

seized him that if, once the enemy got possession of him alive they would subject him to some nameless mutilation or horrible humiliation too terrible to be thought of. Hence his request to his armour-bearer to fall on him. When the armour-bearer refused, he took a sword from him and killed himself.

It may readily be allowed that to one not ruled habitually by regard to the will of God this was the wisest course to follow. If the Philistine treatment of captive kings resembled the Assyrian, death was far rather to be chosen than life. When we find on Assyrian monuments such frightful pictures as those of kings obliged to carry the heads of their sons in processions, or themselves pinned to the ground by stakes driven through their hands and feet, and undergoing the horrible process of being flayed alive, we need not wonder at Saul shrinking with horror from what he might have had to suffer if he had been taken prisoner.

But what are we to think of the moral aspect of his act of suicide? That in all ordinary cases suicide is a daring sin, who can deny? God has not given to man the disposal of his life in such a sense. It is a daring thing for man to close his day of grace sooner than God would have closed it. It is a reckless thing to rush into the presence of his Maker before His Maker has called him to appear. It is a presumptuous thing to calculate on bettering his condition by plunging into an untried eternity. No doubt one must be tender in judging of men pressed hard by real or imaginary terrors, perhaps their reason staggering, their instincts trembling, and a horror of great darkness obscuring everything. Yet how often, in his last written words, does the suicide bear testimony against himself when he hopes that God will forgive him, and beseeches his friends to