

appearance made him a noticeable figure in a young nation which had to depend for its existence on the bravery of individuals who could lead its armies triumphantly against its numerous foes. "There was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he." For these qualities he was chosen the first king.

"Warriors and Chiefs! should the shaft or the sword
Pierce me in leading the hosts of the Lord,
Heed not the corse, though a king's, in your path:
Bury your steel in the bosoms of Gath."¹

Young, brave, handsome and enthusiastic, he led Israel to victory, and promised to fulfil the eager hopes of the people. In these earlier years he appeared destined to become one of the great rulers of his country. The world and its glories seemed to lie at his feet.

"Thou art grown to a monarch; a people is thine;
And all gifts that the world offers singly, on one head combine;
High ambition and deeds that surpass it, fame crowning them—all,
Brought to blaze on the head of one creature—King Saul."²

But a mental weakness was inherent in his constitution, and under repeated attacks of the malady, his mind and body failed. The reputation he had won, and the power he had wielded, were gradually lost and he was finally defeated and slain by the enemy on Mount Gilboa. A sad and tragic end to a career that opened with such brilliant promise for himself and his house, Saul and his sons dead and dishonoured on their last battlefield. "How are the mighty fallen and the weapons of war perished."

Samuel says that his ruin was the judgment of the Lord, because he offered sacrifice and did not exterminate every individual of the Amalekites. But the reasons already given seem to be sufficient to account for his failure. And so his dream of life vanished in night without one ray of light to illumine the darkness.

"A meteor

"That crossed the welkin ere the break of day,
"And then went out forever."

¹ Lord Byron.

² Robert Browning.