

**SAUL: A
DRAMATIC POEM**

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Saul: A Dramatic Poem by Algernon Sydney Logan

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ALGERNON SYDNEY LOGAN

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A DRAMATIC POEM.

BY

ALGERNON SYDNEY LOGAN,

AUTHOR OF "THE MIRROR OF A MIND," "THE IMAGE OF AIR," ETC.



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PREFACE.

As the view taken by the author of the relations between Saul and his subjects is not, perhaps, the most common one, a word or two in explanation seems requisite.

It is plain, from the Bible account, that the priests were very unwilling to grant the people's clamorous demand for a king. It seems probable that in selecting Saul, a poor shepherd boy, they chose one whom they thought it would be easy to mould to their will. On finding himself firmly seated on the throne, however, far from being pliant and yielding, he showed an evident intention of substituting

kingly for priestly rule. A struggle thereupon began, which ended only with Saul's life. Steadily the quarrel increased in violence and fury until it culminated in Saul's putting to death great numbers of the lower order of priests, together with witches, prophets, and the like, as being the mouthpieces and agents of the higher priesthood. The natural answer to this was a declaration that the kingdom had passed from Saul, and the secret anointing of another, in order to give a figure-head to the clerical party. Warned by their past experience, the priests chose in David a youth of a deeply religious mind, in whom afterwards all their hopes and wishes were fulfilled.

It is uncertain whether the Philistines were induced to make their invasion by direct solicitation, or merely by the unsettled state of the kingdom. In any case, the presence of David in the Philistine camp, and the fact that he would have taken part with them in the battle against Israel had it not

been for the doubts of the Philistines on the score of his fidelity, show very clearly that the sympathies of the sacerdotal party were with the invader.

The scorn that Michal felt for David's religious superstition, and which burst forth in after-years, when he danced before the ark,* is no small confirmation of my idea that their education had been as different as possible. And David's ungenerous and weak reply, when he taunts Michal with her father's downfall and his own elevation in his stead, shows plainly that David felt it was to the very bigotry which his wife despised that he owed his crown.

My clue to the character of Phalti is found in II. Samuel, chap. iii. 16.

The story of the last days of Saul, as told in the Old Testament, has enabled me to practically preserve the unities without effort. I have taken the

* II. Samuel, chap. vi. 14-22.

liberty of departing from the biblical text in so far only as to permit Saul's armor-bearer, in the last scene, to die before his master, and thus avoid a palpable anti-climax.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

SAUL, King of Israel.

DAVID,

ABNER, Captain of the Host.

PHALTI, an officer.

JONATHAN,

ABINADAB,

MELCHI-SHUA,

} Sons of Saul.

Ghost of Samuel.

MICHAL, Saul's daughter, who has been previously taken away from

David, her first husband, by Saul, and given in marriage to Phalti.

The Witch of Endor.

Attendants, soldiers, etc.

The action of the drama is confined to Mount Gilboa and its immediate vicinity. Time, a single night and part of the following morning.

SAUL.