protecting their master, and complains of the ceaseless persecution and pursuit to which he has been subject. Then follows a brief conversation between Saul and David.

III. A Brief Repentance. 21-25.

Vs. 21, 22. I have sinned. . . I have played the fool. . . have erred exceedingly; a three fold confession on Saul's part. His repentance was sincere enough, but it did not endure. (Compare Hos. 6: 4.) Return, my son David; an invitation which David is careful not to accept. He has had experience of Saul's variability of purpose. I will not do thee harm; an impulsive but unreliable promise. Let one of the young men come over. David does not again put himself in Saul's power, as he did upon a former occasion, ch. 24: 16-22.

Vs. 23, 24. The Lord render. David will have no more to do with Saul, who has shown himself quick to forget his promises. He leaves his case entirely with the Lord, and prays that his own life may be treated as generously as he had treated Saul's. Against the Lord's anointed. Nothing can break down David's loyalty to God and the king. Deliver me; from the perils and tribulations of an outlaw's life.

Vs. 25. Blessed be thou, my son David. Saul's words did not ring true. David, notwithstanding his determined loyalty, was quick to detect the false note and soon removed from his dominions altogether, ch. 27: 1, 2, Thou shalt do great things. In chapter 24: 20, Saul expressly predicts that David will be king. His place; probably Gibeah. This, as it turned out, proved to be the final parting between Saul and David.

FOR DOMINION PRESBYTERIAN.

"Le Chretien Français" on Leo XIII.

BY REV. T. FENWICK.

The editor of this paper—André Bourrier—was himself several years in the priesthood. The number of July 16, devotes over a whole page to the death of the late "visible Head" of the Roman Catholic Church. Part is an article from the editor's own pen. I should like to give it all, but even though "the man at the wheel" of this paper should be willing to publish it, I should not, for much writing—like much study—is a "weariness of the flesh." I shall, however, give my readers—so to speak—a taste of it.

M. Bourrier heads his article, "Great Pope, Small Christian." He says: "This Pope did all that was possible to correct the faults of Pius IX." These he mentions. Then he says: "But this song had too many couplets. People, at last, became tired of it. They had time to reflect and look closely at it. At last, they found that it was always the same song. The only thing changed was the time."

"Then when the dazzling light of this reign begins to grow dim, people ask themselves what there is of Christianity at the bottom of all that. One may examine—he will see that this Pope was a pagan, and a traditionalist, as were his predecessors."

"The Bible? He seemed to be favourable to the study of it, and those who, like Mgr. d'Hulst, wished to try a new way, were pitilessly sacrificed and died of grief."

"Christ? He did nothing to bring Him again to honour. It is the Virgin, and always the Virgin who is all in salvation. If there be a new favour for the piety of the Pope, it will be for his patron, St. Joachim."

"Relics? He was a fanatical amateur, and put into the superstitions of this foolish worship all the raptures of his devotion."

"Liberal? We know how often he proclaimed his protestations because Protestants opened freely in Rome, their places of worship in the name of liberty of conscience."

"A king without a crown, he now could console himself for the loss of his Pontifical States, and he never understood anything of Gospel simplicity and poverty."

"Finally, he went further in advancing his authority than any of his predecessors did in advancing theirs."

"I look for what was evangelical in Leo XIII. I do not find it. He aimed only at the glory of the Papacy—the strengthening of his power—the return to earthly royalty—the authority of the Church. He desired to increase the number of his subjects—not that of Christians. All for the Church, nothing for Christ. Yet he had a mission so beautiful before him."

"But he understood nothing of that sublime mission, which is, henceforth, the only one of priests in the future. According to the legend, Christ meeting Peter at the gates of Rome, would have replied to the question: "Whither goest Thou, O Lord?" (*Domine quo vadis?*) "I go to be crucified again. (*Stemm crucifigi*) It seems to me that if Christ had ever put to Leo XIII that question: *Quo vadis?* Leo XIII would have answered: "*To reign again*. I go to set up again my kingdom which is falling down." Of all evangelical sayings which he would have remembered and practised, it would probably have been this one: *He must reign*.

"He must reign, yes, he the Christ, but the reign of Christ, is the reign of a Pope. The whole history of the pontificate of Leo XIII is comprised in this single word."