

*THE LAY PRIESTHOOD.*

The greatest sin of David's life was committed when, "at that time of the year when kings go forth to battle," David—the great generalissimo of God's army, the people of Israel, instead of going forth as their leader, remained at home at his ease, surrounded by the luxuries of his palace, and sent Joab in his place. Satan, quick to take advantage of man's self-indulgence and its consequent weakness and blindness to spiritual danger, attended his every movement most closely. Covetousness, that door through which the tempter must always enter in order to break any of God's commandments, was the door through which the unwary servant of God was enticed, and then lust was quickly followed by murder, and the neglect of watchfulness by the loss of self-knowledge, and that consequent spiritual hardness which shut out the former comfort of God's love. Prayer shrank into a cold, dead form, for it was no longer attended by close self-examination, and—like one sore smitten by a deadly inward disease, no outward application affording relief, there was no acceptable confession of sin. "Whilst I held my tongue," i. e. from acceptable confession of sin, "my bones consumed away through my daily complaining, for Thy hand was heavy upon me, day and night, and my moisture was like the drought in

summer." And as God does not ordinarily speak to man with a voice audible to the human ear, He in mercy to His blind and erring servants, sent His prophet Nathan, with a parable which disclosed by a sudden and terrible revelation the awful truth that the sin of the king was not mainly an injudicious use of the unlimited monarchial power, but a defiling of his own body and that of a weak woman to whom the king's command was law. He now saw that, as a circumcised member of God's covenant and of the Messiah to come, he had defiled the members of Christ. Seeing this terrible truth, through man's ministry, he exclaims in the bitterness of his humiliating confession,—“I have sinned against the LORD!” Then followed the God-sent absolution, with its most necessary and wholesome punishment in this life, that his soul might be saved in the day of the Lord. “The Lord hath put away thy sin,”—i. e. its eternal consequences, “Nevertheless, the sword shall never depart from thy house.” “Behold I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house,” i. e. by the shameful incest of Amnon and Absalom his son. “The child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.”

Sorrow and punishment shall surely follow sin,—in this world if repented of in due time,—in the next forever, if unrepented.

It is not without deep reason that where God would make an example